

Life and Teachings of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother

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Forward - Mother's Sweetness

No one who enters Mother's Room fails to be invaded by the sweetness of the Mother. Sadhaks and devotees addressed Her as 'Sweet Mother'.

If Sri Aurobindo is an ocean of peace, Mother is an eternal spring of sweetness. But She loves to call Herself a Force in action endeavouring to evolve the next species. Sri Aurobindo succeeded in bringing the Supramental golden light into his very physical body in 1950. All his life he was working for this Force to come down on earth to abolish suffering and death and evolve the first member of the next species. Mother offers to all those who sincerely aspire a touch of this Force if they come forward to give an opening to the Divine Touch.

She assures us of the Presence of the Force that descended in 1956 and invites us to take a leap forward in the evolutionary march.

In the pages of this book I have endeavoured to introduce Mother to the readers through her biographical events, her relationship with Sri Aurobindo, the sadhaks and the thousands of people who visited her and to show how She responded to the call of people in distress.

Part I of the book relates to the lives and teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Part II contains the English originals of articles published in *Amudhasurabhi* magazine over the past eight years.

To know the Mother is to know the Divine; to let Her Force work in you is to evolve. Her sweetness, which is the sweetness of the psychic, invades our nerves when we call Her into our being.

Karmayogi

Part I

1. The Mother

The Mother was known in her family as Mira. Born on February 21, 1878 of an Egyptian mother and a Turkish father who were thorough materialists, Mira was brought up to become an ideal of perfection. Mira later reminisced about her early upbringing. Her mother was a strong-willed lady who appeared to the children to be an iron bar. She believed her children were not on earth to enjoy themselves but to make their lives the acme of perfection. In spite of this, she did not believe in any

religion, perhaps because to harbour such belief, in her view, made the individual a weakling. Mira's parents were more than affluent, they were wealthy. When Mira later became the Mother of Sri Aurobindo Ashram, she was able to foot the entire bill of the Ashram from its inception when it had 25 members until it reached nearly 1000 members during the Second World War. She gave her all to the work of Sri Aurobindo.

Mira was an exceptional child. Her being an exception was not known to her until later in life when she met Max Theon, her teacher in occultism. It was Madame Theon, an Englishwoman, who told Mira that she carried a white light on her head in the form of a circle with 12 balls of light. That light, Madame Theon explained, was the light of creation. At the age of five Mira would lapse into bliss and go into a trance sometimes when she was placed in an easy chair or during of a meal. Once in the middle of a meal with her outstretched hand holding a spoon, she found herself in trance, much to the annoyance of her iron-willed mother to whom it was a social embarrassment. Little did the mother or the daughter know that she was a Divine child meant to preside over the affairs of the world and to try an evolutionary experiment in her own body to evolve the first member of the next species, which Sri Aurobindo called *Supramental Man*.

Mira had a brother to whom she was fondly attached. Once when he was crossing a river a heavenly voice offered him the chance of becoming a god. He could not respond to this offer and he later joined the French civil service, ending up as colonial Governor in Madagascar.

Mira was a Divine Being and she was attended by several beings in times of need. Once when she was about ten years old running around with children of her age, she ran towards the edge of a cliff and was not able to stop in time. She went over the edge and fell from a great height. It was a fall that could have given her multiple fractures or even been fatal. But she found herself descending through the air as if borne by a benevolent being to a soft, safe landing. It was an angel-like being that gave her that protection. Such things happened to her all the time, but young Mira could not comprehend their full import at that time. Walking through Paris as if in a daze, she once wished to cross a busy street and did not notice a streetcar coming straight at her. She suddenly felt that something pulled her back and threw her violently to the side of the road. Next she found that the streetcar had come to a sudden stop and the driver was intensely abusing her for trying to cross the road thoughtlessly. Except that she was miraculously saved and the driver was vehemently abusing her, Mira could not make much out of the incident. When she grew up and was cooking, she sometimes found tiny beings pulling at her dress to remind her that the milk was about to boil over. She had such special divine attention at all times of her life.

Her early life was set on a search for the Divine and that was the one thing she was interested in. Her later life was dedicated to the ideals of Sri Aurobindo. At a young age, while dreaming, she found her being rising into the sky and spreading all over the town. Countless numbers of sad people with their grief, sorrows and ailments came from all around to touch her robe, which spread out in all directions. The robe was living and contact with it relieved the sorrowing beings of their misery. Mother greatly enjoyed this experience every night and awaited it with eagerness.

When the authorities of the Royal Swedish Academy were inclined to award the Nobel Prize to Sri Aurobindo, he passed away. The offer was still there, and it was considered that Mother could receive it. She felt that it was Sri Aurobindo's ideas, ideals, force and work that were being carried out by her body as a docile instrument. In her view, the instrument should not be glorified and that was the end of the whole possibility.

Around age 20, her 'search' was intense and yet she did not know what she was searching for. She met an Indian in Paris who sensed her deep aspiration. He suggested she read the *Bhagavad Gita* and she obtained a copy of it in French. The French translation was quite poor but she understood the substance of it and received the necessary help. When she found out that there was something inside to be sought for, she says she rushed like a cyclone and made the discovery of her inner being. What normally takes decades of *tapasya* for *rishis*, she was able to realise in a few short months while in the middle of Parisian life.

In her meditations she saw several spiritual figures, all of whom offered her help of one type or another. Among them she saw a dark Asiatic figure whom she called to herself '*Krishna*'. Krishna guided her inner journey. She came to have total implicit faith in Krishna and was hoping to meet him one day in real life. When she was introduced to the enigmatic Max Theon, she accepted him in many ways and learnt several occult disciplines from him. A doubt lingered in her mind whether Theon could be her Krishna. Eventually she concluded that it was not he. Later in Pondicherry when she met Sri Aurobindo, she recognised him at first sight, "It is He, my Krishna."

She was married and had a son. They divorced and she later married Paul Richard, a politician. In her later life, she described the world as ruled by four main asuric figures whom she named Lord of Death, Lord of Nations, Lord of Darkness and Lord of Suffering. These four asuras have several thousand minor emanations. She also said the first two of them had dissolved and if the other two were wiped out, the earth would be ready for the rule of Truth. She had personal contact with the first two of them.

In her frantic search for the Spirit, the only guidance she had was her daily meditation. The introduction of Max Theon, his stupendous knowledge of the cosmos, and the fact that his English wife was an adept in occultism had a great impact on Mother. Also she says that Theon resembled Sri Aurobindo. Her own need for spiritual, occult knowledge supported by her surmise that Theon might be the Krishna of her meditations made her accept him as a teacher or even guru. 'Theon' was not a name. It means God. He never disclosed from which country he had come or any other detail of his life. He had an extensive estate in Algeria. Mother went there for a prolonged stay. There she learned lessons of occultism such as leaving her body, travelling to other worlds and other planets, communing with non-humans, and obtaining an occult power over material objects.

Mother was in touch with several supernatural beings whose status was not fully clear to her in those initial stages. Towards the end of her earthly embodiment, in one of her public Darshans given from her terrace to several thousand devotees assembled on the road adjoining Sri Aurobindo Ashram, she spoke of a Being from eternity looking at her with benevolence. Even at a young age,

she was in contact with her inner soul, which Theon called the psychic being, and was guided by it in her daily life. At Tlemcen where she stayed with Theon, she met an extraordinary being from the other worlds whose real nature was later revealed to her when she met Sri Aurobindo. He described it as the Supramental Being.

On arrival at Theon's estate, Mother and he took a walk into the interior of the expansive grounds. Suddenly Theon took it into his head to start a tantrum and sprang before her, announcing that she was now under his control. Mother's life was already presided over by her psychic being. She took his threat in stride and told him nonchalantly in her own unperturbed fashion that she was under the influence of her psychic being and was not afraid of him. Theon was disarmed, but even then he would not stop his pranks with her. It was true that his powers were enormous and he took occasions to demonstrate them. Once she was standing on the roof of his house with him by her side. A lightning flashed and headed towards them. She saw the lightning suddenly deflected in the middle of its course in another direction. She asked him if he had done that. He nodded his assent.

Madame Theon demonstrated to Mother how she could 'eat' a grapefruit by placing it on her stomach. After a little while the fruit was sucked out and lay flat on her stomach with all its nutrition transferred mysteriously to her body. She had so much power over material objects that they obeyed her as if obeying a spoken command. Mother explains that if Madame Theon looked at her pair of slippers, wishing to wear them, they would move toward her and slip themselves onto her feet.

Theon was taking Mother to other worlds in her subtle body while her physical body lay on the floor. Travelling thus in various places of mystical interest, Mother arrived at a place where the mantra of Life was inscribed in Sanskrit. Mother knew no Sanskrit at that time but took the mantra into her memory. Theon, standing beside her and presiding over the operation, wanted Mother to give him the mantra. It was clear to Mother that the mantra was not intended for him or, perhaps, it should not fall into his hands. She refused the unspoken authoritative demand of the occult guru in whose hands her very body and life were now entrusted. Mother was quiet and her refusal was also quiet. Theon flew into a rage and snapped the chord that bound her to the body. In later life Mother explained that Theon was the Lord of Death and her husband Paul Richard was the Lord of Nations who inspired Hitler to destroy the world. She even joked, "I had good company." After twelve years with Richard when she parted company with him, she told him that she had tried her best for twelve long years to convert him in vain. The ways of the Divine are inscrutable. Mother, who was the very incarnation of the Transcendent *Adiparashakti*, spent the prime of her life with two incarnations of darkness in the hope of converting them to Truth. When she failed in her attempt at transformation, she found that they had exhausted their negative mission on earth and come to dissolution. Naturally, Mother, in whom this revelation was slowly gathering could not put into the hands of the Lord of Death the mantra of Life. She later gave the mantra to Sri Aurobindo. Theon who had severed the chord of life through which alone Mother could reenter her body, saw the purpose of obtaining the mantra was not going to be served. Knowing the Mother as he did, the enormity of his impulsive act dawned on him and he revived the connection.

Paul Richard, who was seeking election to the French Senate from Pondicherry, visited the French colony to organise electoral support. During that visit he met Sri Aurobindo too. During his next visit to Pondicherry, Mother accompanied him. Even from a distance of ten miles from the city, Mother could see a column of white light rising from the middle of the town to the sky. A meeting of Sri Aurobindo and the French visitors was scheduled. Sri Aurobindo came out of his room to the top of the staircase where Mother was waiting at the bottom. They met. That was a meeting of evolutionary significance for the earth and the universe. At first sight, she knew for certain it was He. During the meeting Sri Aurobindo and Paul Richard sat across a table to discuss politics, the election and his personal prospects. Mother sat at the foot of the table on the floor, an unusual act for an accomplished Westerner. She found something was happening inside her head. Thoughts ceased to run, her mind became quiet and silence began to gather momentum. Mother was 36 at that time. There was no important book published in the world that she had not read by then. Apart from high art and higher mathematics, she had accumulated a great fund of knowledge. Not only that, that knowledge in her mind had created its own structure through which it functioned. Mother saw that formidable structure giving way and dissolving at its core as well as at its fringes. Sri Aurobindo, while engaged in a conversation was conferring on her the boon of Akhandamounam, eternal silence, a yogic attainment of decades of Tapas. He was transferring it to her without her asking for it, not through a ceremony of initiation, but casually, in spite of diverting himself in a conversation. Mother prostrated before Him without knowing that that was what Indian sishyas do to their gurus. The next day she noted in her journal, "It does not matter that thousands of beings are plunged in darkness. He whom we saw yesterday is on earth. His presence is enough to assure us that one day Truth will rule here."

Sri Aurobindo said that in Mother he found surrender down to the very physical, the likes of which could not be found in any human being.

Having listened to Sri Aurobindo, Mother and Richard felt that a great treasure of yogic wisdom lay buried in him and it should be given to the world through a journal of his writings. They proposed to start a journal and the three of them would contribute. The journal Arya was thus started, but the First World War took the French disciples of Sri Aurobindo to Paris, "leaving him with 64 pages of philosophy to write every month." Mother spent a year in France and four years in Japan before she returned to Sri Aurobindo in 1920. When she left India, she left her psychic being with Sri Aurobindo in Pondicherry. With her soul literally left behind her, life during those five years was one of suffocation.

After her return to India and until Sri Aurobindo's passing away in 1950, she says a part of her soul lived in ecstatic realisation. When he passed away she took her psychic being and locked it up and sealed it for several years. Her psychic being, which had lived in the constant presence of Divine Love embodied in Sri Aurobindo, could not live without it. Slowly the psychic being came out to the surface of her life after about a decade. It is significant that the descent of Divine Love in great pulsations took place in 1962 overwhelming and submerging her heart too by its power of first descent.

Mother's life is incomparable in many ways. She has narrated an experience of hers while on board ship. There is a belief that on seeing a meteor if one can formulate a wish or a thought before the meteor disappears, the wish would be fulfilled within twelve months. Mother had such an experience with a falling meteor. But Mother's wish was not an ordinary one.

Man lives on the surface guided by the behaviour which can be changed with effort. Whatever the behaviour is, it is the outward expression of the deep-seated character, *svabhava*. Man's character is innate and is born with him. It is inherited from the forefathers and is buried in the subconscious. All over the world it is known that a man's character is not changeable. There is a tradition which Mother knew of which claims that character can be changed in 35 years if one subjects himself to serious spiritual austerities. Mother's wish was that her character should be dissolved and transformed into a Divine character. While on board a ship she sighted a meteor and clearly formulated that wish in her mind. And she says it came true in twelve months, confirming the traditional belief.

Mother says she does not represent a philosophy, a religion or a sect. She says she is a Force of action, a creative force that can new-create. When it was considered by some people that Sri Aurobindo's philosophy could be made the basis for founding a new religion, she declared that she would be the very first person to quit the Ashram if such a thing were done.

Her brother who could not accept the heavenly offer to become a god became the Governor of Madagascar in Africa. Sri Aurobindo had left British territory in 1910 when he fled to Pondicherry, but the British government was still keeping track of him until 1937. Everyone who entered the Ashram had to pass a British Central Intelligence officer at the entrance and sign his register. It was in 1937 when the Congress government was installed in power in Madras that this act of shame was scrapped. Several times the British police tried to kidnap Sri Aurobindo and transport him to British territory so that he could be thrown in jail. So great was their fear that they continued their heinous crime even after Sri Aurobindo had left politics. One move they attempted was to have Sri Aurobindo removed by the French authorities to an African colony. Mother came to know of this scheme and contacted her brother. She asked him to persuade the French government not to listen to the British intentions. He spoke to the concerned officer and managed to have the file on Sri Aurobindo buried at the bottom of a forgotten heap.

Of all the books written by Sri Aurobindo, Mother says *Synthesis of Yoga* inspired her the most. She translated it into French and during the translation she discovered that Sri Aurobindo's English was largely influenced by the French syntax lending itself to an easy translation.

It was in 1926 that she was officially made Mother of the Ashram. Sri Aurobindo's yoga had taken the double route of an ascent into the spiritual heavens and descent into the human earth. He classifies existence into physical, vital, mental and spiritual realms. Though he prefers his own classification for the purposes of his writing, it generally conforms to the Indian yogic tradition. The physical is the material world represented in man by his body. The vital is life in general and the

nervous *prana* represents it in man. The mind is subdivided into six regions for convenience. Spirit is *Satchidananda*, comprising the spiritual trio -- existence, consciousness and bliss.

The divisions of mind are: the ordinary mind of man, higher mind of the sage, mind of the *rishi*, intuitive mind of the yogi, overmind of the gods and Supermind, which is above the gods but below the spiritual world. Sri Aurobindo's yoga does not seek release of the soul into *moksha*. In his yoga the parts of the human being, viz. body, vital and mind, are to be purified so that the higher spiritual force would descend into man to saturation, making him a fit instrument of the Divine to create the first member of the next species, the Supramental Man. As the sadhak rises to each level above his ordinary mind, forces of the higher regions to which he has ascended would descend to integrate his whole being with the new height he has scaled. Sri Aurobindo in 1926 reached the Overmind of the gods and the descent of the Overmind began in him down to his very physical. This was a turning point in his yoga and at this point, he thought it necessary to withdraw into his room and into total silence so that the further ascent to the Supermind and descent of that world would be accelerated. He called all the disciples and announced to them that henceforth Mother would take full charge of the Ashram and he would live in retirement. Mother heard for the first time that this new responsibility was conferred on her and she had been installed officially as Mother. Sri Aurobindo did not consult her prior to the declaration nor did he inform her of his intention. She too heard the news for the first time along with the disciples.

Mother had an energy unheard of even in spiritual history. Her energy was overflowing throughout the day and night. It was so great that she could never go to sleep. In fact, there was no bed in her room. Until she was 80, she used to rest for one or two hours after midnight in her easy chair. Once she asked for some work to be kept ready by her side, because during that short rest she sometimes woke up when the ananda inside was very intense. Unless it was expressed in action, its excess turned into pain. A stack of birthday cards was kept beside her so that she could sign them.

From 1920 she started organising Sri Aurobindo Ashram efficiently. She had to start with lessons in keeping material things and books in proper order and proceed up to the full Integral Yoga. For years Mother did the cooking for the sadhaks herself and also served them food. Until the Ashram grew to the size of 150 sadhaks, Mother says she held their inner and outer movements within her control as if in an eggshell. Perhaps no one could think without Mother knowing their thoughts. Those were the days when discipline was at its height to the point that even friendship among sadhaks was considered dangerous.

Henry Ford, the automobile king, heard of Mother and wanted to meet her. On the eve of his departure, World War II broke out and prevented his coming to India. The daughter of Woodrow Wilson, the US President, came to the Ashram in the 20's and chose to remain there for the rest of her life. A friend of John F. Kennedy took interest in Mother and examined in depth the philosophy and yoga of Sri Aurobindo. He met Mother and asked her what were the external signs by which one could discern the attainment of Supermind in a person. His question was reminiscent of Arjuna asking Sri Krishna on the battlefield, "How does a realised person sit, walk and speak?" Mother explained to him the three conditions which would reveal the attainment of the Supramental

consciousness and told him that of the three, equality was the most significant. The visitor arranged for Kennedy to visit Mother, but it could not take place. Mother's plan for Auroville was presented to Khrushchev while he was in power. He felt the idea of Auroville was something worth the support of his government.

When Nehru visited Pondicherry, he commented that Pondicherry was saturated with peace, little knowing that it was the peace of Mother and Sri Aurobindo. He visited the Ashram school and was enamoured of the children and their sports. During his next visit to Pondicherry, the Ashram was not included. Not knowing that, Nehru inquired when he would be visiting the Ashram school. Hurried arrangements were made for his visit to the school and meeting Mother. During his first visit to Mother at the playground, he was accompanied by Shastri, Indira and Kamaraj. Shastri and Indira became the subsequent Prime Ministers and Kamaraj presided over their elections.

In 1971 Indira was in a political turmoil because of the split in the Congress organisation. Her government had lost its majority and on important occasions in the Parliament she relied on the support of the opposition group, DMK. She had ordered interim elections but thought she would be lucky if she could muster 250 seats in the Lok Sabha. It was at that time friendly advice brought her the suggestion that if she sought Mother's support, her political and legislative uncertainty would end. Indira heeded the advice and came to Pondicherry to meet Mother. Her prayer was for 250 Lok Sabha seats. Mother smiled broadly, nodded her head vigorously and granted the prayer made through her cabinet colleague Nandini. Electoral victory was a landslide win. An Indira wave swept across the nation giving her 356 seats and the coveted two-thirds majority required to amend the constitution. Mother never gives what is asked for. She always gives much more than what is prayed for. Sri Aurobindo in his Hymn to the Mother of Radiances says, "You have revealed to me more than I ignorantly asked for." Mother smothers her devotees with a copious shower of her grace.

During the days of Sri Aurobindo, Mother used to go out to the Ashram departments, and even to several other places in Pondicherry. Occasionally she visited Cuddalore, Chidambaram and Tanjore. When the furniture in Sri Aurobindo's room was to be replaced, Mother herself went to a timber depot in Cuddalore O.T. to choose the right material in teak and rosewood. She once visited the Chidambaram temple and a *Saivite* Mutt in Tanjore district.

She wore saris and about 500 saris accumulated with her. Several devotees coming from outside wished to possess one of her saris. A senior sadhak persuaded Mother to part with two of her saris and gave one to an industrialist devotee. The other also was taken away. When Mother received a lakh of rupees as offering from one, she called all the sadhikas and distributed her saris, laden with the Divine Mother's consciousness, and exhausted her sari treasury.

It was reported by the astronauts that they saw a large ball of white light on the shores of the Bay of Bengal. When this was told to Mother, she commented that they had seen the light of Sri Aurobindo over the ashram and recollected her own seeing it as a column of white light.

Mother had a special rapport with flowers. She has given names to 800 flowers basing herself on their spiritual significance. She says flowers have feelings of pride, vanity and sensitivity. For

instance, roses do not like to be placed in a vase along with other flowers. When kept alone, they rise in stature and look around with pride.

Mother and Sri Aurobindo participated in the affairs of the earth and the universe according to the mission and the work they were doing. When it was clear that the Second World War was inevitable, they saw the Lord of Nations leading Hitler on and urging him to conquer the world with very tall promises. The Lord of Nations, it was said, appeared before Hitler in a dazzling light in shining white armour and gave him detailed advice. Sri Aurobindo called this war, "Mother's war." He used to send his spiritual force in support of the Allies and eagerly awaited the results of individual battles. At every important turning point of the war, Sri Aurobindo took great interest. At the famous Dunkirk battle where the British troops were miraculously saved, it was reported that the fog in the atmosphere served the British navy well. Sri Aurobindo used to refer to that with a smile as the 'mysterious fog'. When Hitler was gaining success after success and Mother was trying in the opposite direction, she said the shining being who was guiding Hitler used to come to the Ashram from time to time to see what was happening. Things changed from bad to worse. Mother decided on a fresh strategy. She took on the appearance of that shining being, appeared before Hitler and advised him to attack Russia. On her way back to the Ashram, she met that being. The being was intrigued by Mother having stolen a march over him. Hitler's attack on Russia ensured his downfall.

Mother came to know of her previous births on several occasions. In past lives Mother was Queen Elizabeth of England, Catherine of Russia, Joan of Arc, an Egyptian Queen, and the mother of Moses, among others. In France, she once visited the palace of Louis XIV. A portrait attracted her and she realised that it was herself. She recollected several other details of that life. In a museum Mother came across a special comb used by an Egyptian Queen. Mother recognised it as one she had used.

She had live contacts with several gods. Durga used to come to Mother's meditations regularly. Particularly during the *Durga Puja* when Mother gave Darshan, Durga used to come a day in advance. On one occasion, Mother explained to Durga the significance of surrender to the Supreme. Durga said because she herself was a goddess, it never struck her that she should surrender to a higher power. Mother showed Durga the progress she could make by surrendering to the Supreme. Durga was agreeable and offered her surrender to the Divine.

Mother saw in her meditation some Chinese people had reached Calcutta and recognised the danger of that warning. Using her occult divine power, she removed the danger from the subtle realms. Much later when the Chinese army was edging closer to India's border, a shocked India did not know which way to turn. The Chinese decided on their own to withdraw, much to the world's surprise. Mother had prevented them from advancing against India by cancelling their power in the subtle realms.

Mother once smelt a bad odour but could not identify it. She neutralised its effect anyway in the plane where she smelled it. A little later an army officer from the Himalayas who came to seek

Mother's Blessings reported the explosion of an atom bomb by the Chinese and prayed to Mother to protect India. India was protected fully.

Sri Aurobindo passed away in 1950. In 1959 Mother saw him in the subtle physical plane for the first time. From then onwards Mother regularly met Sri Aurobindo in the subtle physical.

Mother has recorded her prayers during the first decade of this century and they are published as *Prayers and Meditations*. In one of those prayers she explains how she saw herself in her meditation. She found herself a being of light with all the subtle nervous centers -- *chakras* -- revealing themselves. In place of the head there was a moon and above it was a sun. She explains that she withdrew from the surface eight levels to reach this stage at the ninth. It took her nine stages in the reverse to regain her ordinary consciousness.

2. Sri Aurobindo

Born on August 15, 1872 in Calcutta and educated in England, Sri Aurobindo came back to India with only one aim: liberating India from the foreign yoke. His father was a doctor who never wanted his three sons to inherit anything of the Indian culture, including their mother tongue Bengali. He admitted all his sons into an English school in Darjeeling from where they were taken to England and put in St. Paul's and later Cambridge. Sri Aurobindo was of a unique mould. Darjeeling and its British atmosphere were not a source of pride for him. Instead he had a vision of a dark force entering him which remained until he returned to India about 20 years later. He was meant for the Indian Civil Service, but his anti-British feeling did not allow him to serve the British masters. By absenting himself from the compulsory horse-riding test, Sri Aurobindo disqualified himself from the I.C.S.

The Maharaja of Baroda was looking for an administrator for his state and spotted in Sri Aurobindo a suitable candidate. It was thus Sri Aurobindo landed in Baroda, served the state, taught in the college and returned to Bengal. India was in a ferment. Sri Aurobindo organised the youth under the Congress and voiced radical ideas from several journals he contributed to. Their nationalist activities embraced founding a journal "Vandemataram", founding a National College, worshipping Kali, and experimenting with several ideas as well as procuring chemicals with which bombs were made. Sri Aurobindo did not believe in terrorism, even though he was a radical to the core. The British police arrested him and clapped him in Alipore jail, implicating him in a bomb throwing case.

When his brother came down with a severe hill fever, Sri Aurobindo watched as a Naga *Sanyasi* chanted a mantra, crossed a cup of water with a knife and gave it to his brother. The fever vanished. Sri Aurobindo was interested in acquiring such a power to liberate India from the British domination. In pursuit of this goal, he approached several yogis for help. What he got in return was a silent mind, *advaitic* realisation and the vision of the Cosmic divine.

He sought the help of Vishnu Lele, a Maharashtrian Yogi. The yogi accepted Sri Aurobindo and offered to initiate him into silence. "Sit down, close your eyes. You will see thoughts entering your mind from outside. Refuse them entry," he said to Sri Aurobindo. Sri Aurobindo did so and found Lele's words to be true. He could, after considerable effort, reject the thoughts. In three days Sri Aurobindo succeeded in establishing silence in his mind. To Lele this was unbelievable, since success in this experiment would normally be achieved only after several years. As Sri Aurobindo was an avatar, a great yogic realisation came to him in a few days. So also, later the yogic attainment of Nirvana, the hallmark of a great avatar, came to him. While in Alipore Jail, he used to be visited by Swami Vivekananda in his meditation. The swami guided Sri Aurobindo's yoga and helped him to scale great heights. It was there Sri Aurobindo saw the convicts, jailers, policemen, the prison bars, the trees, the judge, the lawyer etc., as *Narayana*. Sri Aurobindo saw compassion, honesty and charity in the hearts of murderers.

After Sri Aurobindo was found innocent in the trial, his inner voice instructed him to go to Chandranagore, a French territory. The same voice led him to Pondicherry later. His heart was burning with one passion, the release of Mother India. God held a parley with him and told him that Indian freedom was assured and accomplished in the subtle plane. God had another work assigned to Sri Aurobindo. To accomplish that work on earth, He was commanding Sri Aurobindo to go to Pondicherry. During the trial Sri Aurobindo was prompted to help the lawyer with facts, opinions, etc., but his inner voice advised him to desist from giving advice to the lawyer. "The case is in my hands, do not interfere, keep quiet" was the dictum that was whispering from inside. Now, after the trial and release, Sri Aurobindo's impulse was in the direction of the freedom movement. God had to interfere with Sri Aurobindo's preference and insist on his fulfilling god's other mission.

Sri Aurobindo arrived in Pondicherry in 1910. Following him a few of his associates arrived. Sri Aurobindo was examining his God-given mission and was contemplating the best possible course for him to follow. With the Inner Guide leading silently, Sri Aurobindo mapped out his yogic course and fixed its landmarks.

Liberation, *moksha*, came to him earlier but he did not accept it. Obviously that was not his course or goal. God's intention was different. God intended Sri Aurobindo to become a pure Divine Instrument that would hasten the descent of the Divine into earthly life making it Divine Life. In sum, the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo is as follows:

When moksha is accepted, the yogi leaves the Earth, which remains in misery. The yogi who attains moksha for himself must renounce the world. He must endeavour to bring the high heavens into the daily life of humanity and all life on earth. To accomplish that mission the yoga cannot be partial. It has to be integral. The yogi cannot exclude life or even the body from his yogic purification. It is not the Divine intention that the embodied soul should seek release from the cycle of birth and death. The embodied soul should seek total release from falsehood and ego in all parts of its being and, rising into the higher worlds of Spirit, bring down the spiritual force and truth to life on earth, so that death, suffering and disease can be abolished forever.

In the context of Indian yogic tradition this is an adventure and a departure from the tradition. Sri Aurobindo developed new terminology to explain the tenets of his yoga, which he called Integral Yoga or Purna Yoga. All this acquired special and full significance when Mother arrived. She was keen on a plan of action and had her own original ideas for redeeming the earth from falsehood. Sri Aurobindo and Mother shared their approaches and finally arrived at the future course of action.

If creation as a whole is considered, the lower part is of life and mind and body, while the higher part is of Spirit. The spiritual part is known as Satchidananda, which is comprised of Sat above and Ananda below with Chit in the middle. Mind rises so high as to include the worlds of gods. Between mind's highest reach, which is above the gods, and the spiritual worlds of Satchidananda lies a zone which is known to our *rishis* as *vijnana loka*. Sri Aurobindo calls this, in his own phraseology, Supermind and the supramental world. He calls the home of the gods Overmind. Mother was of the opinion that the power of the overmental world would serve the aim of their yoga, namely the abolition of death, falsehood and suffering. Sri Aurobindo explained to her that in the overmental world Truth was not self-existent. Overmind could build a partial world of truth uniting all available truths and excluding ignorance. Should the power of this world descend on earth, a great transformation would occur, but it would still leave a base of ignorance, which means the body would be left untouched. In the Supermind, Truth is self-existent. The Truth of Supermind can penetrate ignorance and reach its basis of truth (nothing on earth can exist without a seed of Truth) and unite all such truths and build upon them. The body and its unconscious base would not yield to the overmental force, but could not resist the onslaught of the supramental truth. Sri Aurobindo also showed her that Krishnavatar already came from overmind. Mother saw the profundity of Sri Aurobindo's experience and gave up her preference. In 1926 the overmental force descended into the mind, vital and very physical depths of Sri Aurobindo. After that momentous victory, he retired to win further laurels in the yogic adventure.

From 1926 to 1950 Sri Aurobindo lived in complete retirement and total silence, constantly raising himself to the level of the Supermind. Even his experience while in Alipore jail, of Narayana in the hearts of everyone, was a supramental experience according to Mother. As his yoga is one of ascent and descent, he had to raise himself first to the level of the *Muni* (higher mind) and wait for the force of that level to descend into him and reach down to the very physical after saturating his nerves and mind. According to Sri Aurobindo, each level of the ascent is followed by the descent of forces of that level, which integrates the experience of the sadhak i.e., fully illumines all parts of his being, viz. mind, vital (nerves) and physical. The next higher level is that of the *rishi* who is endowed with vision, *jnanadrishti*. Sri Aurobindo's description of this level is illumined mind. The yogi, who is above this, receives the divine intuition directly without the aid of sight, drishti or thought. The world of the gods, Shiva, Brahma, Vishnu, Indra, Lakshmi, Saraswati, Narada, Ganesh, etc., is known to us as *Swar* or *swarloka*. Sri Aurobindo calls this world the overmind. These levels of muni, rishi, yogi and the gods belong to the lower hemisphere of creation. The higher hemisphere begins with *vijnana*, the supramental world. It is followed by ananda loka, chit loka and sat loka. Creation ends with this. Outside creation is the Absolute, the Transcendent, the unmanifested Divine.

In 1926, the overmental force descended into Sri Aurobindo on all levels. After that he was engaged in the yogic adventure of raising his being to the supramental world and bringing the power of that world into the earth through the instrumentation of his own body. Before 1950, he accomplished this feat fully. His yoga was realised. The high heavens were reached. They had answered the **CALL** of humanity represented by Sri Aurobindo. The **FORCE** was ready to move from its origin, descend on earth and abolish death and suffering.

Sri Aurobindo saw at this point that the transformation of the earth presupposed one other condition. He saw the Golden Light of the supramental world when he left the blue light of the overmind. If the Golden Light were to remain on earth forever after the descent, it would require about ten yogis who had realised Supermind fully. At the time of Sri Aurobindo's realisation that condition remained unfulfilled. Even if the power of Supermind descended through the *siddhi* of Sri Aurobindo, the light could not remain on earth. Sri Aurobindo needed another ten accomplished yogis. They were not there. He spoke to Mother and said one of them had to leave the earth and continue the yoga from the subtle plane to expedite the **ADVENT**. Mother offered to go. He showed her the unique constitution of her body which alone could accomplish the transformation at the physical level. He decided to withdraw and continue his work from the subtle plane.

In 1956, Sri Aurobindo's work from the subtle plane bore fruit. In 1950, he had offered his own body to the descending supramental light as a fit receptacle. At the time he left his body, the Golden Light invaded it and remained there for three full days. All the other yogic powers he had gathered, he deposited in Mother before he withdrew from his body. In six years, Sri Aurobindo's work prepared the Earth Consciousness as a whole to receive the supramental force, power and light. During the meditation in the playground on February 29, 1956, Mother saw Her subtle body enlarging to the size of the universe and becoming golden. Before her appeared a massive golden door and beside her was an equally massive golden hammer. With one blow Mother smashed the door, the curtain between earth and the golden supramental heavens. Floods of living light of golden colour poured down onto earth. Earth realised the Supermind. Instantaneously, the *tamas*, the inertia of the earth rose up in equally great floods and swallowed up the descending Grace. Following this great event, Divine Love descended on earth in 1962. The Supramental force advanced in 1967 by manifesting itself in the earth consciousness. Again on January 1st, 1969 the force further evolved and became superman consciousness and appeared before The Mother. Mother says that since its advent in 1956, the force is effectively determining the course of earthly events. The diffusion of the Cuban crisis and the inexplicable withdrawal of the Chinese from the Indian border took place because of the presence of this force. She also says children born after 1962 have greater receptivity to this force.

Sri Aurobindo received a visitor in Pondicherry who introduced himself as a lawyer from Madras that had been asked by Chittaranjan Das of Calcutta to meet Sri Aurobindo. He was the great nationalist S. Duraiswamy Aiyer, a friend of Mahatma Gandhiji. There was nothing to be transacted and Sri Aurobindo wondered why Duraiswamy had called on him. But Duraiswamy repeated his call after some time, this time ostensibly to consult Sri Aurobindo on legal matters. Saying he was no

lawyer, Sri Aurobindo declined to evince interest in the consultation. On the insistence of the visitor Sri Aurobindo agreed to listen. The lawyer opened his file and Sri Aurobindo put his finger on some point and said that would be helpful. Duraisamy explained that it was an important case and the client had promised a lakh of rupees in fees should he win. During his next visit, Duraiswamy explained how he won the case on the strength of Sri Aurobindo's advice and offered him the lakh of rupees fees he had received. Sri Aurobindo said he had no use for money and refused to accept it. Duraiswamy's feeling was that the fees should go to Sri Aurobindo as the case had been won on the strength of his advice. The lawyer was not one who could accept a 'NO' even from Sri Aurobindo. With the insistent visitor unwilling to take a 'NO', Sri Aurobindo called Mother and asked for her opinion. As a compromise she agreed to accept Rs.10,000.

Later Sri Duraiswamy joined the Ashram as a sadhak. Mother said he had been a French King in one of his previous births. It is an unspoken tradition in Pondicherry from the days of the colonial regime that the rulers of the settlement kept close contact with the Ashram. Almost all the Governors had met Mother. A speaker of the Goa Assembly was once posted as Governor here. Contrary to the tradition, he maintained little contact with the Ashram. After a year or two, he broke his habit and started visiting the samadhi of Sri Aurobindo regularly on Sundays punctually at 10 a.m. The Governor's sudden change of mind intrigued observers. His own friends sought an explanation from him. He said Sri Aurobindo had appeared in his dream once and since then he had changed his mind.

While on earth great souls behave in strange fashions that baffle the human intellect. Thinkers dwell on such points and discover the greatness of the personality that is otherwise lost. Thieves entered Sri Ramanashram and finding no valuables there sought out the chief 'culprit'. They questioned the Maharishi why there were no valuables for them to steal. In the process the Maharishi was beaten by the rogues. His disciples rushed to the rescue of their master to prevent this heinous crime. Maharishi, in his own inimitable fashion declared, "Do not interfere. Let them continue. They are doing their puja to me!" Certainly the human mind is not constituted to decipher this mystery. In the early days of Sri Aurobindo Ashram, a bread delivery boy was found to have stolen Rs.5 and was beaten by the disciples. Sri Aurobindo heard the noise from the next room, came out, asked his disciples not to beat the boy, and ordered them to 'return' the Rs.5 to the boy. Strange are the ways of great men.

Sri Aurobindo gave up nationalism and the freedom movement at the behest of the inner voice. The British government, which had not heard Sri Aurobindo's inner voice, hounded him up to 1937 fearing that he was a great potential danger to the stability of the Royal Crown. Five times, attempts were made to kidnap Sri Aurobindo and take him to British territory. Through the most strange ways of the Almighty, each time the thugs who consented to this heinous crime fell out among themselves and ended in mutual killing. Once it was a highly placed politician who was anxious to oblige the British authorities. He was shot dead in his own house by a relative before he could lay his hands upon Sri Aurobindo.

Rabindranath Tagore came to see Sri Aurobindo. During his 24 year silence, Sri Aurobindo had broken the rule a few times to meet visitors. Tagore was one of them. He came and saw Sri Aurobindo resplendent with the supramental energy. Tagore wanted Europe to know of Sri Aurobindo's yoga and his work. Before he left he pronounced, "The word is with you."

Several Nobel Laureates have commented on Sri Aurobindo's magnum opus *The Life Divine*. Some said he was the foremost thinker of mankind. Times Literary Supplement of London said that Sri Aurobindo wrote as if he was planted amid the stars. His major works are (1) *The Life Divine*, a philosophical exposition of his yoga and ideal; (2) *The Synthesis of Yoga*, where he explains his yoga from the point of view of knowledge, works, love and self-perfection; (3) *The Ideal of Human Unity*, a treatise on the course of the world's historic currents; (4) *The Human Cycle*, his thoughts on human social evolution; (5) *Savitri*, an epic poem of 12 books with the story of Satyavan and Savitri as its core; (6) *The Future Poetry*; (7) *The Foundations of Indian Culture*; and other writings running into 23 more volumes.

A French writer commented that Sri Aurobindo was the only writer in the history of world literature who had started writing all of his five major works simultaneously and finished them within five years.

His writings embrace all subjects on earth right from the composition of the atom down to the most mundane subject of cruelty to animals. Mother says that in his writings she saw intuition pouring down from above and saturating his thoughts and language.

A short time before Sri Aurobindo arrived in Pondicherry, a yogi from Tamil Nadu said that an *uttara yogi* would be coming to Tamil Nadu soon and he could be recognized by the three famous declarations he had made. He said that yogi was coming here for great yogic accomplishments. The three madresses Sri Aurobindo described in his letter to his wife were considered to be the three declarations, and Sri Aurobindo was recognised in those days as the *uttara yogi* that had been prophesied.

Sri Aurobindo was known in the Ashram as the rebirth of Napoleon. Napoleon's birthday was also August 15th. In his previous births, it was believed he was Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Krishna and many other persons too. Someone asked Sri Aurobindo whether he had been Shakespeare as well, but could not elicit an answer.

Mother spoke to Shiva and Krishna requesting them to incarnate in the body of Sri Aurobindo to expedite his yoga. Mother said Shiva declined the invitation and said he would come after the advent of the Supermind. Mother succeeded with Krishna who agreed. She said she saw with her own eyes Krishna entering into Sri Aurobindo's body. When she reported it to Sri Aurobindo, he evinced no interest in it. In another context, Sri Aurobindo said he did not want his work to be limited by the gods.

Sri Aurobindo said that the world forces had always fulfilled his will, sooner or later.

After he attained samadhi, his body was laid on his bed. It was kept thus for over four days, almost five days. Over 100,000 people had *Darshan of the Master*. The Golden Light slowly entered his body and stayed there for three full days, then gradually withdrew. On those days, Mother said she 'saw' him sitting on his bed -- of course the body was lying flat on the bed -- fully supramental and golden.

Before his complete retirement in 1926, Sri Aurobindo used to meet those who came to see him in the evening when he met his disciples and answered their questions. There were two exceptions. S. Srinivasa Iyengar, who later became the President of the All India Congress, and the Tamil poet *Subramania Bharathi*. They would go to him at any time of the day for a consultation. Sri Aurobindo studied the Vedas with Bharathi. He did some translations of the *Divya Prabhandam* with the assistance from Bharathi. Bharathi's entire period at Pondicherry was one of great inspiration.

A minister of culture in the French cabinet visited Pondicherry and was introduced to Sri Aurobindo's thought. He fully appreciated it and proposed that an Indo-French Cultural Institute be founded with Sri Aurobindo as President.

Peace and silence are said to be the very body of the transcendent Divine. Yogis receive them at different levels according to the type of yoga they do and according to the goals they set themselves. Ramana Maharshi was known to be an ocean of Peace. The depth of peace in a sadhak depends upon the height from which he receives it and the depths in his own being where he integrates it.

Though the force Sri Aurobindo used was from the Supermind, because his being was in direct contact with the transcendent whose intention he was trying to realise in the universe and the earth, peace descended into him from the transcendent unmanifest levels of the Divine. His purna yoga opened all parts of his being down to the physical to the incoming force. The peace that descended from the transcendent heights seeped down into the very depths of his being in the physical body. Hence its intensity as found in him was of the greatest dimension.

One day when a cyclone was raging, Mother went to his room to shut the windows so that rain water would not come in and spoil the room. To her utter astonishment she found neither the raging wind nor the rain had found entry into the Master's room. What ruled there was his solid supramental peace. To her greater surprise, she found him sitting at his table next to a window lost in writing and unaware of the storm outside.

During the period of transfer of power to India from Britain, the Princely states were in a turmoil since each state was supposed to take its own decision whether to join India or Pakistan or to remain independent. In Mysore, there was a commotion and the Maharaja was undecided. He sought an interview with Sri Aurobindo hoping to get some good counsel as well as the blessings of the yogi. The Maharaja was very much aware of his royal position and was not aware of Sri Aurobindo's yoga or its power and expression. Sri Aurobindo assented to the request and asked the Maharaja to come on August 15. The Maharaja on his arrival was unable to comprehend the affairs when he realised he was to have a Darshan of the Master by going in the queue. All that passed the royal comprehension. Sri Aurobindo in deference to the situation suggested the Maharaja could

come at the head of the queue. Mother and Bhagavan silently blessed the troubled soul of the royal house and finished with him in a few minutes. After the Darshan the royal personage found his nerves in ecstasy, his mind in a daze, his being steeped in eternal peace. He was scarcely able to walk steadily. His disappointment at the short interview melted away. The one thing that was bothering him all the while -- the affairs of Mysore -- now no longer bothered him. When he returned to Mysore, he found that the bother disappeared in real life as it had done from his mind and nerves at the Darshan.

1) SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM

When Mother joined Sri Aurobindo, there were about a dozen or more people around Him. Six years later in 1926, she founded the Ashram in his name around the time He withdrew completely. It was Mother's dream from the beginning of the century that there should be a place on earth where MAN could devote all his energies to seek the Divine without having to work for food and shelter. In founding Sri Aurobindo Ashram, She was trying to create such a place. Mother and Sri Aurobindo have said that they had been on earth since the beginning of creation and at every critical juncture of the earth's evolution they have intervened and played a crucial role. Addressing the children of the Ashram school, Mother once said that everyone in the Ashram had been with her in previous births and in those births had prayed to her that they must be with her at the time of Divine fulfilment of the earth. That was why they were there in the Ashram. Sri Aurobindo said that this is the Hour of God when the awakened soul can accomplish in a short time what would normally take centuries in other periods. The Ashram was founded in an atmosphere of such beliefs. Mother also said that if anything new should take place on earth, it should first happen in the Ashram. In short, Mother conceived of the Ashram as a micro-unit of the world. It is her philosophy that earth is a micro unit of the universe. By extension, the Ashram is a representative pioneer of the future world.

Conceived thus, she organised the ashram accordingly. She was a pre-eminent disciplinarian fused with the Mother in her. Organisation had a premier value in her scheme of things. Nothing was too low even as nothing was too sacred for her. She herself came to cook for the sadhaks and served them their food. She began teaching sadhaks how to keep the books orderly and neat and clean!

Her rule was everyone should rise at 3 a.m. She herself would come to the balcony at 6.15 a.m. to infuse into the sadhaks the necessary spiritual inspiration for the day's work. Again she would meet all of them in the forenoon for another blessing. In the evening she went to the playground, took the salute at the march past and blessed them all once more with her Grace. Meditation was of secondary importance to her. She even declared that work done in the right spirit made one progress more than meditation. She could not conceive of two different lives, one ordinary and the other a spiritual life. To her all life is spiritual, one less organised and the other more centrally focussed. She visited all the departments of the Ashram, discussed the work with the heads of the departments and evinced interest in the minutest detail. She saw that the descending force was finding expression in every little work, be it planting of a jasmine sapling or writing the presidential speech for the Indian Philosophy Congress.

Mother created a department for each activity and made the Ashram a mini-universe. She created the dining room, laundry, bakery, reception service, publication department, prosperity, press, auto workshop, key service, furniture service, homeopathy section, massage centre, playground, library, music room, photographic lab, embroidery division, art gallery, guest house, concrete casting factory, wood works, flower garden, restaurants, agarbathi department, handloom weaving, bindery and several others, totalling 52 departments in all. She created all these departments not so much because work needs to be done but because places were needed where work would be done as sadhana.

It is Mother's belief that a sadhak's soul is very much on the surface, much more open and receptive, on his birthday. Man passes through a cycle of experience between two birthdays and on the birthday itself he is most open to the Divine influence. Therefore, Mother meets every sadhak on his birthday to saturate his soul with the Divine Grace and spiritually equip him for the rest of the year.

Work done here, the spiritual atmosphere in which it is done, directly leads to spiritual progress. For those who are not sadhaks but are simple devotees, this work has a beneficial effect on their careers and lives. A first class MA in mathematics was languishing in a small press for an unenviable salary during the war. A sadhak told him to resign that job and serve Mother in the dining room. After six months of service, he was recruited as an officer at four times his press salary by a newly floated automobile company where in the next 30 years he rose to the post next only to that of the chairman. That is the power of service to Mother.

What we call Ashram today appears to be a single building but really consists of four different buildings. This houses now the room where Sri Aurobindo did his silent tapas for 24 continuous years, the two rooms where Mother stayed in succession, the double-vaulted *samadhi*, the meditation hall, the fruit room, the reception service, the publication department, the safety vault, the garage for Mother's car, the Bulletin room, the reading room, etc. The jasmine at the entrance is over 60 years old. The tree that sheds its shade on the *samadhi* is called service tree.

At the entrance of the main building of the Ashram is a spacious hall for reception. The office of the reception service is in the room next to this hall on the west. Inside the hall on the eastern side three photographs of Sri Aurobindo are kept. In the middle is the photo taken of him at a young age. On either side are the photos taken when he attained samadhi. Mother had attached significance to the photo of early days. No one knows the reason for the significance. When a sadhak made pranams to this photo and got up, he saw Sri Aurobindo coming out alive from the photo. When this was reported to Mother, She commented that it was a powerful photograph of Sri Aurobindo.

There are as many aspects to Mother's conduct of the Ashram as there are aspects in the universal life. Not all come to our attention. Nor do we fully understand the true significance even when it catches our attention.

An Ashram department purchased a sophisticated machine from London and once it went out of order. The department contacted the supplier firm and awaited the engineers to come and attend to the repair. In the meantime, they suspended a few operations and carried on certain minor

operations so that the part in disrepair would not be disturbed. One morning when the sadhak in charge of the machine opened the room, he found someone cleaning the machine and was taken aback. He saw a figure about two feet tall. When he mentioned it to his colleagues, doubts were raised in their minds about the man's soundness of mind. Not desiring to evoke laughter, he stopped mentioning the topic. But he continued to see the figure at the machine on subsequent days. He solved the problem for himself by knocking at the door before opening it. The engineers from London arrived, examined the machine, heard the history of its breakdown but were surprised to know the machine was being used. They asked for a demonstration and it was given. They opened the part that was broken and saw it was in several pieces. Normally in that condition the machine could not move an inch. They reported it to Mother, including the presence of the small being. Mother explained there were several benevolent beings in the atmosphere taking care of Her people and materials.

There is spiritual peace in the Ashram. It is not only there. Every article coming from the Ashram carries that peace, even though it is a book or even a brick. A business executive came to a rest house on one of the Ashram farms and was struck by the peace that prevailed there. He could appreciate the peace in the rest house and exclaimed that if peace, which he had not found in the hundreds of temples he had visited, was there in the rest house, how much more pronounced would it be at the main Ashram.

An orthodox man came to Pondicherry in connection with his official duties. He visited the Ashram out of general interest and had his lunch in the Ashram dining room. After the meal was over, he thought of taking *paan* and tobacco as usual. In his orthodoxy he had made an exception for *paan*. A new sensation in his stomach diverted his attention from the *paan* and he began to think aloud. "Constant travel necessitated by inspection duties and continuous hotel food had spoiled my digestion and stomach. After a meal, I used to have an uneasy sensation for some time. I have come to live with that. Today I have a new, different feeling. Food sits pleasantly in my stomach. My usual uneasiness is not there. Perhaps it is *Mother's prasad* that cured my disorder in the stomach. Let me not take tobacco, at least, today."

The atmosphere of the Ashram is very pronounced. It cannot be missed or mistaken. Even walking on the roads adjoining it, one can feel it. Generally it is full of peace. But in truth the atmosphere carries peace, silence, joy and delight. One feels a sudden elevation in the atmosphere. Someone said, "Blindfold me and take me to several places in Pondicherry. I shall tell you when I come to the precincts of the Ashram."

A man of about 70 was intrigued by several youngsters taking serious interest in the Ashram. Out of curiosity, he came there one day. Being an old man, he took notice of sadhaks of his age. Their health and vigour struck him. He exclaimed, "It is unbelievable that aged people in the Ashram walk erect without a walking stick." Essentially, this is a yoga that aims at conquering death, disease and suffering. Sri Aurobindo says a first realisation is prolongation of life at will. It is natural that the sadhaks enjoy a sound health not comparable with others. When someone takes to Mother,

automatically he gets a longer lease of life than was sanctioned at birth. That boon is part of the Ashram.

An adventurous young man from the Ashram undertook a tour of the Himalayas. He heard of a famous yogi and went to see him in a cave. The yogi was stark naked and was seated on a tiger skin. He told the boy, "You come from an Ashram near the sea and in that Ashram they are doing something difficult and new." Mother was struck by the sincerity of the yogi who could know what was going on here and the genuine frankness with which he acknowledged it.

There was a government officer in Madras who was a devout worshipper of *Shakti*. By his pure devotion he had acquired several powers and hence a reputation among his friends. Once he commented about the Ashram and the unique work that was attempted there and prophesied that it would become internationally known. He also predicted that the Chinese invasion would end. It might be, he added, on their own initiative.

Some Indologists were pursuing a line of research to fathom the historical circumstances surrounding Rishi Agastya and his stay in Tamil Nadu in ancient days. Their research led them to believe that the very spot where Sri Aurobindo Ashram is situated today was the spot where Sage Agastya's hermitage once stood.

We said earlier that the Ashram represents the future achievements of the earth as a pioneer and as a microcosm. By the same token, Mother says the Ashram represents and embodies all the present difficulties of the universe. If those knots are loosened here, humanity would be freed in those aspects.

Occasionally ardent devotees in their early enthusiasm insist on joining the Ashram in spite of Mother's refusal or unwillingness. Mother relented in certain cases and admitted them. On joining the Ashram, they found their inner urges got out of hand and reared their rebellious heads. Not able to handle the situation they reversed their decision. Mother says each ashramite represents one possibility in the universe along with one difficulty. It is for the sadhak to throw his inner yogic weight on the side of the possibility and against the difficulty. In doing so, Mother comes to the individual's support. Work done for Mother purifies his physical depths and removes the difficulty, bringing the possibility to fruition. That is yogic progress. In handling the inner difficulty, the aspirants' part is to take the right side and refuse to allow the wrong side expression. This is the right attitude. Given the right attitude, Mother handles the power and strength of the rebellious material and wipes it out. Man by himself cannot conquer those vibrations. When Mother says that the sadhak's part is only surrender and the yoga itself will be done by her, this is what she means. In the later days after Sri Aurobindo's passing away and particularly after her own retirement, she did not encourage people to join the Ashram. In fact, after 1970, she advised a foreigner to do her yoga from where she was and not join the Ashram. She also explained that joining the Ashram at that stage might help the inner difficulties surface in an unmanageable way.

3. Auroville

It was Mother's dream to create a place where MAN could seek the Divine without having to dredge for food and shelter. It was in fulfilment of this dream that she founded Sri Aurobindo Ashram for those who dedicated themselves to Yoga. With the same underlying principle and the same actuating aspiration Mother founded **AUROVILLE** --*town of Sri Aurobindo*-- for those who have not taken to yoga as their main ideal in life. Auroville is an international city meant for those whose ideal is to live according to truth. The ideal caught the attention of the Soviet leader Khrushchev, but before he could take concrete interest in the project his political career took a different turn.

Mother was no believer in religion. She was fond of saying that the time for religions was over and the future belonged to spirituality.

The city has, in the conception of the initial architects, several zones with roads on which automobiles are prohibited. The soul of Auroville is Matrimandir or 'Mother's temple'. Matrimandir is constructed as a sphere that houses in its centre a meditation hall. The construction is uniquely arranged so that sunlight enters the building during all hours of the day through a small hole in the roof. At the time of the foundation in 1968 an urn of lotus bud shape was constructed, into which earth from all nations of the world was deposited by youth from each nation.

Mother's conception of the city and life there includes several features. Money has no role to play in Auroville. Cars are banned. No administration with authority over the lives of the members is created. No one is appointed as the head or leader whom all should obey. Each member is to be guided by his inner light only. Any structure of authority that is created is to be functional and not to have legal or administrative power vested in it.

One main reason Mother had in mind in founding Auroville was that the city must be a symbol of human unity and thus prevent the next world war by its very presence on earth. She even declared that as long as Auroville existed, no war would break out. Human tendencies of pugnacity, competition, spite, jealousy, rivalry are bound to surface in a cosmopolitan place where hundreds of men and women gather and live. Their daily lives offer thousands of occasions for human interactions. Mother wanted those innumerable occasions to become the anvil on which human nature would consent to be beaten into a divine shape. If in Auroville Man shapes himself anew in the image of the Divine and endeavours to transform his own human nature into Divine nature, life on earth would gently turn to the Divine. This was Mother's intention. She even said that Auroville was a field of experimentation, not an exhibition of already accomplished perfection.

It was Mother's way to name the different communities in Auroville as **peace, harmony, aspiration**, etc.

The spiritual atmosphere in the city is very powerful and unmistakable. No one can miss it. It is easy to imagine what amount of uncertainties would loom large in the life of a city where there is no central authority, no fixed provision of income, no one enjoys property rights, no one has any say

over anyone else. Every day must dawn in Divine Grace and be lived in faith and grace. Still, people who visit the place are powerfully attracted to live there. To a visitor's query, an Aurovillian doing duty at the Indian pavilion, Bharat Nivas, answered, "Nothing is certain here, but everything works." More than the comment of the man, the visitor was struck by the Aurovillian's sparkling face expressing the inner light.

Auroville was founded in 1968. A regular visitor to the Ashram in 1960 was crossing a road junction and suddenly noticed the figures of Mother and Sri Aurobindo in the distance. The splendour of the vision was great and so real that he lost himself totally. A few days later when the devotee was crossing the same spot the vision recurred. Only then he took notice of the spot on the road where he had had the same vision miles away in the sky. He could make nothing of it, even though it made him grateful to Mother for the *Darshan* in the subtle plane. Several years later when Auroville was founded, he understood that the spot of his vision was the future site of the city.

Mother desired some exotic plants that would grow only in the Arctic region to be planted in Auroville. Seeing the question on the faces of the disciples, she explained that in future the climate would change and snow would fall in Auroville.

Having founded Auroville to prevent future wars, Mother was following the news of the stockpiling of armaments. She was sad and commented that the very accumulation would compel its masters to find a use for the weapons.

4. Health, Cure Of Diseases

Sri Aurobindo says that the body cures itself. He even says that doctors create disease and then cure it. The doctor is able to cure the patient more by the patient's faith in him than by his treatment. The body needs medicine for its cure because over the ages the body has become used to taking medicine and has come to believe in the medicine.

Sri Aurobindo and The Mother have cured hundreds of people who have prayed to them. Cancer, TB and diabetes are no exception. Several people who had lost their sight regained it by the Grace of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. Mother says when Sri Aurobindo's Grace acts, a hand of blue light goes to the diseased part and wipes out the disease. Mother's complaint is that the patient's faith in the disease (that it is an incurable one) impedes the effectiveness of the force.

Mother advises us to imagine a cocoon of white peace around us before we sleep. The cocoon ensures restful, good sleep. When we sleep like this, our sleep is replaced by a luminous peace. On waking up we feel as if we are coming out of *dhyana* (meditation).

Of the millions that suffer from various diseases, Mother says, one in a thousand is a real disease. Mother has a novel cure for any disease. The method involves speaking to the cells and removing the disease. She explains that cells are very conscious of what they are. Their being self-conscious is

a way of life with them. They go their way as long as we do not pay any attention to them. The moment you examine an aching part, she says, the cells receive the attention and respond fully. Their way of response is to increase the disease which brought them the first attention. If we show the ailing part to another person the cells enjoy the attention very much and increase the disease greatly. So, Mother's way of curing any disease is to speak to the cells directly, "You idiots, keep quiet, shut up." When repeated, the cells obey the order and give up the disease. I personally know several cases where disease was cured in this way.

Our tradition says that a disease can be cured by three methods: medicine, mantra or a gem. Each has its own process and differs in effectiveness. Cure by supramental force has the hallmark that the disease is unable to recur. Supramental Force not merely cures the disease, but dissolves the basis of the disease in consciousness. Whether it is karma or *svabhava* or a desire or whatever, the supramental force eliminates the basis and the disease has no further possibility of recurring.

5. Wealth

Sri Aurobindo said that three things were essential for Truth to reign on earth. They were governmental power, wealth and health. Regarding health, he said everything is known about it. Regarding the government, unless 'we' are the government, it is not possible to influence a government for our purpose. He said he did not understand how wealth could be secured for that. Mother took up the idea and meditated on it. She reached another world where the treasure of the earth was stored. Mother headed toward the central place where the treasure was kept, but at the entrance she found a black python on guard. She tried to walk past the guard, but it stopped her. Ordinarily, beings of any world obeyed Mother, but this was different from the usual. The python told Mother that he would be killed if she were allowed inside. Mother asked who could pass that entrance and what condition they should fulfil. The python answered that when the sex vibration had disappeared from the earth, the treasure would be given to earth.

In reply to an Aurovillian, Mother said to succeed in life one needs cleverness and to succeed in yoga one needs sincerity.

Money must be moving, must constantly be put to productive use, should never stagnate according to Mother. The more swiftly money moves, the greater is its inflow. About misers, Mother says they live near their wealth after their death.

Contrary to spiritual tradition, Sri Aurobindo says that money should not be neglected. At its origin money belongs to the Divine. If spiritual people shun money, the hostile forces would acquire it. Presently money is in the hands of the *asuras*. It must be won back for the Divine.

6. Life

People have understood that a rosy path leads to a nasty place in life. If one should succeed in life, he has to face trials and tribulations. Life is a field of struggle. Accomplishments in life are awarded to those who seek adventure. Naturally, a life of adventure is a life of struggle. This is the character of life the world knows.

Mother gives another dimension to life. Struggle ensues when the effort is aimed at a possibility of two types -- success or failure. Effort, when it moves towards a possibility of two types of success, is no longer a struggle but is enjoyable. Ordinarily Mother removes the possibility of failure from life and offers the alternatives of two types of success. She does not remove effort, but the struggle part of the effort is removed. This is true on a great majority of occasions. She does not eliminate failure altogether. She keeps the possibility of failure for the rare few whose destiny is for a far greater success than they are seeking for. Mother's award of failure is the passport to greater success. Human life is full of falsehood. It is the presence of falsehood that necessitates the struggle and keeps the possibility of failure around the corner. There is no scope for falsehood when one is working in Mother's consciousness. Therefore the struggle part is eliminated and the possibility of failure does not exist.

Mother summarises her yoga in terms of life. She says, to know God it is enough to come out of ordinary mind. The ordinary mind presides over life and pervades it. Living inside the ordinary mind, man faces struggle, the prospect of failure, and their entire brood of expectation, irritation, frustration, disappointment, pain, etc. Coming out of the ordinary mind, one would expect that he would come out of all these constrictions; but Mother says, coming out of it one knows God. It is a summary way of saying that God waits for man to turn to him, while all the time man is inextricably involved in his own ordinary mind through habits that are ingrained. The poet says the world is too much with us.

One's karma, if not repeated, is abolished, says Mother. This is contrary to our tradition.

7. Education

The ideas of Mother and Sri Aurobindo are revolutionary in the extreme. From the beginning neither of them set great store by formal education that leads to a degree. Sri Aurobindo felt that if one learns one subject with a certain thoroughness, his education will be complete and he has the essential equipment to acquire any other subject by himself. He did feel that history and biographies are great educators. The school they founded in the Ashram for the children of the devotees teaches English and French and awards no degree at the completion of the higher level course, a procedure not usually followed anywhere.

Mother's view on education, especially on the capacity of the human mind, is perhaps unique. She feels any man can do anything, if he chooses. She does not see any inherent limitation in the mental capacity. It is known that one's intelligence does not increase during one's life-time. What varies is its

extent of application or the experience it draws upon. But Mother says that if one chooses to be in touch with his Psychic Being, his intelligence starts increasing. Mother gives the example of a rustic girl of low intelligence who, during the period she was in touch with her psychic being, learned to perform ballet dance at high levels which requires greater intelligence.

"Concentrate on the body, you fall ill; concentrate on your vital, you get depressed; concentrate on your mind, you go mad" is her description of human nature as expressed by the body, nerves and mind. In other words, the parts of being in a man are fully unconscious. Their normal capacity expresses smoothly when we are not actively giving them consideration. It may be the experience of many that when you are in doubt about the spelling of a less known word, if you simply write it down, the correct spelling comes out. When the construction of a sentence is questioned, people often speak it out and the right form emerges. Whether it is spelling or construction, originally we have consciously learnt them correctly. With the passing of the years the skill has moved from the conscious to the subconscious part of the mind. The subconscious remembers it correctly. Any stumbling is only in the conscious part. This is why when we start writing or speaking, the right form comes out 'automatically', as we say. Similarly, the health of our body, joy in the vital and clarity in the mind have moved down to the subconscious or unconscious, as the psychologists call it, and function smoothly. Our concentration on them makes them conscious and brings in the disorder. Their order is in the subconscious. We should not make them conscious if we want them to maintain their order.

Mother offers a great secret of life to us if we wish to enjoy permanent happiness. Life becomes miserable for us only when we expect others or events to behave as we want them to. Obviously this is not what we notice in our behaviour, though our behaviour is shot through and through with this attitude. First, the world around us is not going to oblige our wishes. On the face of it, it is not practical or rational. If we change our attitude, our misery will disappear. It comes in a subtle way into our thoughts. We do not openly expect people to behave according to our wishes. What we expect them to do is the 'right thing'. Under the guise of rightness, we smuggle in our expectations. A classical example is the parents who seek to arrange for the marriage of a son and a daughter. All the complaints they voice when they seek an alliance for the daughter are perfectly legitimate, rational and right. When the very same people seek an alliance for their son, the whole attitude comes out in full. They are found behaving just like the parents of their son-in-law. People who plead for fairness on one occasion refuse to offer the same fairness in a similar situation in which they are the principal actors. That is what Mother means when she says that people want others to behave according to their own wishes. When the supramental force descends, it is necessary to create a bridge between the old and new worlds. Mother says women are better fitted to create that bridge. Women are better equipped as constructive creators, says Mother. They know how to handle the power of truth.

Mother has pronounced ideas on violence. She feels it is permissible only for self-defense.

The brightness of the Lord, his original splendour, is so intense that even the sun looks faded before Him.

Mother does not distinguish between ordinary life and spiritual life. For Her there is a less conscious life and a more conscious life. In other words, when man in ordinary life becomes more conscious, he becomes spiritual and his life becomes a spiritual life.

'Turn the other cheek to your enemy who smites you on one cheek' is a famous thought in religion. With the enemy, Mother says, you must love him. In a mood of bravado one may turn the other cheek with the inner emotions still remaining the same. But, at heart in the emotions, one must have only love for another, be it a friend or an enemy.

Nations of the World

Each nation has a special endowment of its own. France is known for her intellectual clarity and chivalry, Germany for her innovation, Japan for honour and beauty, USA for practical organisation, and India for spirituality.

When world politics was discussed, Mother said she found the Russians more sincere than the Western politicians.

8. Mother's way of answering her devotees

In areas where people have energy, training, good upbringing, skill, capacity and a fairly long tradition of having functioned successfully at a certain level, they rarely face problems. In such areas not only do they have experience in using the materials available for a certain accomplishment, they also have the capacity to manage when resources fall short. A member of an agricultural family comes into that category when he has to cultivate, a child of a professor in the field of education, a *Chettiar* youth with limited means in a trade. That is what we describe as culture or tradition in the society with respect to social survival. Traditional skill achieves successfully in circumstances of plenty. Even in unfavourable circumstances it manages very well, but often feels the sore lack of resources. Should this lack be made good, e.g. sufficient water supply to an agriculturist, his problem vanishes.

Problems arise from external circumstances owing to continuous drought, lawlessness, communal tension and many other similar external conditions that affect the entire population. They too have a solution in Mother, but that is not what we are presently considering.

Similarly, for individuals born in a poor family, poverty is a long-term perennial problem. People born with physical handicaps have come into this world with a problem. Though these too are human problems, concerned individuals and the society they are born in consider them not as problems of the individual but relegate them to a different category. They accept the status quo as a reality with a sense of resignation. Solution for such issues is available in Mother's life.

If we eliminate several categories of the above description, what is generally considered as a human problem can be described as the situation of individuals belonging to a particular social level not being able to maintain that level for one reason or another. If three boys in the house are educated and employed, while the fourth is not able to complete his studies and settle down in life, this is a problem for the boy as well as the family. What is a sour problem for him may not constitute a problem for another boy of a lower social level trying to become a graduate in the first generation. When he is not able to take a degree, this boy settles down as a shop assistant, which is socially one level higher than his father who was a farm labourer.

In other words, general human problems arise in one's life when one essential component of the personality is lacking. When such people come to Mother and pray for the removal of their problem, Mother either quickly removes the problem through one of the existing favourable circumstances around him -- e.g. get a girl quickly married -- or she gives him the necessary energy so that the missing skill develops and his problem is permanently removed. In a particular case, a boy, as I described above, failed in the examination and faced a serious problem. He came to have Mother's *Darshan* and returned home. To his utter amazement, he was taken to Madras by the son of the chairman of an automobile company and given a job. While he was at the Ashram, this favourable circumstance developed at home through a neighbour.

In this case Mother acted through one of Her ways, her way of granting the highest aspiration of the devotee, whether voiced or not. When the boy saw Mother, though his mind would have thought of passing the examination, he would have harboured in his depths a desire to get employed in a big company. He was a fatherless boy brought up by kind relatives. A job in a big company and this boy were poles apart. When the boy was at the Ashram, the daughter of the chairman of that company came to lunch at her neighbour's house. The boy's mother was called by the neighbour's family to help serve the lunch. The dignitary came to like the lady at service and asked whether she could give any help. That miraculous circumstance got the boy a job he could never dream of. This is one way of Mother granting the prayer of her devotees. Let us consider different types of problems and see how Mother solves them.

1) Granting the devotee's highest aspiration

The story of the boy illustrates Mother's way of granting the highest aspiration of the devotee, voiced or unvoiced. Delayed marriage, employment, delayed sale of a property or right price for a valuable property represent this category along with numerous other things.

The devotee has a conscious desire, while he also has a deeply felt desire. The conscious desire in the above illustration was to pass in the examination. It is in the mind. The deeply felt but unvoiced aspiration in this case was a job in a reputable company. That is in the subconscious. What is there in the mind is voiced through a prayer. What is in the subconscious, though unvoiced, rises and spreads around in a subtle vibration. That is a powerful vibration which reaches Mother's answering consciousness more quickly than a prayer from the mind. Hence the fuller fulfilment of the unvoiced aspiration.

A need, a desire, a possibility or even an impossibility gets granted by the Mother in the above fashion.

2) Problems that we have which not many others have

We seem to be singled out for special suffering sometimes. Under this category comes a long list of problems like delayed promotion, a son in USA wanting to cancel his studies, a thesis lying unapproved for a long time, an unjust court case, indigestion, chronic diarrhea, incomplete studies, abandoned projects, an irresponsible husband, wife or child, etc.

The theory behind all these problems is that there is some deficiency in the person or in the circumstances. The deficiency may be in intelligence or nervous strength or capacity to accomplish or favourable circumstances.

A simple but genuine prayer of the sufferer reaches Mother. She either removes the insufficiency in the circumstance or in the devotee's being. Once that is removed, the problem is readily and fully solved.

3) Problems that have been precipitated out of our own conscious doings

Neglected studies, wasted wealth, betrayal through trust in bad characters, buying properties that are not economically viable, marrying an irresponsible man and expecting him to change, duties to the family neglected, investment in dubious projects, etc.,--in such cases, the bad results are no surprise to anyone. Normally in life, if a man has ever bitten one of these baits of misfortune, he never rises again. He is lost forever. Very rarely do people come out of these dangerous situations. But with Mother the situation is always fully rectified, though there is a condition for that.

As a minimum, before praying to Mother, the devotee must realise his folly and decide to stop further acts of irresponsibility. At the physical level of his behaviour he must change, e.g. the boy who neglected the studies should start reading. If this much is done and a prayer is voiced to Mother, the entire wrong done to his life gets corrected. Only that he must change his objectionable ways. Many in life have fully realised and changed too, but life does not restore the lost money or property. Mother always restores them.

One question arises. In certain cases, there is nothing for a man to change now. It is too late because the property is lost or a government job has been resigned. Obviously there are situations that are past remedy. Here one thing is still possible. The mental attitude with which the original folly was committed is still available in the mind. One must come forward to change it now. If a boy who has wasted his time and let the chance of examination pass now changes his mind, we say he has realised his error. After such a genuine realisation, if a prayer is voiced, it will be granted in double measure. New circumstances come, new energy releases itself from inside, new contacts appear, new rules or laws are enacted. Life for the penitent devotee takes on wings. He ends up twice higher than he originally aimed.

4) Consequences of Karma in earlier lives

An honest officer is unjustly punished by vindictive politicians; a hard working student expected to top the state list is prevented from appearing for the examination by circumstances; a soft spoken man marries a termagant wife; an angel of a woman gets an uneducated poor blockhead because he is a maternal uncle, etc. These are explained as karmic consequences.

"Karma must be suffered. No one can escape it unless he is a realised soul," says the tradition. Faith in Mother and a deep prayer removes the immediate result and fully dissolves the power of karma.

5) Karmic consequences of acts done in the past years which one continues

Whatever the karma, if the devotee now comes forward to stop those activities that have generated the karma, Mother wipes out the consequences. The devotee's part is to stop those activities.

Prayer to Mother by such persons for the solution of a problem in a project where his karmic deeds have accumulated-and which he refuses to stop-will yield copious results in every other area of his life except in the project for which he prays.

6) A man having pronounced capacity way above others languishes at the ordinary level

This can be a problem classified as unrewarded potential or unfulfilled ambition. A clerk whose official knowledge and capacities were unrivalled, could not appear for the government examination because he lacked a few marks in one subject. For 10 years he had been working in leave vacancies of 10, 15, 30 days. An industrious, frugal householder had been gathering house-building materials on his plot for 25 years, but for want of a substantial sum was never able to begin building a house. A group of highly skilled, capable, industrious labourers from a village had to walk to a town five miles away for daily wage labour. An extremely honest, industrious contractor who had done 17 years of serious work found his money spread among his clients uncollected.

People of this description are talented, honest, and hard working. Life has given them no fulfilment. If they come to Mother, they need not even pray. Their hard work is prayer enough. What life has not given them, Mother gives at the first contact even without prayer, because their honesty is purity and their work is the prayer of the very body. Life is not able to give them rewards, even though they have several endowments, because they lack something essential in their personality that prevents all other endowments coming to fruition. Life is a field where you get back as much as you give. It does not give you more than what you give it, because it cannot. In the above examples, I know what was lacking in each case. But Mother is a field of creative consciousness. She gives much more than what man offers to Her. Therefore, she is able to compensate for what is lacking in the man and offer him rewards for the other existing endowments. Life is like a cement tub that contains the water you have poured into it. Mother is a spring that gives more than what it appears to have. Truly, Mother starts giving more and more when your capacity to receive is greater. The more you take out of Her, the more She offers you.

7) Your capacities are lifted very high and accomplishments sail towards you

When the faith, service and inner contact with Mother are steady and constant, such results issue.

A layman taking interest in technology accomplished very well. In three years the project he founded became the biggest of its kind in the world. A man from no field wrote his first book and in two years it was published in five languages. A state level officer at the junior-most executive post was elevated, overlooking twelve of his superiors, to the post of the chairman of the all-India organisation he was serving. A Rs.1,000 employee rose to the status of buying a Rs.200 crore old English project in a period of 15 years, thus reaching the social pinnacle. These individuals had simple but deep faith. To one of them loyalty and honesty are second nature. Another is an extremely good man and constitutionally he cannot be anything other than good. The third is one whose family virtue of obedience and loyal sincerity are a way of life for him.

Mother gives, gives and goes on giving. She can give only LOVE, a mother's love. Our capacity to receive is a limitation. Even then, when one area of receptivity is filled to overflowing, She discovers in you other areas where she can give. Effort, purity, goodness, faith, service, and constant inner contact endlessly expand our receptivity. If we are not pure in one area, She gives in other areas. If we do not take effort, she chooses to give us things that we can effortlessly accept. If we are not good by nature, Mother gives us occasions in which we can only be good and makes that a channel for us to receive. If we are karma-ridden, she gives us opportunities to wipe out our karma. If we do not respond to Mother, She gives whatever is possible in the context. If we have no faith, She looks for one in our group or family who has faith and gives us through his faith. If we go away from Her, She calls us to Her again and again.

If your parents do not love you, Mother gives you affectionate teachers and friends. If you are lazy Mother accomplishes your work through another's dynamism. If you are utterly irresponsible, Mother has your responsibility discharged through another's wider sense of responsibility. If you have faith in medicine, She cures you through medicine. If you believe in systems She accomplishes your work through systems. If you believe in law, She sends you protection through law. If you foolishly trust a bad character, She makes him offer honest behaviour only to you. If you help malicious venomous people, She keeps your head above water blissfully. If you get into serious trouble, She offers you excellent openings to get out and She gives without asking. She gives more than what you ask for. She makes misers generous with you. She enacts new rules and laws to serve your particular need exactly. She gives you unimagined capacities, inconceivable opportunities. Above all She gives you the joy that pervades you inside and outside. BUT as devotees we should endeavour to be scrupulously clean, honest, active, good-natured, self-giving, thoughtful, resourceful and above all constantly remember Mother with love and devotion for Her own sake, for the joy She is and the light She is.

Mother says now that the new consciousness is there in the atmosphere, it responds to anyone who seeks it. She gives an example of it from a news report. There was a news report in great detail about a man in a hospital who went into shock from an injection of penicillin. After some time the doctors gave him up for dead, but slowly the man got better and eventually fully recovered. Later he explained how he felt the cells in his body begin to die and death spread up to the heart. When the shock brought him death and his cells were quickly dying, something in the man decided that he

would not give up. Against his decision, death was spreading to different parts of his body. But he would not give up. Finally it reached the heart and affected that too. The man was not deterred, even after his heart was affected. At long last, at the very last moment, death relented and his efforts were rewarded. He found the dead cells began to revive. It was not he who would give up. He persisted and persisted, till he fully revived.

On hearing this report, Mother commented that the new force in the atmosphere responded to his perseverance. His perseverance was great indeed.

Mother says She puts a spark of hers as her emanation in the devotees who accept her. It gets lodged in their souls and stays there forever. Mother holds herself responsible for anyone who has met her, even if the meeting was only for a second. Mother was seen stopping her work for a minute and then resuming. She says when ardent calls reach her and are 'audible' to her, she stops her work to send her response.

One night during her sleep Mother 'heard' someone frantically calling her. She woke up and 'saw' a man was leaning against a door and calling her. Next day Mother learnt the news that Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri had died at Tashkent the previous day. Much later reports came to her about Shastri's dying moments, which confirmed her vision of him.

Mother says this new power in the atmosphere is acting so that inextricable situations find solutions and people rise up from their death bed.

Different ways in which people accept Mother

People accept Mother in several ways and at several levels of their lives and faith. The following are some of them.

1. Mother is accepted as Divine by those who come here as casual visitors and who occasionally pray to her.
2. She is accepted by devotees who rely on her for serious work. There are other regular visitors to the Ashram who have taken to Mother but they are unconcerned about results in life.
3. *Sadhaks* accept her and pray to her only for spiritual progress.
4. People accept her as one who would do something because Mother has approved of it. Others would not do something because Mother has disapproved of it.
5. One can accept Mother and change his behaviour to follow Her. At a deeper level one can accept her and change his character to follow her. At the deepest level people come forward to change their consciousness so as to follow Mother.
6. People who are examples of excellence in their own lives, because of that characteristic, are devoted to Mother. She is accepted by those who do work as *Nishkamyā karma*.
7. There are those who would like to live their lives only relying on Her. Others never pray for anything.
8. A true child soul seeks total identification with Her.

Another classification of how people relate to Mother

Sadhaks, devotees, visitors and others can also be classified in a slightly different fashion.

1. We can accept Mother as one to whom we run in a crisis. This is to accept Mother as our **SAVIOUR**.
2. We pray. The prayer is granted. We accept Her as one to whom we can pray. This is to accept Mother's Divinity, as one of the several gods to whom we pray.
3. To know the truth of Mother's avatarhood and accept Her as such is to accept Mother as the Mother of creation.
4. To accept Mother as one to whom we refer all our major works before we commence them is to consider Her as the source of all our major existences.
5. To accept Mother as one to whom we refer all our minor works before we commence them is to consider Mother as the origin of our entire existence and functioning.
6. We can accept Mother as one who can give us anything we pray for, provided that our prayer is a right one. This is based on a belief, "Mother can give, but my prayer must be right". This is to conceive of Mother as the origin of all good in creation.
7. We can accept Her with the idea that only Mother's solution is needed. If it is not there, I must change. No other solution is possible. I do not need another solution. This implies exclusive reliance on Her.
8. To accept Mother as one who is adorable, who enlivens memory, and whom the memory always seeks is based on constant remembrance.
9. To see Mother constantly inside oneself is constant presence.
10. To be Mother in word and deed is identification in outer life.

9. Prayer

People are of different types and many levels. Mother exists at all levels of creation and expresses herself in all types. Prayer means the human soul turning to the Divine soul seeking a relationship. Such a turning is called aspiration. When the individual soul seeks an eternal relationship with the Divine soul, the Mother of souls plays an intermediary role to make that relationship initially possible and consummates it in all its possibilities. This call from below and the answer from above find expression in the field of life and lose their character of call and answer. According to the given context it is a moved emotion, a great expansiveness, a trance like meditation, etc. At a more mundane level, it is a prayer for an ice cream or a sanction of success in a national election. Whatever the prayer and whatever the appearance of the sanction, it is the child soul turning towards the transcendent reality seeking a merger. Several of these can be explained.

1. Children ask for their merest desire. Mother grants it. The result is they take to Mother.
2. Adults ask for what is right. Mother grants it so that they will progress according to their own light. Some even insist on what is wrong. Mother often grants it in the hope he will soon realise.
3. Man does not know what to ask for. He prays for guidance and protection. She gives.
4. Man knows his desires but prefers to accept Mother's guidance, resulting in Man conquering his desires and taking to consecration.
5. Man takes to consecration in all details of his life and progresses in surrender.

6. Man prays for the small thing he knows and cherishes. Mother refuses to grant it and grants something greater.
7. Man sees his prayer granted in every small thing but does not work to remove his central defect. She waits for him to become aware of his central defect.
8. Man's prayer for anyone else is readily granted but not so readily for himself. It means he persists in utterly foolish ways of life.
9. Man does not even pray; nor does he know he deserves anything. She gives. Many accept and prosper; some refuse and make Mother wait for their readiness in future.
10. Sometimes he prays; sometimes he forgets to pray. She takes very good care of all his affairs. His soul receives. He is a pure devotee, though not fully conscious.
11. There are many pure souls on earth. They have not known of Mother's existence at all. She knows all of them and all the needs of their souls and answers the calls they have not made.
12. There are child-like souls who work hard, who are selfless, cheerful, pure, expansive, not even thinking of God or Mother. Simply they are spontaneous, fresh and are at their best at all times. She constantly keeps in touch with them.

10. Grace

The Divine choosing to act on its own initiative is known as grace. Pity is the response of a person to another's suffering more because he is unable to stand the sight of suffering than for the sake of the sufferer. Sympathy is the feeling one has at the sight of another suffering more for the object of suffering. The word 'sympathy' itself means to have the same (sym) feeling (pathy). This is a response of strong nerves to a victim of cruelty or suffering. Pity makes the individual who feels it miserable and helpless. He will not be able to relieve the sufferer. Sympathy comes from a strong person who can help the sufferer but not without sharing the misery of the other. Compassion comes from the soul. While sympathy evaluates the rightness of the victim and helps because the other suffers unjustly, compassion extends its help and relieves the other without evaluating the desert of the sufferer. The victim suffers, he needs to be relieved. Whether he is right or wrong, he should be helped. This is the attitude of compassion. Grace comes from the Divine. It acts because it does not see any reason for suffering to exist. While sympathy and compassion aim at relieving the sufferer, Grace aims at abolishing suffering. This is a lower function of Grace. The highest function of Grace is to hasten--abridging centuries into months--man's elevation to the divine status. In between the abolishing of suffering and raising man to the Divine, Grace acts at various levels. Some of them are explained below.

1. We often see a prayer is answered exactly as we have asked for. This is Mother answering prayer through Her Grace. When someone was short of Rs.2,700 for a particular work, the exact amount came at the exact moment. Mother has several ways of granting a prayer. When she does so through her Grace, the answer exactly meets our requirements. This is the least of all expressions of Grace.
2. An impossible tangle of difficulties is resolved up to 99% or an incurable disease is relieved 99%. A man at the age of 65 got his arthritis relieved 99%. Mother acts from her Grace but

through the faith of the devotee. I make a distinction between Mother acting through one of her powers, and her acting through a favourable circumstance around the devotee. In this example, Mother acts by her Grace through the faith of the devotee. If Grace had acted by itself, the relief would have been 100%. Faith moves mountains and in this case, it moved the Divine Power to relieve an incurable disease in an impossible condition. That is the greatness of faith. Still faith limits the achievement to 99%, whereas if grace acts on its own the cure will be 100%.

3. We often say our prayer is over fulfilled. This is the characteristic of Grace. A boy who endeavoured to simply pass the examination rose to the first rank; the candidate who ardently aspired for a clerkship got an officer's job; property put up for sale for Rs.27,000 rupees fetched Rs.81,000; a devotee who longed to buy an acre of land bought 15 acres; the trader who moved heaven and earth to secure a district dealership became the director of the manufacturing company. These are all pure expressions of Grace, the presence of Grace indicated by the excess that comes.
4. When Grace sails towards the devotee, there may be visible reasons from the devotee's side. Grace acts on its own, not in response to your prayer, your work or your desert. Still the devotee often finds an ostensible 'reason' for the incidence of Grace.
 - Grace comes because one has by his long industrious work deserved it. A farmer worked on his 100 acre plot so intelligently and diligently that he was universally admired. When the farmer completed his programme on his 100 acre estate, things shaped up in an unexpected fashion so totally that he was able to buy the adjacent 100 acre farm. It came in such a succession that the huge crew of workers on the first estate could take over the reclamation of the next estate without their having to disband themselves.
 - Grace comes in answer to a specific prayer. Indira Gandhi came to Mother praying for 250 Lok Sabha seats and ended up winning 350 seats.
 - Grace comes without a prayer, without man knowing of the existence of it. It awaits entry, awaits for a token acceptance. At the end of 30 years of business, an American businessman on whom Grace decided to descend received as much business in one year as in all the 30 years before. Grace waited at his door, waiting for a token of gratitude. He flatly refused Grace and its gift receded.
 - Grace moves and GRANTS without one's asking for it or even knowing the power of Grace just because one is related to a centre of Grace. A man whose back was seriously broken was suffering intense back pain for 15 years. He was not interested in meeting Mother when he came to Pondicherry, but when he relented and had Her *Darshan* he was fully relieved of his pain in the back.
 - Grace moves on its own to convert a difficulty into an opportunity. Corrupt, dishonest colleagues of an honest officer foisted a false enquiry on him behind his back. The enquiry resulted in exposing everyone who conspired for it and raised the honest victim above the heads of the hawks.
 - Grace awaits us at all points of life as if it awaits the visit of a VIP when out of perverse foolishness one drags oneself into trouble. A perverse stupid man in his anger at the

success of his only well-wisher foolishly handled some articles and severely damaged his hand. Just at the moment when everything required a vehicle, a driver, a doctor, etc., they were readily available. On top of that the doctor, after a second examination, found there was no fracture of the bones. Had one link been missing, the suffering of the victim could have been great, leading to complications.

- Grace does answer after man persistently exhausts all perverse opportunities to ruin himself. A greedy fool resigned a secure government job to become a teacher and raise his academic status and later discovered his folly. A fortuitous chance got him back the same government job at a higher level, making up for the loss of seniority during the interim period.

It is a sure sign of Grace when something comes unasked. If there is a little extra than what is needed or prayed for, it indicates the presence of Grace. When Grace acts, unseen quarters offer help; long standing rules are changed in your favour; a new rule is made in an unbelievable way just to meet your precise requirements; the unheard of possibility happens; someone acts contrary to his nature to be of use to you; in spite of one's folly and utter perversity, one is not able to spoil the work and it gets completed.

Grace always acts unknown to anybody for the good of all as when the Chinese retreated from the Indian border.

11. Mother's Unique Ways with her children

A *tantric guru* who came to have Mother's Darshan exclaimed in pleasant surprise, "The Lalitha I worship is here."

Answering someone on violence, Mother said violence is justified only in self-defense. Though she has said that, she did not use violence even in self-defense against those who tried to harm her in one way or another. When news was brought to Sri Aurobindo that a magician who had caused a rain of stones to fall in the residences of Ashramites was sinking, Sri Aurobindo took pity on him and said he need not die for throwing a few stones. Sri Aurobindo helped the magician revive.

I have repeatedly said in several places that Mother answers prayers that were not voiced by the devotees. Further, in instances when the devotee's affairs are caught in a tangle and are spoiled and news comes to him after the loss is incurred, if he can bring himself to pray to Mother to save the situation that was already lost, Mother will act in a unique way. She does save the situation. The faith of the devotee to pray to her after the work has been spoiled, is no ordinary faith. It is extraordinary. Should he keep his faith and go about uncovering the situation, he would find that Mother, on his behalf, had been present in the situation and arranged things in such a way that the situation could be saved later. Every turn of events would be seen containing a circumstance by which the whole situation could be retrieved.

A research scholar found his guide took a dislike for him and vowed he would never certify his thesis as bonafide. The guide left the job and sought another job somewhere in North India. The scholar hoped against hope and had his term extended to the full permissible limit of four years. He had almost given up. When there were only four days left before the day of expiry, someone at that stage told him to pray to Mother, whom the scholar had not even heard of. He prayed and then travelled 200 miles to the university to submit his thesis on the very last day without the signature of his guide. The Registrar of the University told the scholar that the guide happened to be in town and he could try his luck. With trepidation the scholar went to the guide's place where he was warmly welcomed. The guide was all smiles, explaining that in the evening he was leaving on a foreign tour, and he volunteered to certify the thesis. Mother always acts like that. She arranges affairs around you in such a fashion that your work can be accomplished. She is present wherever you go for your work in the form of a friend, a relative, a helpful officer, a kind hearted VIP, a favourable rule, etc. Such is her ubiquity.

Mother is universal. She is not confined to Pondicherry or even India. What is done to Mother as work or service has always a tendency to spread far and wide, covering the devotee's entire area of emotional identification. If a devotee of Mother engages himself in a certain kind of activity—for example, he purchases a yarn mill—Mother's influence over the entire spinning industry will be noticed. Not only the devotee's mill will prosper, but the entire industry will too. The owner of a coffee estate offered his estate to Mother. Mother advised him to run it himself considering that in spirit it was hers. The estate, which had been losing turned the corner and later it was sold. Even after it left the hands of the devotee, the value of the estate began to rise and registered a three-fold gain in price in three years and in 10 years its value rose 25-fold. The entire field of coffee growing began to prosper beyond measure. That is Mother's universality.

A devotee was working in a godforsaken area on top of a hillock. As drinking water did not exist there, he used to carry it with him during his visits. Since every novel thing he attempted was a success, some friends even were bold enough to suggest he could try to tap the ground water. He tried. It was a success. Mother did not stop there. He found out that his entire estate was full of underground water. More was to come. The entire region was soon dotted with borewells and came to be known as a water-rich region.

Mother's gaze is very powerful! Only those who are open in their souls can meet her gaze and hold it for awhile. A tall majestic sadhu visited the Ashram and impressed everyone by the tejas on his face. When he came before Mother for Darshan, he could not meet her gaze and looked away at once. Not many can hold Mother's gaze for a full minute. A healer came from France. He was an uneducated ordinary worker. When She looked into his eyes, he held it for more than a full minute. Mother was surprised at his receptivity and continued to give Her grace through her gaze. When the man was saturated and Mother turned her eyes away, it was a full 20 minutes, a unique experience even for Mother.

In the days of Sri Aurobindo and even a little later, visitors who came to have Mother's Darshan would be brought by a sadhak to the morning balcony Darshan. Mother would express her opinion

after seeing the man. If he met with Mother's approval, he would be brought to Mother the following day for pranams. A newcomer was so brought to the balcony one morning and Mother called his sadhak friend to express her approval. She explained she saw the tall man with the beard that morning and the sadhak could bring him to her for pranams. The sadhak was surprised. His friend was short and had no beard. Mother wanted to be sure and gave precise instructions as to which side the visitor should stand on and asked him to be brought again to the balcony the following day. Again Mother saw him tall and with a beard. What Mother saw was the visitor's appearance in the previous birth.

A famous Tamil writer called Va. Ra. lived in the Ashram in the early days. When he first came, Sri Aurobindo described the facial appearance of this writer. No one could see it on the face of the visitor. Va. Ra. left and returned after a year to live in the Ashram. Everyone was struck by his appearance. It fully matched Sri Aurobindo's description a year earlier. Sri Aurobindo in his subtle vision had seen how Va. Ra. would look after a year.

Most people who take to Mother come to Her attracted by her spiritual greatness. Many do not even know of the several aspects of Mother till they become familiar with Ashram life. Whether the devotees know or not, Mother's powers express themselves in the lives of the devotees. One such is an interesting power of Hers. If a devotee is endowed with all the requirements of a job and is emotionally identified with his institution, he will be fast rising to the top wherever he is or however big the organisation he serves. There are cases of people who have risen to the top post of an All India Organisation, state politics, etc.

Sri Aurobindo's Purna Yoga has a declared aim of defeating death. He even says one of the first attainments is the capacity to prolong life at will. In the case of a devotee it expresses as a longer life than decreed. Dangers to life predicted by horoscope become void after taking to Mother. The inauspicious hour, or rahukalam, is a part of the Indian tradition. Rahukalam is known to be the arch enemy of any act. After taking to Mother inauspicious hour loses its potency unless the devotee retains his faith in it. Even if the devotee has started ignoring rahukalam, people in the social milieu have faith in it. Their faith will keep the atmosphere of life conducive to the play of rahukalam. It works in a strange reverse fashion. The power of undoing of rahukalam works in the life of a devotee by undoing his obstacles. That is Mother's way in life. A devotee farmer was invited by a land development officer to avail of a Rs.25,000 loan. The hour of submitting the application coincided with rahukalam. The devotee disregarded it. But rahukalam has retained its power. The secretary of the bank raised impossible objections to the application, much to the embarrassment of the officer who invited the farmer. The very first step was not taken for months. Rahukalam proved itself powerful. The Indian bank came to know of the farmer's activities and invited him and offered Rs.2 lakhs. Had the Land Mortgage Bank been quick, the farmer's sale deeds would have been pledged to it and to retrieve them was no mean job. Perhaps the offer might not have waited until the procedures of retrieving the documents with a bank were fulfilled. Rahukalam, which acted according to its original character, happened to serve the devotee in this case. When a man faces an obstacle in life and understands that would be his undoing, he prays to God. When his prayer is

answered, the bhakta finds the obstacle disappearing. He offers a deeply felt prayer of gratitude. Mother also acts similarly removing the obstacles. When the devotee is faced with an obstacle, one of Her ways is to convert it into an opportunity. That is unique with Mother.

An industrial group with a Rs. 10 crore turnover got into real trouble by some misdeeds. One of the members was a devotee. What was normal in the trade came to be considered an error in this particular case. Ordinarily such errors are leniently viewed or given a token punishment. In this case, it was taken up by political rivals to settle an ancient grudge, with the result that this group had become a scapegoat. They were past redemption. All the members of the group resigned to their fate and were ready to be wiped out. The devotee member had not lost faith. He believed that Mother would not let him down. He persisted in his efforts to raise their heads above water. Slowly things changed complexion. They began to come out of the ordeal. Winds of change were favourable. The efforts made for survival opened new opportunities, new contacts, etc. As a result they weathered the storm and survived. Not only that. In three years their turnover crossed Rs.100 crores and in another four years their assets grew to the level of Rs.100 crores. Mother had turned the difficulty into opportunity.

There is an anecdote about Madhvachariyar, the founder of the philosophy of Dualism. While travelling in the Himalayas, he asked one of his disciples to stay in a mutt there and wait for him to return. The loyalty of the disciple would not allow the Master to travel alone. He followed the master. After some time the Master turned around and saw the disciple. He waved his hand and pronounced, "Go back". The disciple was lifted into the sky and was deposited back in the mutt. A Master's words have such power in the material world. Mother's Power is real in the world of matter and can be felt as such.

When a person is a source of trouble, Mother's way of removing the trouble is to make the same person set it right.

Anyone anywhere in the world, if he is inwardly receptive, can receive Mother's Force and the results of Her work for the world. The only thing that matters is the inner receptivity, nothing else.

She used to see a ball of light on the tip of her pen when she wrote. The light prevented her from seeing the writing. Still she wrote correctly.

On his 60th birthday a sadhak came to Mother for birthday blessings. She asked him what he wanted and without waiting for an answer she asked if he would like strength. She put her hand on his head. As if a tap had opened, strength flowed into him. For several years after that, he used to join the running competition with youngsters and complete it.

An elderly man who is a devotee of Sri Aurobindo introduced a young man to the Ashram. The young man seriously took to Mother and was following as many disciplines of Mother as he could. One of those disciplines was if someone hurts you, do not consider whether it is right, but look inside yourself for the dark spot that invited the external hurt. Do not react even in thought. One day the youngster came to see the elderly man and also brought a friend. The elderly man evinced

interest in the newcomer. The young man said that they had both been to visit the Samadhi where his friend had sat for some time. While he was sitting there, he felt he was bodily lifted into the air and reached the top level of a drain pipe which was outside Mother's room. When the young man reported this to an elderly sadhak in the Ashram whom he used to meet, the sadhak explained that his friend had relations with Mother in earlier births, since his subtle being had risen up to the pipe outside Mother's room. When the elderly man heard this report, he frowned and said that the whole thing existed only in his friend's imagination. The young man could not reconcile the comments of the sadhak with those of this elderly man. Yet he was interested in not reacting but finding inside himself what could have brought this unseemly comment of the elderly man. In the process, the young man was silent for about half a minute. The elderly man became excited, lost his usual poise and spoke agitatedly, "It is silly and stupid on my part to have made this comment, especially when a sadhak has given an interpretation. What do I know?" Mother's disciplines are powerful and can not only bring about desirable changes in oneself but can change the external situation too. Inner control leads to mastery over external events.

Sylvia, an Australian lady, cabled from London that she would be visiting Pondicherry. Robert received the cable and arranged for a room in an Ashram guesthouse. Sylvia was a businesswoman who had purchased some handloom goods from Robert. She had not heard about the Ashram but was visiting Pondicherry just because it happened to be on her route back from London. Sylvia did not show up on the given day but reached there one day later. Robert met her more out of courtesy than for work. He found her full of fear and pale like a ghost. She asked what hotel it was and commented about the extraordinary peace that was there, not knowing it was an Ashram guesthouse. Then she began to explain what had happened to her and why she had come a day late. She had reached Bombay from London and had a seat on the Madras flight. Somehow, that seat was given to someone else and she was offered one on the next flight. Not being used to such practices, Sylvia raised a storm in the office and had everyone shaking. But nothing could be done to restore her lost seat. She was seething with anger when she saw the plane take off. To her horror a few minutes later she witnessed that same plane crash. She was horrified to think that she was supposed to be on that flight. She could not overcome the horror even after a day.

The fact that Sylvia was passing through Pondicherry, staying in an Ashram guesthouse and meeting a sadhak was enough to take her out of the danger of a plane crash. Mother's protective wings extend far beyond Her children.

A service organisation and a business organisation were run by the same proprietor. The business was small with several lakhs of rupees turnover. It so happened that the service organisation came in touch with Mother. It matured to the point where the service wing did some service to Mother. The head of the service wing who was not known outside his profession started to become famous, powerful and prosperous beyond measure. The institution itself expanded to double and treble in size. The proprietor's real interest was in the business wing. That began to prosper limitlessly. Where the proprietor's emotions were focussed there was great growth. It rose to the No.1 position in its industry in the state and No.2 position at the all-India level, raising its turnover 28 times. The

proprietor did not even know that his service wing was rendering service to Mother in the initial years. Even much later, he never knew what service had been rendered. Still Mother's Force awarded its prize to those who offered Her service.

If someone has accepted Mother and he examines his life after a little while, he will find there exists no problems of any description. There are rare instances where problems do exist. Those are problems wantonly created by the devotee out of his preferences.

12. India

Mother said India would become the Guru of the world. India is the country where spirituality is developed to its heights. She must lead the world and the world must come to accept the leadership and guruhood of India.

At least 30 years before Indian Freedom, Mother told Sri Aurobindo that She saw India free in the subtle world. In 1930, when the Congress leadership was packed with giants of the pre-Independence generation, a group photo of Congress leaders was shown to Mother. She spotted out a youngster who was lost in a corner and asked who it was. It was Jawaharlal Nehru. When Mother said he would be the future leader of India, nobody could believe her.

Mother was sorry that the British had stayed in India too long. She said that wherever India had inherited Western culture, she had become rotten. Even now 70% of India remains unpolluted by westernisation. Mother says spirituality is in the very atmosphere of India. An Indian farmer, according to Mother, is closer to the Divine than the European intellectual.

It was Mother's long-standing wish to become an Indian citizen. The Government of India granted Her Indian citizenship without Her relinquishing her French citizenship. Thus, she enjoyed dual citizenship.

Sri Aurobindo believed that India must remain united to lead the world. In 1947, he even prophesied that within ten years India and Pakistan would unite.

Almost all Chief Ministers, Governors, Presidents, Vice-Presidents and all the Prime Ministers have come to Mother seeking Her blessings.

13. Mother's Principles in Work

Work for Mother is a field of greater yogic effectiveness than meditation. Mother says one can make a greater progress in yoga by doing the work in the right spirit than by meditating. By right spirit Mother means taking interest in the work that comes to us instead of seeking to do the work one likes. It looks simple, but this is one of the most difficult disciplines in any yoga. A boy who loves

cricket can agree to stop playing it during study period and sit at his table for hours preparing for the examination. He unbends himself from play and bends his energies to work. This is to do one's duty. This is admirable. By the above discipline Mother wants this boy to derive the same joy in doing his lessons as he derives from cricket playing. Normally that capacity is not within the reach of the boy. At least he can suppress his enthusiasm for cricket, disregard his dislike for study and do his duty. This way he gives his energies to duty. This is good and Mother approves of it. Now what She asks for is that the boy should enjoy his studies as much as he enjoys playing cricket. That is ordinarily beyond human capacity.

When a man takes to yoga, accepts Mother, adores Her, loves to do Her bidding, feels the privilege of working for the Divine Mother and sees his reading as something he does for the sake of Mother, joy begins to issue from reading. Within the limits of this act, this is a process of divinisation, transformation, a process of raising man from sensual pleasure to psychic joy. To know that we are doing the work in right spirit, Mother gives an index. After completing a work if one feels joy, he has done it in the right spirit. If one feels tired after a work, he has done it in the old human way. Almost as a rule when a man joins the Ashram the work that falls to his lot is one that he has detested all his life. He has to learn to transform his dislike into enjoyment. That is one aspect of *sadhana*.

A man derives joy from a work when he has great skill in it. He who has high skill in a work can be seen taking pride in it and enjoying it. Several such aspects in the physical, mental expression of a work help one enjoy it. An attempt is made to explain these aspects below.

Punctuality, regularity, orderliness, cleanliness, etc. are essential disciplines to accomplish a work. We can say that if the value of punctuality alone is acquired by Indians to the level of European punctuality, it can transform the nation from a poor to a rich one. All of us know its value. It is enjoyable when we possess it. It is very productive. Regularity and other qualities in the list above are more valuable. In 1920 Mother started teaching *sadhaks* how to keep books in an orderly way.

Maximum utilisation of energy, materials, money, water, electricity, etc. is a cardinal principle. In other words, elimination of waste of every description is a value. A company in USA went bankrupt. It was a small company with Rs.5 crore sales. Another man bought it. The first thing he did was to apply a scale of utilisation values he had evolved in his own business. He worked out the percentage of expenditure on every item such as electricity, advertisement, etc. He applied those norms here and found the electric bill was 2.5 times higher than it should have been. He took action to bring down all expenses to within his norms. In three months, the new acquisition became an economically viable one, even profitable. Mother followed all these principles, which would be understood as economy in Ashram life. She used to re-use envelopes by turning them inside out.

To approach a work from another man's point of view is a powerful principle for success in life and work. To approach it from our own point of view only will generate conflicts and produce low results. To approach the same from another man's point of view is generative of harmony, producing maximum results. I shall give one example.

A contractor of sugar mill waste known as pressmud was in business for 17 years and was fairly successful. But over the years his business accumulated outstanding from the farmers to whom he supplied on credit. He had a thick bundle of 200 promissory notes due to him for the last 17 years, periodically renewed. Each year he supplied more, collected a little, lent more and so on. The outstanding remained.

A devotee farmer came to the contractor one year. The ruling price of a lorry of mud was Rs.125. As the farmer wanted very large quantities, a Rs.5 reduction was offered and the contractor was willing to increase the reduction even up to Rs.10, the maximum permissible. The devotee had a different approach. It is the approach of taking another man's point of view. Having sold pressmud for Rs.125, the contractor has only accumulated promissory notes, not cash. The devotee proposed to buy in large quantities at prices that were proposed by the contractor and offered to pay in advance. But he wanted to examine the facts of cost and profit, instead of negotiating an imaginary price. They sat together and worked out costs including payment by the contractor to the sugar mill, labour, sales tax, lorry expenses, etc., without omitting a single detail. At each figure, the farmer included an allowance and rounded it off to the next higher figure. For example, if the factory should be paid every month Rs.2,900, he made it Rs.3,000. If eight workers were needed for a load, he made it nine. When the final figure was arrived at, the farmer asked what net profit the contractor expected from the operation and added it. Further he proposed to add a monthly salary to the contractor paying for his service, even if he was serving himself. The contractor was scandalised and refused it. It worked out to Rs.85 per load for 2,000 lorry loads. The price was fixed at Rs.90. The farmer paid all the money as and when the contractor needed an advance. No farmer could believe that pressmud was supplied at Rs.90. The contractor was able to collect all the 17 year arrears that year, selling a small part of his mud for cash to his old customers. He bought a lorry that year and declared it was the most profitable year for him in business. To take another man's point of view accomplishes great work at less cost, more smoothly, to the benefit of both parties.

An attitude of "work first, anything next" must be the guiding line.

To have a good control of speech is a yogic discipline but will yield great results for anyone in any walk of life. The total amount of talking must be brought down to the minimum necessary level. The tone must come down to an audible whisper. These two efforts are very difficult. In business low voice produces great profits.

When an industrialist with Rs.10 *laks* annual sales came to Mother, he mentioned his one major industrial problem was a harassing manager who irritated him beyond measure by his umpteen repetitions, which occupied all his time. Among many ideas, he practised low voice and was relieved of the harassment from the manager in one day. His sales rose to Rs.50 *laks* in three years.

The voice comes from our life centre and therefore carries a life-power. Conserving the energy through low voice will have desirable results in life. In business, it first of all makes the entrepreneur effective and happy. He functions in a relaxed way. If anyone follows this in business, he will discover that there is no better way to make money. Voice lowered is money conserved.

Systems for every individual item of work are essential.

Coordination of all systems generates an unheard of power.

Personal power must be replaced by the impersonal authority of a system.

Mother was great as an organiser. Whatever She did, she functioned through a system. Sitting on a bench near the garage inside the Ashram, I witnessed a man coming with a ladder and a can of grease. Seeing my curiosity about his work, he smiled and explained that there was no special occasion for his work. Mother arranged for a register in the workshop in which fixed dates were given for every little work to be done periodically. Accordingly, this man had come to grease the joints in the collapsible gate in the garage. That is the extent to which Mother paid attention to details and put those details in a system that worked automatically.

Ordinarily man carries the weight of his work on his nerves and it gives tension, making people look older than their years. Often we hear, "There are a million details. If I forget one thing, it is not done. I feel like going mad." This is so because this man does not resort to systems. Once you create a system, the work is done well and your nerves are free. A system does the work of 10 or 100 or 1,000 men. That is the value of a system.

If systems are valuable, coordination of systems is powerful. Suppose there are 25 systems in a company with a minimum of coordination and they are all coordinated to a maximum extent, the same staff can accomplish twice or thrice more. To give a simple example, in a college if the timetable of the dozen departments is not coordinated, i.e. if each department has its own time table, the two year course will extend to five years and twice as many classrooms must be built.

We can see one expression of this at home when there are three cycles for use and five of us are using them. Without coordination, two more cycles must be bought and with coordination, one or two cycles can serve the purpose instead of three.

When individual power is exercised, accomplishment is low. If impersonal authority is used through systems, the same man can manage twice the amount of work.

Values are lifelines. They have great power. In business one value everyone appreciates is the quality of the product. Every businessman as well as every customer knows fully well the value of quality. If you look at any company and find it is making steady progress, certainly it will be adhering to values. If two companies in the same industry are making small and great progress, surely the latter company will be following higher values. Even one great value fully followed can give extraordinary results. Some of the values that are meaningful to business are: safety, security of job, family feeling, constant progress, reliability, honesty, efficient after-sales service, maximum use-value of product, courtesy, friendliness, ideals in work, trustworthiness, quality product and loyalty.

The required level of education for the work of every employee is essential.

Education expands the mental horizons. An educated person is better for his education. Each level of work requires a minimum education. Workers, supervisors, clerks, managers, accountants, etc. should have the education necessary for them. That makes the work enjoyable for them and productive for the company. The idea of accomplishing a higher work through a less educated person may be successful in the exception, but as a rule it hurts the work.

Full essential training for the work is important.

Education is the base, training is the top dressing. Regular systematic training, though costly in the beginning, pays rich dividends in the long run. Generally we let our workers be trained during work. We expect them to be trained by experience. As a rule this training is slow, partial and expensive. One bad result here is that they acquire a wrong training.

One company in Holland followed the first principle of recruiting people and expecting them to acquire training through service. Another recruited trained people. Though both were of comparable endowments in all respects, in five years the second company rose to the 3rd position in the industry while the first company was ranked 21.

Perfect skill is of permanent value.

Skill in works is yoga, says *The Gita*. To see that everyone in the company acquires perfect skill in what he does will raise any company from the bottom to the top. It is the duty of the owner of the company to constantly raise the skills of his workers. That makes the workers happy and labour relations smooth. A company with 50 workers had at least 25 labour problems in two years and was closed for five months. The proprietor agreed to take very special steps to give complete skill to all his workers. The situation reversed and the labour trouble disappeared.

Courage in crisis is a great endowment. Intelligent risk in seeking opportunity brings reward.

To advise one in a crisis to have courage is easy, but to give him courage is not so practical. Granting that a company faces a crisis, the entrepreneur finds himself helpless and it leads to panic. But there are people who in a similar situation do not get panicky and who are courageous. About 15 years ago, a Rs.150 crore company faced a market situation in which it became clear to all that it was only a matter of time before the company would have to close. Employees at all levels were filled with terror. The situation was in nobody's hands. The proprietor was courageous and calm. He was the one who would lose the most but he did not lose courage. In a few weeks, there were several unexpected developments and the crisis blew away. Today the company's assets are worth Rs.1,000 crores. Anything could have happened. It is the courage of one man at the top that saved the situation.

Well, he was one endowed with courage. What about ordinary mortals who get panic-stricken? Of what use is this advice to them? Knowledge that courage is a saviour brings some courage. If one is a devotee and prays for courage, Mother grants plenty of it.

Resourcefulness is always a great value. In business it pays rich dividends. Mother's devotees can find their minds becoming more and more resourceful as days pass. A determination to be resourceful helps it to flower. Simply described, resourcefulness means to find a use for every resource and to find a solution for given-up tangles.

A milk society was continuously losing money, and the co-operative department considered closing it. One low level officer expressed the opposite view. They asked him to try. In six months, he turned it into a profit-making society and even purchased a delivery van. Pleased by his resourcefulness, the department asked whether he could start a co-operative bank. He did. In the first three years, his performance record was top-most in India. He was a simple man who retired at a non-gazetted post. But he was resourceful. At the silver jubilee of the bank, they hunted out the man from his retirement and gave him an award.

Endless Progress

To have constant endless progress as a goal enlivens a business organisation. When a sugar mill was founded, the owner sought Mother's blessings. She wrote "For endless progress". He registered 1,500 acres of cane for the first year crushing. The average per acre yield in the adjacent factory area was 28 tons. This factory fixed a high average of 45 tons an acre, since initial cultivation gives higher return. Mother's endless progress reached the fields too. The fields yielded 85 tons an acre, which even touched 110 tons in exceptional cases. The factory kept on crushing the first year's cane for two full years.

Mother herself blesses her devotees with endless progress. If endless progress is accepted as a conscious goal, the company does progress endlessly.

If a devotee starts a company, endeavours along these lines seriously and meets with a fair level of success, his company will have several characteristics that can be observed.

- There will be an atmosphere of hope and joy in the work.
- Public image will be one of admiration and approval.
- Individuals in the company will be sought after by everyone from everywhere.
- Expansion, not mere growth, will be endless.
- No difficulty will ever arise.

If ever any difficulty arises, either it will be in our power to remove it or it will be a stepping stone to higher achievement.

Mother as a Disciplinarian

Mother's love is great. We can say that her love is as great as her disciplines. But She had the unique endowment of disciplining people not through authority and punishment but through her love. Those who were well brought up, those who came forward to discipline themselves were

appreciated by her. Discipline, external and internal, is necessary, but it should not be imposed from outside. It must be self-imposed. Discipline is an article of faith with Mother.

We can say that following Mother's rules is as good as following Mother herself. The more disciplined you are, the closer you are to Mother.

Levels of Prayer

Think of Mother when a crisis comes. It is better to think of Her before the act commences. If you want to start any work and that work has several strands, has a history - a *karma* - first think of those obstacles before thinking of the work. Prayer to Mother with a mind of awareness is a better prayer. Keep your home clean and be diligent in all your acts before you think of praying to Mother for any particular work. Better still, keep the mind clean before cleaning the house.

If you pray to Mother before an act commences, knowing the obstacles involved in it, and with a clean mind and home, prayer is most powerful. If you can do that much, you do not have to pray, because She thinks of you. No prayer is necessary to accomplish any work. Still, prayer has a place for higher perfection. Prayer, concentration, effort, consecration are powerful yogic methods and instruments. A diligent, alert, conscious householder need not resort to any of these methods to have a work done. All his work will be well accomplished. He can resort to prayer or consecration for greater perfection in *sadhana*.

Mother as a Mother

Apart from Her divinity, Mother is pre-eminently a mother. She gives as few others can give. She often said that she had to act according to the mother in her. A mother disregards her children's deficiencies and pays attention only to their requirements. A Jewish proverb says that God created mothers because he could not be present everywhere. She gives you spiritual experiences and, when you manage to lose them, she helps you to regain them too. She starts giving to you before you even come to her in a measure no one can imagine.

A man was trying in vain to sell a property of his for twice the market value! He did not succeed. Mother, whom he had not heard of, helped him to succeed for her own reasons. After the deal was successfully finalised, his temperament spoiled it. For another six years he could not sell it. He once came to *Darshan* out of curiosity. In return of that man's visit of curiosity, Mother brought him an offer of purchase for three times the impossible price he asked for. Again at the time of finishing the deal, he spoiled it. He was now shown that it had come to him from Mother. The man agreed and visited the *samadhi* to pray. The lost offer came back. That is how Mother gives.

A young man who started life on a salary of Rs.125 was invited to the Ashram sometime in June of a certain year. In the middle of July, the young man happened to meet the elderly man who had sent the invitation earlier. He suggested to the youngster to visit the Ashram on August 15. Mother and the Ashram were unknown to the youth till then. In the first week of July, the young man's income rose to Rs.960. Neither the young man nor his people knew it had any connection with his proposed

visit to the Ashram a month and a half later. Mother alone can give as She gives. We see only the external material gifts and are oblivious of what She pours into the soul of the man.

14. Nature, Climate, Weather

Mother says the weather is under the control of some little entities. They all obey her. When children in the Ashram school pray for no rain during the games, these entities answer positively. It is a constant experience of our school children.

Indira Gandhi was in North India, touring parts that were affected by drought. A devotee was there in those parts by chance. He met the Prime Minister and told her that a prayer to Mother would bring rain. She instructed a telegram to be sent to Mother by the devotee. Rain came in copious measure in response to the prayer.

Pondicherry and its environs have never suffered the negative effects of drought. From a certain village, a group of workers were coming to an ashram factory. They complained of water scarcity in their village. The news reached Mother. Mother asked the villagers to pray. Rain descended in torrents and would not stop. Too much rain now caused a problem. News again went to Mother. She smiled and the rain stopped.

Mother easily tunes herself to nature and nature responds to her readily. It is the experience of several devotees that, in answer to their prayer, several times a cyclone that was predicted to hit in the next few hours moved away. Even in cyclone-devastated areas, devotees have reported that their properties, even an advertisement board, have been left intact though surrounded by several damaged buildings.

Robert was someone who brought rain wherever he went. Even in a desert he visited, there were unprecedented rains creating a flood. Robert was fond of Sri Aurobindo's *Gayatri* mantra and started chanting it. The temperature reached peak levels as in dog days. It was Robert who constantly complained about the heat. When he suspected a relation between his chanting and the rising heat, he suspended the chanting. The heat came down. But the *Gayatri* he was chanting would not stop. It started repeating itself inside him without his initiative. The heat rose. With great effort Robert succeeded in stopping the *Gayatri* and maintained that control till summer passed away.

15. Gods

Mother always had several types of relationships with the Gods. She once saw a film on *Anusuya*, the wife of a *rishi*. Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva appeared before *Anusuya* and asked food to be served by her naked. *Anusuya* turned the *Tirumurthis* into babies by the power of her chastity and served them food. Mother commented that it was a lovely story. Mother explained that through her devotion

Anusuya invoked the Supreme to come to the rescue of her husband against the erratic wishes of the *Tirumurthis*.

Mother used to conduct meditation in the hall and several gods, goddesses and *rishis* used to regularly participate in the meditation. She said they perched themselves on the cornices of the meditation hall pillars. *Durga* came every year a day or two before the *puja* for *Durga*. Mother spoke to *Durga* about surrender to the Supreme. This concept was new to *Durga* and she was intrigued. Later she understood. *Durga* explained that the gods never thought of surrender. It was not their way. When *Durga* understood and offered surrender to the Supreme, she enjoyed the new experience.

Once Mother spoke to the sea god and asked him not to disturb her work by encroaching into her building. Mother had heard a lot about *Ganesb*. One day she meditated to see him. She saw him approaching with his trunk and a smile. She was surprised that he did exist. He was happy to do anything for Mother. Mother expressed her need for money for the work. He agreed to do his part. Mother said that for ten years money flowed in constantly. Later she took up work in America. By that time money had dried up. She called *Ganesb* and asked him what happened to his promise. *Ganesb* expressed his inability, saying that Mother's need was too big and his resources were limited. Mother explained that since people in America had no knowledge or faith in *Ganesb*, he could not give her money for work in America.

A *Ganesb* temple near the Ashram was being renovated and there was not enough space on one side. *Ganesb* came to Mother and asked her for space from one of her adjacent buildings. Mother called her people and arranged for it.

Mother returned to her room one day and found *Shiva* standing there. He was as tall as the room. His head reached the ceiling. She had a conversation with him and he said he was willing to help her. She wanted her physical ego to be eliminated. *Shiva* consented and the next moment the sensation in the cells showed that the dissolution of her physical ego had begun. She told Sri Aurobindo what had happened. He felt it was not necessary at that time. Immediately every movement in Mother's cells stopped.

Mother had asked *Shiva* and *Krishna* to incarnate in the body of Sri Aurobindo to expedite his mission. *Shiva* was unwilling and said he would come after the advent of the Supermind. *Krishna* agreed and entered into Sri Aurobindo's body. Mother says she saw with her own eyes *Krishna* incarnating in Sri Aurobindo's body. She reported all that to Sri Aurobindo and found that he was not interested.

Sri Aurobindo used to say that he never wanted to be limited by the gods. The gods belong to the overmental plane. Their dimension, Mother says, belongs to the dimension of earth. Overmind is a plane where the full power of truth does not exist. It is a plane where truths can protect themselves and act, eliminating the destructive influence of ignorance. Overmind brings together several truths to act in unison. *Krishnavatar* came from this plane. The color of this plane is blue. Sri Aurobindo explained to Mother that the overmental truth had no power to transform ignorance into

knowledge. It can function successfully protecting its truth and avoiding the warping influence of ignorance. Truth is self-existent in the next plane of Supermind. Here there is no ignorance. Power of Supermind can enter into ignorance, reach its foundation of truth, unite all of them and from there transform ignorance into knowledge. Without that seed of truth, however little, neither ignorance, nor evil, nor falsehood, nor even hostility can exist. Beings of the supramental plane are of the dimension of the universe. On February 29, 1956 when the Supermind descended, Mother found herself as big as the universe and in a golden form. The gods have a limitation when they come to function in the supramental plane. Sri Aurobindo had declared he never wanted to be limited by the gods in his work.

After 1950, Mother sometimes took to walking. She was walking daily on the verandah outside Sri Aurobindo's room. After a few days, she found Krishna walking alongside her. Much later, she found Sri Aurobindo instead of Krishna walking with her. These were adorable moments in her life. She remarked to Sri Aurobindo how nice it was to walk with him. It was much better than the other work she was doing. From that day onwards, he stopped coming. After sometime Mother found that, when she walked on the verandah, She was followed by **HERSELF**.

16. Past Lives of Sadhaks

Mother and Sri Aurobindo were on earth at all critical periods of evolution to guide it, said Sri Aurobindo. Answering a question about how long they were on earth, he said since the beginning. Mother always said that all those who are here in the Ashram, those who were here and even those who had left the Ashram, were with them in several previous births. Everyone of them had, in earlier births, prayed to Her for the boon of being with Her at the time of Divine fulfilment. And that is why they are all here, said Mother.

In a certain period, Mother was telling *sadhaks* about their previous births. To one sadhak she said that she saw an emanation of Vivekananda on him. Another was a Roman general. Commenting on the royal robes of an actor on the Ashram stage, Mother said he looked exactly like his past self as a Roman Emperor. Reincarnations of Hector, Moses, Lalitha [Radha's play mate], a French king and Confucius were found by her among her disciples.

TRANSFORMATION

For human life to be transformed into Divine Life, the ego should be replaced by the soul, the thoughts of mind by the *jyothi* of the spirit, the attachment of the heart by divine love, the excitement of the vital by the delight of the spirit, the habitual efficiency of the body by the unfettered power of the gods, death by immortality, etc. All expressions of darkness and falsehood must be replaced by expressions of light and truth. Purna yoga's central endeavour is to bring this about.

When we receive blessings from the Mother, when we think of Her and feel we belong to her, when we really see Mother acting in our lives, we see the expressions of such a transformation.

An industrialist devotee came to the Ashram on his usual annual visit, met a visitor who had come there, and discussed his own affairs in his factory. The industrialist was pleased by the half-hour discussion with the visitor and even felt that it might be useful. A week later the visitor received a cheque for Rs.2,000, requesting him to use it for the work he was doing for Mother. The industrialist was known to be a miser of a hard type. Not many people had succeeded with him in matters of money. Everyone who personally knew the industrialist refused to believe the news. Some could not even believe it after seeing the cheque. Misers of reputation have shown the 'Divine Truth' that misers do have generosity when they relate to Mother and have acted as men of generosity. Whenever you find a man acting exactly opposite to his nature, you can be sure Mother is at work. That is her power of transformation.

The owner of a coconut garden prayed to Mother that the theft of nuts from his garden should stop. It stopped. Two men came to him. They announced that they were the thieves and that they had decided to turn over a new leaf. Theft can stop in response to prayer. The thief changing his ways and announcing it to his victim is unheard of. Wherever it exists, it is transformation. Wherever Mother acts, that touch of transformation is inevitably there.

Mother has named the flower of the Indian Cork tree 'transformation'. A bank's offering more money than applied for; dishonest villagers returning their loans on their own; an applicant who pleaded for the inclusion of his name in the selection panel, cancelling the previous rejection order, finding his name included, not in the panel, but in the selected list; the aspirant for a bank clerkship being recruited as a bank agent; the buyer of a property offering a higher price than the one quoted by the seller-are not common to human life. They are the experiences of the devotees and expressions of Mother's power of transformation.

17. Where is Mother?

By 'Mother' we mean the Mother of Sri Aurobindo Ashram who lived here in her physical body for over 60 years. Sri Aurobindo said Mother was an avatar and an incarnation of the Divine Transcendent *Shakti*. In Her individual aspect she lived here and worked with Sri Aurobindo. During her stay She revealed her universal aspect several times. To us, her devoted children dedicated to Her mission, She is the Supreme Divine Mother physically leading us to the realisation of the Supermind. She is individual, universal and transcendent. Her being here on earth, Sri Aurobindo said, is an act of constant *Grace*. When all is said and done, we mortals have a way of feeling that she WAS here and now Mother is not here, referring to her physical existence. It is true that the physical presence of Mother is constant Grace, an incomparable opportunity to relate to Her as her own children. It is an Hour of God and not luck that earth was often favoured with. Perhaps this was the most auspicious hour in earth's life. Mother even added a new dimension to

Her existence on earth. The Divine Mother, of whom she was a physical incarnation, herself came down on earth to hasten the advent of the Supramental Being, because our Mother was here.

Well, it is a physical fact that Mother lived amongst us and now she is no longer with us in the physical body. How do we know when she acts, where she is, which acts express her grace? There are several ways that were true even when Mother was here and continue to be equally true now, perhaps more true. One thing is certain. Mother's presence is now more powerfully felt everywhere than when she was here prior to 1973. She responds to calls more quickly and her answers bring a fuller result.

When a devotee meets Mother, she initiates him into spirit by looking into his eyes, reaching his soul through the eyes, fixing a spark of herself in his soul, which grows there into an emanation of her, presiding over his life. Apart from that permanent lodged inhabitant, there are the other moments when she comes into your mind, heart, nerves or life. They have a special sweetness, each special to its own plane, and have a marked way of expressing.

We can know Mother is there when CALM invades our heart suddenly. When Mother chooses our heart as a temporary abode, we feel it as CALM. If she chooses to linger there for more than a minute, causeless joy issues out of our heart. Joy is always Mother's gift and causeless joy is a stamp of Her presence. If you ever find your mind expanding--actually it is felt as if the skull is expanding--you can spot out Mother in your mind. If thought ceases in your mind of currents and cross currents, it indicates Mother's visit to your mental region. When the sensation of excitement changes into pleasing expansiveness, when others speak your thoughts, when life moves towards you bringing you the man you want to meet, the things you want to acquire, when new rules are made to meet your new needs, when MORE is given to you than what you asked for, when an argument against you turns in your favour, when help arrives exactly on the minute, MOTHER IS there.

A man with a deep-seated inferiority complex developed a high strung tension and learnt to live with it, living a miserable inner life. He came to Mother's *Darshan* and on the same day the entire terror dissolved forever. Another well-placed business executive of very fortunate circumstances in life developed a fond sentiment for the Vedas and learnt important portions, neglecting traditional injunctions. His unorthodox interest in the orthodox ways of Vedic lore had the very opposite result than he aimed at. His mind was torn by an unbearable tension to the point of having sleepless nights and nightmares for 15 years. He came to have Mother's *Darshan*. When he entered Her room, even before coming in front of Her, Her gaze fell on him and wiped out the demon that had possessed his mind.

A professor of high academic education and attainment came to Mother's balcony *Darshan* and found his mind falling silent and his thoughts ceasing, an experience he never had in life. A timid lady who used to fear everything and everyone came to the Ashram to renew contact with her sister lost several years before and was frightened beyond measure as to what would happen at the meeting. To her surprise, meeting her sister in the Ashram premises gave her a joy not known to her before.

Clever talebearers in a school carried false stories to the indecisive headmaster against a new teacher. He called a teacher's meeting to discuss and decide on the 29 complaints. Being unprecedented in the 100 year tradition, every other teacher was panicky about the issue, since a weak boss was being handled by clever intriguers. In a potential atmosphere for any untoward turn, the meeting began on an uncertain note and led nowhere. The new entrant was a devotee of Mother and decided not to defend himself. He awaited the result. The foolish remarks of the talebearers provoked the headmaster who furiously turned against them for leading him into a situation he could not manage. He abused them publicly and dispersed the members. When the devotee does not defend himself, Mother defends him more fully than he can.

18. Some Related Information

Mother says the life of a man remains in the body after death for seven days. Life exists at several levels. When the heart stops, pulse stops, the body becomes cold, we declare a person dead. But deeper layers of life linger even after the body begins to decompose and finally leave the body only after seven days. In more developed cases of the soul, the period may be longer than seven days. The Indian habit is to cremate the dead body. Mother says when the body is burnt, the lingering life reacts and twists and turns the body sometimes. Burial is the best method according to Mother. It leaves the lingering life peaceful.

Mother accepts the service done to her devotees as service done to Her directly. Several traders, workers, doctors and other professionals offer paid service to Mother's devotees as part of their regular work. Often they may not be even aware that the people whom they work for are devotees of Mother. Invariably every one of them prospers, as if they have done service directly to Mother out of dedication. The remuneration they draw in return for their service becomes, by an inverse logic of life, Mother's *Prasad* to them. Likewise, there is a long list of people whose experiences illustrate this phenomenon. A money lender who lent a devotee a small sum got a troublesome partner removed from his firm; an agriculture labour supervisor who worked in one of Mother's farms discovered water in his field well, which had been given up years ago as waterless; a school headmaster who offered a unique help to a devotee was promoted in his own religious hierarchy to an unprecedented height; a field labourer on Mother's property became a community leader; a rickshaw man who was serving devotees received a permanent income five-fold higher for a fourth of his usual labour. To whomsoever the service is offered, Mother receives it from behind. When it is offered to Her devotees, She receives it as if it is directly offered to Her.

After coming to Mother, man finds his capacities increase and life offers rewards to the increased new capacities. As a result, average people rise to heights, incapable useless people become successful, even great, and labour leaders rise to political eminence.

It requires a great *punya* of past births to be part of Mother's work, even if the individual is otherwise endowed. It is not endowment of personality that entitles a man to Mother's service. It is only his

poorva janma punya. Even if one is a dummy and good for nothing, such *punya* can bring him to Mother, Her work and Her service.

People who seek spiritual progress should still make an offering of a fruit or a leaf or a cup of water. It is an imperative in the scheme of spiritual fulfilment in human life. Only that material offering completes the last link between the eternal source of endless progress and the aspiring soul. Those in life whose prime requisite is not spiritual progress but material welfare must make a material offering. A Saivite *brahmachari* of over 70 years came to have Mother's *Darshan* and on hearing the above explanation pronounced, "I seek only Mother's Blessings. I am not in favour of material offering." His *Darshan* had several beneficial expressions in his life. His health grew in vigour. His face began to shine as never before. He began to adore Mother with sincere emotion. He was appointed as an approved water diviner by the state government. He, who had been used to 10 to 15 calls a year, now was called all the time and answered three or four calls on a single day. He said that in one year he did as much work as he had in the previous 30 years. But, he received only as much income as he had earlier or a little more. He was sore about it. He was pondering on that paradoxical situation of a mountain of work accompanied by no enhanced income. When he almost spoke aloud his situation, one who had been present at his earlier pronouncement, "No material offering", reminded him of his earlier stand. He quickly reversed his stand and sent an offering to Mother. All the money due to him came as if obeying invisible orders. He left for his native place, bought a piece of land and a house, dug a well, and settled down in retirement. Material offering is in place for those seeking material prosperity.

In my 29 years of experience, I have heard of several instances of Mother relieving the distress of her devotees. I have myself witnessed many of them. I have myself been instrumental in bringing devotees to Mother. In the next chapter, I would like to give a summary of all I know of under the title 'What happens to you when you come to Mother?'

19. What happens to you when you come to Mother

Your clumsiness comes down, mind is clearer, health gains, life is happy, you are treated better by others, you rise in life earlier, your income trebles, unmarried girls get married, new rules come to bestow unexpected gains, quarreling in families abates, you get employed, feel happier, rewards come your way, recognition is greater, you score against rivals, diseases disappear, constantly people exclaim, "Where was I, where am I now, it is unimaginable!", tempers calm down, you become a better person, acquire new capacities, you are invited on foreign tours, irresponsible children turn around, intimidating management becomes soliciting superiors, coercive partners quit, miserly partners buy you shares with their money, abandoned projects come to life, a nobody becomes a VIP, life prolongs after decreed years, incorrigible bad habits fall off, lost speech is restored, a mere volunteer becomes a chief minister, the greatest of dangers turns into the greatest of opportunities, lost wealth is restored in greater measure, properties offered for sale get thrice the price, annual incomes become monthly income and later daily income, low level employees rise to be top level

executives, last level worker rises to become a CEO, final tragedies in life disappear in seconds catapulting you into the limelight, you end up buying 300 acres having aimed at owning one acre, record prices greet your produce, unforeseeable help brings in unimaginable abundance, complicated arrangements work out smoothly, unrealised ambitions given up decades ago come to life yielding results, life brings in the whole when you aspire for a part, uncultured relations put up acceptable behaviour, hostile society calms down into an admiring one, sickness disappears from the family, accidents disappear from vehicles and factories, strikes are forgotten by your workers, employers lose the attitude of exploitation, bankrupt divisions come to life, truant children become regular and rise to the top, vain people become sober, sight lost 20 years ago is restored in full, water appears in wells given up as dry, arch enemies acclaim your accomplishments, longed for posts are now offered to you, you become dominant in situations where you were submissive, invitations come from heads of administration and heads of state, journals solicit articles from one who has never published, rewards given at the end of career are offered at its beginning, retarded children improve enough to marry, neglected children become popular, timid men turn into respected leaders, coolies become community leaders, a thief becomes a wealthy trader, copious rain comes in the middle of summer to save the crop from a pump breakdown, you get a house in hours in a city where it takes months, opposite lawyer discloses favourable facts, a plot turns against those who hatched it, dismissal orders are dismissed at once, letters with no address reach safely, money lent to rogues is recovered, offensive spouse becomes pleasant companion, poor father is able to conduct three marriages in three years, offensive boss is compelled by his superior to write favourable reports cancelling bad reports, admission to medical college is secured without effort.

20. To Accept Mother in Life

In life we act according to what we like and avoid what we dislike. We choose our friends, our food, our job, etc. We take care to avoid certain people or certain foods. Some jobs are anathema to us. This is the basis for man to succeed in life. When you have people around you whom you like or when you do a job of your choice, you naturally meet with success. If for any reason a job irks you, you constantly look for an opportunity to get out of it. This is normal human life at all levels. When Rajiv Gandhi was invited to politics with a promise of future Prime Ministership, he said he would rather be a pilot. That is the force of liking. It is right in life.

Should a man say that he would like to accept Mother in life, he would be touched at this point and, only if he is willing to change this attitude, can he think of Mother. Mother's attitude is to rise above likes and dislikes, relate to work, do not express your personality but express your duty, do it without expecting results, do it without any attachment to the work itself. This is high sounding and seems idealistic. Our first response is to shun it at all costs. But this is a truth of life. At home, at the office, with relatives, friends, at a function in public, we do exhibit this ideal so as to be approved of in the society. "Here is an order to pay money to flood-affected people. Several others have come. I feel

guilty in throwing away government money. But it is not for me to question. I am here to execute orders. Let me do it." This is what one in government service does.

If we look at the level of life we have risen to, at this level we will be following the above ideal at several points, in several ways. All men who continuously rise in life can be seen putting away their personal preference for one reason or another and relating to work on hand. That is the way of progress. Mother says it is good one makes several individual adjustments but it is better one gets that ATTITUDE permanently. To acquire that attitude forever is to accept Mother in life. To begin with, this attitude is essential in Mother's way of life, which culminates in the final ideal of "No Reaction". Man's life itself is a reaction to the environment. For him to reach an ideal of no reaction is a very high goal. Mother says reaction comes from the ego. Mother's yoga stipulates the abolition of ego. Hence her ideal of no reaction. Taken in the best of spirits, this is a great opportunity for progress. What is very difficult for man becomes less difficult and possible, if he invokes the help of Mother. Should one try for a life of no reaction, he will soon discover how enjoyable and powerful life is.

Normal human responses are expectation, greed, irritation, vindictiveness, jealousy, etc. If these get fulfilled, the pleasure one derives out of them is sharp, not wholesome. Certainly it is far more satisfying and pleasant to genuinely feel happy at a colleague's promotion and congratulate him, instead of feeling jealous about his advancement. It makes you feel good and that is a way of progress too.

Man anticipates the results of his present work and starts building on them. That is one reason for disappointment and frustration. To do the work and concentrate on it and think less and less about the result is a good attitude. Whatever discipline you follow, whether it is the right attitude, no reaction, feeling happy about another or not thinking of results, LIFE will cross the limits of our patience. If we succeed in one discipline at one level, life, as if it is consciously testing our endurance, will present a stronger occasion. If you manage to keep your cool at the provocation of your being bypassed in your office in the matter of allotting work, life will present you another opportunity where your promotion will be bypassed. The patience you managed to exhibit in the previous case will give way now. Even if you succeed here, another opportunity more difficult will come to break your endurance. Life is bent upon testing us and we should pass that test at all costs. Only with that attitude can we succeed in an effort like this.

It is easy to keep patient when someone wrongfully prods you, but when your right actions are twisted and motives attributed, it is not so easy to keep quiet without reacting.

You may pass that also. Yet there is one more test. You have loved a person as a good friend for a long time. He feels now there is an opportunity for him to serve a rich man and earn his good will, if he initiates an act of gross betrayal of your interest. Not many can stand that situation. A few may pass that test too. Added to that, he calls into question your otherwise spotless integrity to justify his own betrayal. Not to react here is not given to anyone who does not base his faith in the Divine. If one outwardly succeeds in this, still the inner reaction is not easy to abolish. Mother says that in such

a situation one has to love the man who betrays you. Surely you cannot love his betrayal of your interest. Mother says love in him the Divinity, in spite of his betrayal. To find that love inside oneself is a sure way of accepting Mother in life. However intimidated you feel in such a situation, if you accept the ideal and call in Mother's support, She makes it possible to emerge unscathed. Also She gives you no further occasion in life of that description.

We cannot compare ourselves here with others, because not many people are following these ideals. We can constantly compare ourselves with the ideals we have set for ourselves.

If this ideal is too high and one feels he cannot attempt it, he can make a small but significant beginning that will lead to the goal in time.

1. As a first step, it must be possible to drop jealousy, hatred, offensiveness, selfishness, etc. One can make a full-throated effort, at least, with one of them.
2. As a second step, try to take another man's point of view, train yourself to listen, be pleasant and try any such attitude.
3. At the physical level of action, punctuality, orderliness, regularity, etc. will help the efforts above.
4. At a higher level act on faith.

If you are not able to follow any of these with full significance, at least start following the external physical versions of them in behavior.

21. Different Types of Progress

Man seeks comfort and happiness. If this is the goal of a man and he wants it from Mother, it is easy for him to attain it.

If comfort alone is the goal, a prayer with faith will bring it. If one needs his life to be happy too, prayer with moved emotion will accomplish it. For most, the whole life is covered by the twin goals of comfort and happiness. There are other types of progress in life sought by many.

- Steady success in the present life as a continuous phenomenon is desired by one type of people. To maintain the relation and devotion to Mother steadily is an inner condition that will yield this outer result.
- There is a progress whose rate is far quicker than we can conceive of. Here the final results are awarded as initial returns. Such a result comes to those who are dynamic and diligent in work. Life yields great results to these people at the end of a career. If Mother's devotees are diligent and dynamic in their work, Mother gives the final results in the beginning. Mother gives in the beginning what life gives in the end.
- Moving to the next higher level, the lessee of a land becoming a landlord, taxi driver becoming a taxi owner, high school teacher entering college service, etc.--are some

expressions of progress. To all those devotees who accept Mother in life generally--not merely as Divine, but as a guiding force in life--this type of progress happens.

- Moving to the top level, a servant becoming master, a low-level officer becoming a high-level executive is another type of progress. If devotees accept Mother in life, not in a general fashion, but thoroughly and fully, they meet with such success.
- Moving from the lowest of jobs to the highest of posts and likewise from level to level is the highest progress life can afford to anyone.

There are those who accept Mother in life thoroughly and fully and also open their faculties wider and wider to Mother. Particularly, they open to Mother in their vital and let Her expand herself in their vital.

22. Insoluble Problems

There are nothing like insoluble problems for Mother. But, in the scheme of things, in the life of the devotee many problems are left unsolved which he comes to describe as insoluble problems. If problems of that description are taken up, there are two approaches that lead to solutions. One way is to change the human trait that generated the problem. That is a radical, substantial solution that would not only offer a solution to the problem on hand, but would usher the willing individual into a greater measure of prosperity. The other is to seek a limited solution. Isolating the problem from the man and his life, insulating it from other influences, concentrating our efforts on the solution, we find a solution. Either is possible.

For the first solution, it is necessary for a man to know why a certain problem arose. If he knows it and he is willing to change in himself that trait which created the problem, then it is good. Once he makes that inner change, a prayer will readily remove the problem, however knotty it appears to be. In case he is unable to locate in himself any characteristic or attitude or activity that led to the problem, he should come forward to assume that one exists inside him and be willing to give it up, whether he knows it or not. Before taking up a prayer to solve the problem, he must pray to Mother to remove what in him has caused it.

The second is not an attempt to change one's inside but to aim at a limited solution, which is a total solution to the problem. A dozen methods are open to him.

1. Intense Prayer: If one is unemployed for years or a girl's marriage is getting postponed for 10 years or one is suffering from a chronic disease, an intense prayer will remove it. By intense prayer I mean that the devotee should go deep into himself, as deep as the problems constitute a worry in him, and from there resolve to pray to Mother. Prayer from that depth will be elevating. Should he reach such depth for prayer, he should set apart three or four days and be fully absorbed in it. The problems will melt away. As the devotee goes to a depth within himself

and voices a prayer from there, the problem receives the full impact of the prayer whose intensity is equal to the problem. Naturally it gives way.

2. **Deep Concentration:** The first method of prayer and this concentration are the same in essence but their forms vary. This can be resorted to only by those to whom concentration is natural and easy. A concentration should be developed in meditation and tested for its intensity against the intensity of the problem. If it does not match, day after day the intensity of the concentration should be increased until it reaches the intensity of the problem. In a few days one can reach it. Once it is reached, the problem can be forgotten and one can lose oneself in the concentration. The problem gives way on its own.
3. **Complete Consecration:** Narrating to Mother in prayer or in imagination the sequence of events that led to the problem is called consecration. If it is done without reactions of mind, after a few sittings the knot will be broken. One significance of this method is all the harassing life events that led to the creation of this problem, once consecrated, will not recur in the life of the devotee anymore.
4. **Offering the Karma:** If the devotee knows now that his past actions have led to the present situation, he should offer to Mother the original acts so as to dissolve the karma at its roots. A father whose son had run away from home acknowledged that in his youth he had run away from home as a truant. His offering of his earlier actions now to Mother brought his son back to him exactly at the moment when his mind repented.
5. **Offering of the propensities that have created the Karma:** This is the same as offering of Karma but is deeper and has a greater purifying effect.
6. **Constant remembrance of Mother:** Instead of focussing on the problem, if one comes away in his mind from the problem and tries to remember Mother constantly, at the point the remembrance reaches maturity, the solution is found.
7. **Gratitude:** Mother says the god of Gratitude is the youngest in the life of earth. If one who is beset with a problem puts aside the problem itself and takes up other bright aspects of life and feels an intensely real Gratitude to Mother for each of them, before the list is fully covered, the problem will be solved.
8. **Faith:** A renewal of faith in the context of the present problem and fuller affirmation leads to a solution.
9. **Higher Understanding:** If one is of a mental bent, analysis of the problem in a wider context so as to arrive at a fuller understanding removes it.
10. **Grace:** Grace acts on its own. For us to bring ourselves to move Grace, all that we should do is to withdraw the faith from every other aspect. That makes Grace act. For instance, when salary arrears of 15 years are pending with the government, the mind will naturally rely on rules, procedures, etc. Grace cannot act as long as faith is there in any other aspect of life.

23. Purna Yoga

Mother says that She does not represent a teaching but is a creative force in action come on earth to expedite evolution. A teaching is an idea. One can accept a teaching and act on it. His willed action gives his own force to the idea. Non-violence, truth-speaking are such ideas that carry not a force of action but a force of idea. The idea becomes a force when the will of man lends its force to it. Electricity is not an idea, it is not a teaching or an argument. It is a force, a material force that can be used in several ways. Unless we use electricity, it does not come into action. All other theoretical explanations, however brilliant they are, are beside the point for electricity. Mother is a spiritual force. She is a spiritual force in mind, life and body. She emerges in full vigour and finds a play only when we let her work on the parts of our being. When so permitted Mother removes the shade of ego and desire from the soul, narrowness from mind and spirit, and darkness and *tamas* from the body. Man can achieve in a few days with Mother's force what will otherwise take years or maybe centuries.

Lenin said electricity when combined with the soviet made communism. Scientific discovery of any description takes the society centuries ahead. The spiritual discovery of Mother can abridge millenniums into days and months. For instance, Mother says the *sadhak* can consider himself lucky if full yogic efforts bring out the psychic being in 30 years. She adds that in the atmosphere of the Ashram, if one lets her force work in him, the same can be achieved in a few months. Sri Aurobindo says this is the Hour of God when the Divine intends to take great evolutionary strides in a few short steps. He also adds that his yogic help can best be received only through Mother. It is the mission of Mother to distribute His grace to the *sadhaks*, devotees and the world-at-large.

Mother and Sri Aurobindo used the supramental force to deliver a mortal blow to death. The supramental is unique in more than one way. In mind if we have an idea and want to put it into action, we use the will to accomplish it. The idea expresses knowledge and the will implements it. Mind is so constituted that the knowledge and will can exist apart in it. One may have the knowledge without having the will. Another may have the will power without the knowledge of what to do. In a third, both may coexist without action. If we want to build a house, it is clear that the idea will not achieve it unless one decides to build it and swings into action. That is what we mean when we say knowledge and will exist separately in the mind. In the Supermind they are fused together. Knowledge there contains the will and will includes knowledge. To extend the analogy of the house, if one with Supramental Consciousness thinks a house can be built, the house is there instantaneously. In Her vision of the supermind, She explains how the supramental beings act just by thought. One of those beings wanted to have a garment and Mother says it was there on him at once.

Trikaladrishiti, the knowledge of the past, present and future, will be a natural, permanent endowment of the Supramental Consciousness.

When we want to know about a person or a thing, we collect information, put it together, think and arrive at an opinion. That is the way of the mind, observation, sensing, thinking and inference. Supramental Consciousness has direct, total and integral knowledge of the persons or things it wants to know. When one endowed with Supramental Consciousness wants to know of another person

before him, he turns his attention to that person and feels a total identification with him. The Supramental man feels the other man's thoughts enter his own mind, his feelings enter into his nerves, making knowledge total and complete.

Spiritual attainments of any description can be imitated by adepts but, Mother says, the supramental attainments cannot be imitated. They do not lend themselves to be faked.

As Mother's yoga advanced, Her sense organs began to change character. Instead of the physical ear hearing, the subtle ear started forming and slowly replaced the physical one. Her subtle sight came more and more to the front, pushing Her eyes to the rear. She narrates with interest how She sees with eyes closed. Her listening functions precisely when the speaker's thoughts are well formulated and clear. She is unable to listen when there is lack of clarity in the speaker's mind.

To take to Her Yoga, Her basic conditions were very simple. Avoidance of politics, liquor, smoking and sex were those conditions. To receive the most from Her, She demands sincerity down to the very physical. Her explanation of mental sincerity is to know one knows nothing. Vital sincerity for her is to renounce the enjoyment of success. She goes further and says if one can give up the right to happiness, one gets the right to Ananda. Material sincerity is to give all one's material possessions to the Divine Work.

Mother often draws a poignant distinction between our life and the future life She has in store for us. One such dictum of Hers is: Explanations are mental, Power is Supramental. Her understanding of human nature crosses all known boundaries. She says that man now lies as never before and explains it is due to the fact that dying falsehood rises in vigour.

Until the age of 80, Mother did not sleep for more than one hour in the night. After 80, She changed Her sleeping habit. At night, She says, Her consciousness is as full as in the day. At various times energy of enormous intensities passed through Her. Once a sadhak received an 'electric shock' on approaching Her. She said an Italian discovered that the human body has such intensity of electric charge as to give a shock at a distance of 18 feet. Not only Her consciousness but even Her material substance of the body had acquired the power to spread out all over the universe.

Mother started hearing comments that She 'looked' tall at night and confirmed it was true.

Mother is a pre-eminent iconoclast. She says there is no destiny that cannot be changed.

In January 1969, the Superman appeared before Her. She saw no shadow of the figure. She says with the disappearance of the ego, shadow disappears too.

The passage to Supermind is marked by the heart stopping. This was an experience of Sri Aurobindo according to Mother.

Her list of mantras that She had been chanting runs to over 100. One of them She used often. OM NAMO BHAGAVATE is that mantra. The experience of Mother was that the greatest of inner disturbances is calmed by the chanting of this mantra.

She explained this yoga from every point of view. One important explanation: *Absence of personal reaction is the basis of Purna Yoga.*

Kundalini is the stored-up nervous energy in the muladhara chakra, situated at the tail end of the spine. When yogis succeed in their *tapasya*, they awaken this energy. It rises trumpeting like a serpent through the *chakras* in the heart centre and those in the head to join the thousand-petalled Lotus *chakra* above the head when the Yogi attains samadhi. In our yogic tradition awakening of *Kundalini* is a major landmark and soon leads to Mukti and Samadhi. So, it was understood that a Yogi whose *Kundalini* was awakened could not live for long. In Sri Aurobindo's Purna Yoga, the whole process is in reverse. The Yogi does not awaken *Kundalini*. He surrenders his ego and intensifies his aspiration. The Psychic being buried behind the heart comes forward and slowly opens the *Sahasradala* centre, the thousand-petalled Lotus centre above the head. The higher spiritual energy starts pouring in, opening each chakra in succession from above downwards, ultimately opening the *Kundalini* chakra. This happened to Mother and Sri Aurobindo, and both of them, contrary to the traditional belief, lived for over 50 years after the awakening of *kundalini*.

Her Peace is as tangible as any earthly force, perhaps, more powerful than that. She used to say that if anyone invoked Her Peace over a crowd in commotion or a quarrel, it would descend at once. It is the experience of many people that quarrels subside in minutes, noise disappears, disorder turns into order when Mother's Peace is invoked on the situation.

Mother comes to us according to our strength, rather according to our weakness. It is not given to man to receive all that Mother is. At best he can receive what his greatest strength permits. Receptivity to Mother, to Mother's Force, to Mother's Consciousness, to Mother's Grace comes from purity, faith, devotion, sincerity, etc. It is not so easy to fulfil any of these conditions in a good measure. So, we have to look at what we are, instead of considering what Mother's conditions are. As we are today we have accepted several things. We have accepted our own innate ability, better skill, our own inner goodness, etc. To receive Mother most, the immediate practical step is to accept Mother at the level of our greatest reliance. Let us accept Mother instead of social opinion, if society is the highest standard we have accepted. Should a person disregard society also and be guided by his own conscience, let him accept Mother instead of his conscience. That way one can receive the most from Mother.

To practice self-restraint is the basis of all yogas and any discipline. Should a man agree to practice self-restraint as directed by Mother, it will be a great discipline. She says one should not seek comfort, and one should not seek to do the work he likes. Instead he should evince enthusiasm in the work assigned to him. This is no ordinary effort. It means if one wishes to sit and gossip but is asked to sit and type, he can bring himself to do it as part of duty and obedience. Imagine what will be the effort required for him to enjoy his typing as he would enjoy his gossip. That is the type of self-restraint called for to follow Mother. The day consists of 24 hours and if one decides to practice such a self-restraint, 24 hours are enough to make great progress.

Mother explains purity as exclusive reliance on the Divine. She draws a distinction between trust and surrender. One can surrender to another knowing that the other would ruin him but still can bring himself to accept it. Trust is different. One who has Trust (in the Divine) knows that whatever the Divine does to him, ultimately it will be for his own good. Surrender can have a dimension of self-immolation, whereas Trust is always self-fulfilling and elevating.

Another way of making progress in accepting Mother is to raise oneself. Each man is at one level of existence and functioning. Suppose he tries to raise himself one step higher than where he is, he requires prolonged persistent efforts. When he succeeds, the success may be for a short duration in the day. We must accept the small success and try to extend it throughout the day. This is a powerful way of growing more and more into Mother's Consciousness, since after completing one level, there is always a next higher level open to him, making his progress endless. Such an effort can be made to speak in a low voice, to keep Mother's Presence, to practice any of Mother's disciplines.

One other way is to fully exhaust one's physical, nervous and mental energies in the work we do. A foreigner working in a project took to this and in six or seven days he was exhausted beyond measure. At that moment near a machine he 'saw' Sri Aurobindo standing in resplendent form, a vision rarely granted to seekers.

24. Purna Yoga and the Traditional Yogas

The aim of any yoga is *moksha*, liberation of the soul from the cycle of births and deaths. In Purna Yoga the aim is not liberation of the soul but transformation of human life into Divine Life. To start this Yoga the soul is to be liberated, but not from the cycle of birth and death. The soul is to be liberated from ego and desire. The soul that seeks its own liberation while millions of other souls languish in darkness is expressing an egoistic desire. In Purna Yoga the human soul must renounce the desire for individual salvation and lend its liberated status as an instrument for the greater fulfilment of the original Divine Intention.

Hatha Yoga, Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Jnana Yoga, Tantra, and Raja Yoga are the main lines of Indian Yoga. In all these yogas, the system chooses one part and purifies it through austerities. Purification leads to the liberation of that Purusha, the Purusha of that part. Through that initial liberation they attain *Moksha*, i.e. give liberation to the Jivatma. Hatha Yoga's instrument is the body. It liberates the *Annamaya Purusha* and attains final liberation of Jivatma through that. Jnana Yoga uses thought in the mind as the instrument to work on and attains the desired result, initially releasing *Manomaya Purusha*. Raja Yoga uses the whole mind to achieve the same result. Bhakti Yoga and Karma Yoga use the vital and will respectively. All Indian Yogas use one part of the human being. Purna Yoga uses all the parts of the being--mind, vital and body--and seeks the release of Psychic being from the domination of nature, the *Prakriti*. It is called Purna Yoga because its instrument is the whole being.

In our tradition *Kundalini* awakens and rises through the chakras in the heart between the brows and the head and joins the thousand-petalled Lotus above the head yielding *Moksha* through *Samadhi*. In Purna Yoga the entire process is in the reverse. The Yogi releases the psychic being hidden behind the heart from the ego and desire. The Psychic comes out and hastens the purification of the entire instrument. This opens the thousand-petalled Lotus, first and lets the higher spiritual force descend through all the chakras down to the *Kundalini*, which is awakened at the end.

In the tradition we use one part to liberate the whole. This being an arduous task, naturally serious austerities are called for. *Asanas, Pranayama, Japa, Mantra, Tantra*, etc. are resorted to. In Purna Yoga, as the whole being is the instrument and the sadhak is not the human being but the Divine Itself, the path is broad. Hence all narrow austerities are avoided. Methods needed here are sincerity and aspiration. Only, they must be total and intense.

Tradition employs physical methods. Purna Yoga eschews physical methods and resorts to only spiritual and psychological methods.

Tantra Yoga, which occupies a place of pride in Yogas, starts with the dictum that MAN is a soul in the body. Purna Yoga begins with the assumption that MAN is a soul in the mind.

It is customary for the Jnani to look down upon the ignorant Bhakta, and the Karma Yogi frowns on the Jnana as insubstantial, etc. Each yoga is inimical to the other. In Purna Yoga, not only are all these three systems included, but each leads to the other, to finally integrate the effort.

Indian Yoga is a life-shunning path. Purna Yoga declares that all life is Yoga and embraces life in its fold. Rishis, Munis, Yogis, when displeased, are known to spell out a curse. Purna Yoga has as its experiential base 'all life is divine'. It does not lend itself to curse anyone. If in its path an obstacle is laid, it looks into itself to remove the deep-seated curse, the eternal falsehood.

Traditional Yogas purify one part of the being and the ego of that part is dissolved, while the egos of the other parts remain. In Purna Yoga the ego in every part must be wiped out to bring the psychic being forward, the very first requirement.

Traditional yoga is done in the hermitages in the forest, away from life. Purna Yoga accepts life, lives it as the Divine Wills it to be lived, so that Life is divinised.

Guru is all in our tradition and even replaces God as far as the *Sishya* is concerned. The guru is God. Purna Yoga does not seek or accept a human guru. The Jagat Guru, the world Teacher in the heart of the sadhaka, is the only Guru.

Yogis pray to the gods Shiva, Vishnu, Krishna to grant them boons in their Yoga. The gods assent and grant the prayers. The Gods help the Yogi in his Yogic realisation. Purna Yoga aims at bringing down the power of the *Vignana Loka*, the Supramental plane that is above the plane of the gods, the overmental plane. If gods are accepted by the sadhaka, his yogic achievement will be limited by the limitation of gods, unless the participating god himself seeks spiritual progress through Purna Yoga.

Practice of this Yoga is not governed by Asanas, Pranayama, dress regulation, diet restriction, auspicious hours or even Mantras. Even meditation occupies a place of less importance here, not the pride of place accorded usually.

Indian tradition does not encourage women to take to sanyasa, yoga or tapas. In certain disciplines there is even a prohibition. Mother accepts women with the same eagerness as men into Her fold. The only criterion for Mother is the fitness for yoga.

Our tradition says--and Sri Aurobindo also has said the same thing--that in sleep every human being goes to Satchidananda to be spiritually energised. The stone stillness of sleep enables the soul to raise itself to that height. Purna Yoga demands the same type of inner stillness in activity for its accomplishment.

Part II

1. Introduction

Sri Aurobindo started yoga thinking he could gain enough yogic power to liberate India from British domination. As soon as his yoga revealed to him that India was free in the subtle plane, he realised that God had given him the work of emancipating humanity from falsehood and suffering. At the same time, there was someone in Paris doing similar work for God and meeting Sri Aurobindo in her meditations. In her mind she called him 'Krishna'.

They met in Pondicherry in 1914 and discussed their plans to serve God and to finally dissolve pain and suffering from the earth. Together they agreed on a course of action that was a further step in Indian yoga. She returned to Paris because of the war and later joined him in 1920 to remain in India forever. She became known as The Mother. Indian freedom was their concern. She told Him that she saw India free in the subtle plane. Once that much was settled between them, they wanted to finalise their course of action to fulfil God's original aim on earth.

Together they decided to carry Indian yoga to the next step from where Krishna left it in the Gita. Disciples in small numbers gathered around them to participate in their yoga. In contradiction to the Indian tradition that the body is false, they saw the body as the foundation for God's Truth in man and believed it must be liberated from falsehood. Rama had come on earth to establish the *Dharma* of *sattvic guna* in the individual. Later Krishna went a step further and tried to establish God's Dharma in collective human social life. Sri Aurobindo and The Mother decided to establish God's Truth at a higher level, viz., in earth's life, so that suffering, pain, falsehood, cruelty, and poverty in any form would be fully and finally abolished from earth's life, not merely from human life. Rama worked for the individual, Krishna for the collectivity, and Mother and Sri Aurobindo for the whole earth. If about a dozen people could accomplish this feat in their bodies, God's truth would descend, they declared. Hence they allowed seekers to collect around them. That was how the Sri

Aurobindo Ashram was founded. Mother declared that in 1956, six years after He left his body, the promised Truth descended on earth, but for its full expression the earth was not ready.

The common man may ask where does he come in this scheme of things and what is the relevance of this yoga to his life. Apart from being an avatar, Mother is a mother to every created being. She comes to us as a mother too. Falsehood is found in several forms. They are poverty, illness, mental pain, human impurity, imperfection, disharmony, etc. If the ordinary man relates to Mother, Her Truth and Power reduce these forms of untruth and finally abolish them. If man, while suffering, prays to Mother for relief and is relieved from any of these deformations, he receives Her Truth and serves her. In other words, man comes to Mother to get his daughter married, his son employed, to restore his lost property, cure his illness, secure promotions and in this way he is serving God's purpose of establishing Truth on earth forever. This book narrates several such experiences of devotees.

2. The Mother and Sri Aurobindo Ashram

When a sadhak asked "since when were Sri Aurobindo and Mother here on earth," Sri Aurobindo answered, "since the beginning of the earth's creation." To them, the Earth is a being, Mother Earth, a micro-unit of the Universe. Earth, they say, is an evolving being. At different critical stages of the Earth's evolution, The Mother and Sri Aurobindo have come down on earth to personally guide the evolution. Today they declare that the evolution of Earth is at a critical stage, in the sense that Man is not the last term of evolution and the spirit of life is endeavouring to evolve the next higher species, the Superman. That is why Sri Aurobindo and The Mother have come down to direct and hasten man's transition to Superman. The Mother was not an aspiring sadhak seeking spiritual realisation but a Divine Being presiding over the destiny of man.

She was born in France in aristocratic circumstances and was found to be a strange child since infancy. Often she would fall into a reverie and be lost to the world. At an early age she began to realise her special nature and was in pursuit of it, reading the best literature of the world, including The Gita. When her body fell into a trance, many spiritual teachers used to visit her and guide her in her sadhana. Among them there was an Asiatic figure whom she called Krishna. Her one aim in life was to discover the Divine inside and surrender herself to it. Also, she dreamt of creating a place on earth where she could provide all the material necessities to the seekers of the Divine, so that they could pursue the one aim she found worth seeking-their inner self-discovery. She was awaiting propitious circumstances for the fulfilment of this ideal. When she came to India, accompanying her husband during his election campaign, she visited Pondicherry. Ten miles away from the city she saw a column of light in the centre of the city and headed for that. Thus, She came to see Sri Aurobindo and at once recognised him to be the Krishna of her meditations. In him she found the same ideals as her own and took up work with him. After a visit to France she permanently joined him in 1920 and took up the spiritual work of Sri Aurobindo, around whom about 20 disciples had gathered.

Man acts to fulfil his needs and guides himself by his nature, known as human nature. This is selfish, aggressive, acquisitive, possessive, mean, vindictive, and so many other things that we know of. In his march towards civilisation, man learns to restrain himself and learns not to express these low aspects of human nature. In fact, human nature consists of high potentialities and low actualities. It is the lower side that often presses forward. When man advances further than the early civilised conditions, he seeks culture. He tries to change himself inside and express what he really is in his inner character. At the first stage of civilisation what changes is behaviour. In the second stage of culture it is character that changes. Below that remains the consciousness of Man, untouched and unchanged. Only when this changes from pettiness to nobility, from falsehood to truth, can human life turn into Life Divine.

The Mother's aim is to found a place where *sadhaks* can gather to work for this change, which She calls Transformation. It is not given to man to bring about this change in himself. Only the Divine can do so. All that man is called upon to do is to totally surrender himself to the Divine. In practice, this is done by meditation, selfless work and an adoration of the Divine in one's prayers. The triple key of yoga must be turned in the lock of the spirit.

In 1926 Sri Aurobindo had a further spiritual realisation and retired into total seclusion, which lasted until his passing away in 1950. In 1926 the physical organisation of the place fell to the lot of The Mother and She called it Sri Aurobindo Ashram. In the beginning all the *sadhaks* were doing all the works related to their maintenance, such as cooking, washing, gardening, maintenance of buildings, etc. All this work was given to them as part of their sadhana. The Mother herself did the cooking, served the food, ran the office, signed hundreds of papers, apart from conducting meditation, giving *Darshan*, listening to the spiritual problems of the *sadhaks*.

At 6:15 every morning she appeared on the Ashram balcony to initiate the day with her blessings. *Sadhaks*, who got up at 3 a.m., finished their own meditations and a good portion of the day's work, and then assembled under the balcony to receive her blessings. Here she collected all the aspiring souls and lifted them upward, charging them with her spiritual energy. In those days there were only a few departments. Later, after the Ashram grew, many departments sprang up: the office, library, dining room, press, workshops, playground, art gallery, dispensary, farms, dairies, flower gardens, guest houses, legal department, audit department, and many others, too. Her *sadhaks* worked in all the departments and ran them as a service to the Divine. The heads of the departments met her in the morning and took her blessings and orders. Again at 10 a.m. she used to meet all the *sadhaks* individually and bless them. Once again, in the evening at 5:30 p.m., she conducted meditation and met each sadhak to give her blessings to them.

Four times a year she used to give *Darshans* known as public *Darshans*, at which a few thousand devotees gathered and received her Grace.

3. Purna Yogi Sri Aurobindo

While standing on the threshold of *Moksha*, Swami Vivekananda said to himself that he would not accept the boon of heaven as long as millions of souls on earth were plunged in darkness. Thus, actuated by high selflessness, he denied himself the heavenly privilege. So did Buddha refuse to accept the liberation, *moksha*, that came to him. Sri Aurobindo began a parley with the Divine as to what he could do to wipe off sin, suffering, ignorance and darkness on earth. The Voice never failed to guide him. Now it asked him to totally surrender to the Divine Purpose on earth, so that the Divine might achieve in the world through him as a surrendered instrument.

Yogis aspire for *moksha* and attain it through *Jnana*. Others open the heart of love and attain the same goal. *Karma yogis* resort to desireless work--*Nishkamya*--to reach heaven. All of them consider the body as false, an impediment. For this reason yogis disregard the body. This is our tradition. Sri Aurobindo realised that the *Jnani* who attained wisdom could spread light in the world but that would reach only a handful of high souls; the *Bhakta*, who in his *laya* dwelt in God's chamber, in his *Samipa* poured the divine love on his devotees and followers, but the elevation of the masses at large was transitory. The *Nishkamya Karma* Yogi set a high ideal for other aspirants to follow. All this could touch vast humanity only on the fringe of its existence. After thousands of *jnanis*, *rishis*, and yogis have appeared on earth, the ignorance of the masses, their dense darkness, their infinite suffering still remain a reality. Sri Aurobindo realised that for this suffering to dissolve, it was not enough that several thousand souls reached the high heavens. The Divine should come on earth, bringing His light, love, and power not only to the minds and hearts of men but also to their very bodies, which had up until then been considered reservoirs of falsehood to be shunned and dreaded. All the *tapas* of the *muni*, all the yoga of the *rishis* are not enough to wipe out the falsehood of the body. These are individual efforts to reach the Divine. Sri Aurobindo realised that a higher power, higher than that of the aspiring yogi, should come into the human frame, if the dense falsehood of the body should dissolve and turn into divine light. His inner voice showed him that if a few--maybe 20--people could bring this higher light into their very bodies and their falsehood dissolve into light, the entire falsehood on earth would disappear, along with the age-old suffering and original sin. Perhaps this is analogous to one scientist making a wonderful discovery of a radio or a telephone and the whole ignorant world happily sharing the full benefit of it for no particular virtue of theirs.

With this guiding star of *Jnana* held before his vision, Sri Aurobindo set his foot firmly on the path of Purna Yoga. *Moksha*, the final goal of yoga or *tapas*, becomes the first step in this *purna* yoga. Long before Sri Aurobindo came to Pondicherry, he had attained this individual *mukti*, but had opted not to leave the body and the earth. Later in the Alipore Jail, God showed himself to Sri Aurobindo as the Cosmic Divine, the divine dwelling in every heart. After his release from jail, the inner voice led him to Pondicherry and his effort became more and more concentrated. His Presence was an ocean of peace, a peace that could not be penetrated even by the raging cyclone through an open window. He was able to pass the *Akanda Mounam*, the grand achievement of decades of *tapas*, to The Mother while he was engaged in conversation with her husband, Richard. Krishna came down and incarnated in Sri Aurobindo's body, a vessel of light, to complete his mission initiated during the period of the *Bhagavad Gita*. When asked by a disciple, Sri Aurobindo explained that Shiva was a part of his inner being. He told the world that his was not a yoga for attaining *moksha* or a yoga for any

high human ideal. It was a yoga of the Divine. He aspired to surrender himself more and more fully to the Divine, so that the Divine might achieve His Purpose on earth for His own delight.

Retiring into his room, he did his yoga with all his might and found the response of the Divine always there to come down into his own body and consequently on earth through his body of light. The Divine was totally ready. Sri Aurobindo's body was very pure. But that was not enough for the Light to come on Earth. A few more yogis of his level, maybe 10 or 20, had to be available with the same purity of being and purity of the physical, for the Light to descend permanently on earth. He was striking a new path, a highway to heaven or, rather, a way for heaven to come down on earth. When he realised that all his great heroic effort had succeeded in bringing the Light down on earth, he was happy; but when he saw that the descent was limited to his own body, he understood his mission was not completely fulfilled. Still, he decided that the descending Light should, at least, touch earth once. That was possible, he saw, only if he withdrew from his body and offered that pure vehicle as a receptacle for the Divine descent. Having seen that, he decided to withdraw himself, so that the Light might come on earth for at least a few days. He withdrew from his body in 1950. The Golden Light came down and occupied his yogic frame for four long days. He promised to remain in the subtle world to continue his work and not leave for heaven in pursuit of his own salvation.

4. The Mother and Her Devotees

Though the Ashrams and swamis are exclusively devoted to the pursuit of the Spirit, in view of the reservoir of power that accumulates in them, the common people approach them with a view to solving some of their insoluble problems. Rajen Babu was an asthma patient who was advised to seek the blessings of Ramana Maharshi. He stayed at Tiruvannamalai for a month in the hope of having his asthma cured by the Maharshi. A villager came to Gnanananda swami and said his cow was not yielding enough milk and wanted vibhuti from the Swami. Great souls always listen to such prayers and grant them, though these activities are outside the pale of their central pursuit.

Several people not necessarily interested in yoga have come to The Mother with their prayers and have had them answered. As this is a place outside of the Indian tradition, people generally come to Mother after trying every other avenue. Parents come when a child has lost his speech or when a boy has run away; industrialists bring their woes of strikes; unemployed graduates pray for jobs; girls who remain unmarried for a long time pray for early marriage; patients with incurable diseases visit the Ashram to find out whether there is any hope for them. All of them go back rewarded. If any problem or news is brought to the notice of The Mother or even the message enters the area of Mother's power or is brought to the Ashram, it means that that problem can be solved. (Mother says she holds herself responsible for everyone who has seen Her, even if it is only for a second).

I give below some experiences that are within my personal knowledge: (1) Anyone addressing a prayer to Mother finds the prayer answered. (2) If someone who has no faith suffers from a

difficulty, another who is interested in him finds his prayer answered. (3) Unintended, unconscious relationship with Mother or the Ashram wipes out existing difficulties or creates fresh prosperity. (4) Diseases known to have no cure disappear at the touch of Mother's force. (5) Difficulties given to a devotee turn into great luck for him. (6) When a man faces a problem in life-having foolishly exhausted all the life possibilities-for which there is no known solution, Mother creates fresh situations just to answer this devotee's prayer. (7) A long-suffering patient given up by his doctor, whose prayers to his own faith have not borne fruit, chooses to pray to Mother and is relieved. (8) Unambitious people who come to Mother without a thought in their head about progress in life find themselves compelled by circumstances to accept better situations. (9) When both rivals to a post seek Mother's blessings, both are rewarded in time. (10) Men who have casually seen Mother find themselves freed without their effort from impending, grave punishments.

1. A boy of 20 lost his speech and was in the hospital for three weeks. He did not know Mother or Her power. Someone sent him a flower from the Samadhi and requested him to pray to Mother whom he did not know. On the third day he spoke one sentence. His older brother was overjoyed and rushed to tell everyone that the first signs of speech had come. When this brother went to the devotee who had spoken to him about Mother and returned home, he found that his younger brother had come home from the hospital and was speaking normally.
2. A man took to bad ways of life and was found to be getting worse with the passing years. Ten years passed and his family gave up on him. His wife and children were depressed. One of the family members became a devotee of The Mother and the prosperity of the family began to pick up. Soon it became a respected family in the area because of its wealth and status. What had not hurt the family earlier now began to make itself felt. The behaviour of this truant member became regrettable. The devotee member secretly sought some advice and began to pray that the truant member should change his ways. He was told that on the day he could pray to Mother without fail each time the problem came to his mind, the problem would be solved. The devotee intensified his prayer. Two weeks passed. One day the truant member broke permanently with his former friends, vowed not to return to those ways, went home and offered to take care of the family establishments.
3. A man was separated from his temperamental wife for several years. He was willing to put up with her in spite of her temperament, but she insisted that he not support his own family, which depended on him. The separation lasted years. When this man wanted to meet a friend of his in another location, they fixed a date and place at Pondicherry. When he went to meet his friend, he discovered that there was a crowd waiting to have the *Darshan* of Mother and they had somehow chosen that place. He too had Mother's *Darshan*, met his friend and returned home. A week later he was reunited with his wife when his father-in-law brought his wife back to his house. She has remained with him since then.
A man was in a temporary government employment as an officer for four years. He could not pass the necessary tests. Therefore, he sought another permanent employment at a lower salary, which he got. During this period he happened to accompany some devotees to the Ashram and on the same day the scales of pay for his temporary job were revised to a high

level. As he had exhausted all scope for remaining in the department on temporary assignment, he was in despair. He was advised that if he took full effort to pass the tests now, the Grace that gave him the fresh opportunity would also help him in all other fields. It was quite a task for him to secure an extended exemption, pass two tests that were anathema to him, and retain the job at the level of the higher revised salary.

4. A man was suffering from TB for 20 years, and his doctors told him that the bacteria was resistant to drug treatment. He was under the personal care of a doctor and moved to the town where the doctor had been transferred. A time came when one of his lungs had to be removed. It was at this time that he came to the Ashram. It was explained to him that if he took any medicine now with faith in Mother, the faith would cure him through the medicine. He opted for Ayurvedic medicine. When the doctor gave him powdered coral stone, he was disappointed as he had had enough of it already. However, after eight months he was cured and began to assume independent charge of his farms, often traveling long distances.
5. An officer came to the Ashram accompanying his superior, who was going to meet Mother. He also had Her *Darshan* and became Her devotee. Quickly his position was raised in his organisation. He became the junior-most at the top level. This was an all-India institution with great power. Officers at the top level would join together to act as they chose, but not always in the best interests of the organisation. This new officer at their level was a very honest man and hence an inconvenience to them. They moved strings and sent wild stories about him to the Ministry. The Minister became alarmed and had an inquiry ordered. The inquiry revealed that the devotee was the best of the top officers. The next year, the chief executive's post became vacant. The Minister decided to appoint this devotee, overlooking more than ten of his seniors.
6. A foolish, dull boy struggled his way through ten years of schooling up to SSLC level and failed in the selection examination. In the next three attempts he also failed. Those were the days when only four attempts were allowed. Everyone advised him to take the exam only in the subjects that he failed in order to earn what is called a 'complete SSLC' degree, which is regarded as the same as the normal SSLC degree, except that he would not be eligible for government employment. The candidate was stubborn. He said he would rather fail than take the complete SSLC degree. He tried a fourth time and failed again. Now his poor family, which had been anxiously waiting for him to pass and get a job, was dismayed. At this time he came to see Mother's *Darshan*. Someone who sympathised with him prayed for him, not knowing what to pray for. The next week the government changed the rules and allowed more than four attempts.
7. An orthodox Brahmin was suffering from an incurable skin disease with bad eruptions all over his body. He tried every medicine and prayers of all the usual forms. He made offerings at famous temples, but even though his suffering became less, the disease remained. His son was visiting the Ashram and suggested he pray to Mother. Being an orthodox person, he thought it was not right to pray to any person outside his religion. His disease as well as his suffering became acute. Without the knowledge of his son, he wrote to the Ashram asking for Mother's flowers. The flowers cured him fully.

8. For five years, an old man was trying to sell 27 acres of land. He could not sell them because the land was sandy and nothing would grow there. At last he found someone and fixed a price of Rs.27,000. This buyer was anxious to buy, but for some reason the old man did not respond for several months. One day he visited his friend, a devotee, who had arranged for the sale and the buyer too was there. The sale talk was resumed, but the devotee friend was really anxious to know why the old man had not responded for a long time. The old man said he had had another offer for Rs.81,000 that had fallen through. The devotee then explained to the buyer that he had suspected some such thing had happened, because he had seen the buyer in one of Mother's *Darshans*. The old man was exasperated because that offer was now lost. He was told that what once had come to him from Mother would not be lost, if only he were willing to pray. The old man took the clue and even visited the *Samadhi* to offer a prayer that the lost opportunity might be restored. When he returned home, the buyer was waiting for him and the sale was closed for Rs.81,000.
9. Friends of two presidential candidates approached Mother for blessings. She gave both of them Her blessings, some flowers from Sri Aurobindo's *Samadhi*. One candidate waited for it, received it with care and kept it with him. The other candidate was more eminent and his friend could not reach him at all with Mother's blessings. At last one day when the friend finally met the candidate and was about to hand over the flowers, some VIP's walked in and took him away. Most unexpectedly, the first candidate was elected. The friend of the eminent candidate never had the courage to open the subject of Mother's blessings to the loser. Years passed. Finally one day he mustered courage and handed over the dried flowers to the candidate, who received them with devotion. The next year this candidate was elected unanimously to the post. When asked by the press how Mother's blessings dated many years ago had been delayed, he was unable to know why. He said it might be that they had been misplaced.
10. In a village feud two groups quarreled and one man was killed. The leader of the other group and his father were given the death sentence. One of their relatives was a devotee of Mother. He was disturbed. In the meantime, he found out that the leader had once visited the Ashram for Mother's *Darshan*. The devotee was told that if a man had once seen Mother, he would not die this type of death. Encouraged by this, the devotee approached his relative, the convict, with a request that he pray to Mother. His punishment was set aside on appeal.

5. Parc-a-charbon, Banyan tree, Ganesh Temple

Mother had subtle vision, subtle hearing and all other subtle powers. Often when She saw a person She did not see his physical form. Instead She saw what he would be ten years later or in his next birth or what he was in a previous birth. Inanimate objects communicated with Her. The gods were in relation with Her.

One evening at 6 o'clock, She asked to see a certain sadhak. He was not available. She asked for someone else. He too was away on work. Then she asked for anyone available to come see her urgently. An elderly sadhak presented himself and offered to do any work that was required of him. She spoke to him saying, "The Banyan tree near the Matrimandir in Auroville is in pain. Just now the tree came to me and complained. Please rush to the spot and relieve the distress of the tree and report to me."

Auroville is five miles away from the Ashram and the Matrimandir is at its centre. The Banyan tree is very old and has spread its roots all around. It is very close to the Matrimandir, standing between the foundation stone of Auroville, which contains the soil of all the world's nations, and the Matrimandir. The Aurovillians all worked to build the Matrimandir, which was under construction, and their houses were around the Banyan tree. Since the tree is centrally located and people live close by and work there during the day, nothing can happen there which will escape the notice of the *sadhaks*. The elderly sadhak rushed to the Banyan tree, wondering what it could all be about. It was already dark. There were no lights around the tree. He was an old man who could not climb up the tree. What was he to look for? What kind of distress could a tree feel? If it were anything that could be seen by people, it would have already been noticed. If it was something subtle or something on top of the tree, what could this old man do there in the dark? Soon he reached the spot. At the foot of the tree, a worker had fixed his axe. When workers want to keep their hatchets or axes, they have the habit of hitting a tree trunk with the sharp edge to lodge the instrument there. Someone, as was his wont, had fixed his axe in the foot of this tree. The moment the sadhak saw the axe fixed into the tree, it became clear to him. He quickly removed the axe, searched for the owner and while giving the instrument back to him, instructed him not to do that anymore. He returned to the Ashram at once with joy and reported to Mother. When he told her at what time he had removed the axe, She replied that exactly at that moment She had felt the relief of the tree.

One day some years ago She called a trustee of the Ashram and said She wanted to give a small piece of land from the backyard of one of her buildings to a *Pillaiyar* (Ganesh) temple which was adjacent to the building. The trustee explained to Her that for some months the trustees of the temple had been wanting some space. It was a small temple situated in the midst of residential buildings. During the days of the French rule, the temple was dilapidated and very few visited it. Legend says that some Frenchman was annoyed at the superstitions of the Indians and one day took it into his head that he must save these ignorant Indians from superstitious worship. He removed the idol of *Vinayagar* (Ganesh) and drowned it in the sea. The next morning there was a sensation in the temple area and a crowd gathered. People were outraged at the improper high-handed behaviour of the Frenchman but were helpless to prevent him. The following day they gathered in a large number and found the *Vinayagar* idol back in the temple intact, as if nothing had happened. After this incident the temple became very popular and streams of worshippers began visiting there. Now it was time to renovate the place. Because of a lack of space in front of the temple, the authorities had built a *mandapam* across the road with the traffic passing underneath. They needed some more space for devotees to do *pradakshina* around the temple. It is for this purpose the authorities of the temple tried to acquire more space on any one side of the temple. Being a residential place, their

attempts had met with failure everywhere. Their attempts with the Ashram had also met with no success.

Mother listened to the explanations about the temple with interest. She said the previous night, while she was in meditation, Ganesh had come to her and said he needed some space from her building. She said she had decided to give the space and passed orders to that effect.

About 50 years ago Selvaraj Chettiar was the Mayor of Pondicherry. He was an import merchant. As a mayor he was very influential in France and with the French Government. He had a coal godown right on the beach. Sea waves lashed against the compound wall and washed it away. He re-erected the wall a few times, but each time it was washed away. The Mayor consulted the French engineers, who were the leading marine engineers in the world. French engineers had built the Suez Canal. As he was influential and wealthy, he availed of the best consultation from the leading engineers and with their advice put up the compound wall again. But again it was washed away. It became clear that the sea erosion could no longer be contained. The godown was very big and was a very valuable property in those days. This work was the talk of the town, and there was no question of its being a secret. The Mayor decided to sell the property as early as possible. No buyer showed up and things came to a standstill. It was clear that the longer the sale was delayed, the worse it would be for the seller.

The Mayor sent word to Mother asking whether She was interested in buying the godown. Her *sadhaks* all knew what had happened, but as a duty reported the request of the Mayor to Mother. She had no idea of what had gone on. The *sadhaks* told her the entire story of the Mayor's failure. No one wanted the property to be bought but it was not for them to give such suggestions to Mother. Having given the offer and answered her questions on the history of the earlier attempts to put up a wall, they awaited Her decision. After some consideration, Mother asked them to buy the property. Everyone who heard her decision was dismayed and certain that in a few years the entire godown would be washed away. But every *sadhak* also had faith in Mother. So they went happily and bought the godown.

After the purchase was over, they asked for her guidance. She asked them to build a compound wall. They did, but it was washed away. They repeated this a few times, and each time it was washed away. Finally they reported the results to Mother. She asked them to stop the work and She would come to visit the place. One evening she went to the site and sat for a while on a chair. She asked the *sadhaks* to re-erect the wall. The next day the wall was put up. Today it is still there.

She explained later that on the day She came to the spot, the sea god came to her and announced his decision to enter into that area. Mother told the sea god that she wanted the place for herself and he must not come in. Mother said that these beings always used to obey her. But the sea god started a discussion and Mother had to stay there a while. She explained to him that she had important work in the Ashram and in that place, so he must not come there. At last, She said, he agreed.

6. The Mother and The Ashram

The Mother joined Sri Aurobindo in the hope she could work for divinisation of life on earth. Sri Aurobindo Ashram was founded by her in 1926 for this purpose. The occasion for founding the Ashram was the retirement of Sri Aurobindo on November 24, 1926, when his yoga moved into the final stages of realisation.

The aim of Integral Yoga is not *moksha*, release of the soul from the body, but the conversion of human life into a Life Divine. When She founded the Ashram, devotees and disciples began to gather around Her. Though She threw the door of the Ashram open to everyone, irrespective of position, creed, religion, sex, or nationality, She made a very careful selection in matters of admission. Decades later She disclosed that everyone in the Ashram had been with her and Sri Aurobindo in their previous births, working for the same ideal. She indicated that Sri Aurobindo had been Napoleon and Leonardo da Vinci in previous births and was Krishna, too. Among the disciples She once said there were people who were *rishis* and emperors in their previous births. She described Sri Aurobindo Ashram as the cradle of the new civilisation composed of the new race of supermen. It was an experiment to evolve the Superman from humanity, and for this purpose man had to conquer his human nature. The civilised man conquers his behaviour while his inner feelings remain the same. The cultured man changes his inner feelings and character, too. But even in him his consciousness remains the same as the animals from which he evolved. Especially his subconscious is the untamed brute. To convert human life into a divine life, it is not enough to change the behaviour or character. It is also essential to change this basic animal consciousness into a higher consciousness. This, She calls transformation. It is not given to man to bring about this change. Only the Divine can do this miracle. All that is asked of man is a total surrender of all that he is.

Mother once said that until the number in the Ashram grew beyond 150, she guided and controlled every inner and outer movement of each sadhak. In other words, She herself took charge of their *sadhana* and guided them. It is said that a *rishi* or a yogi could bless, at a time, one person seeking his grace. The greatest known *rishi* is said to be capable of blessing seven persons at a time. In her public *Darshans* Mother used to emanate the vibrations of her Grace, meant individually for everyone, to all the three thousand devotees gathered. That is why no one, not even her permanent attendants, would miss this public *Darshan*.

She said she held herself responsible for everyone She had seen even for a minute. She is the Mother, not only to human beings but to all life on earth. Trees in her garden used to complain to her, if they were not watered. Animals under her care have always sent their silent messages to her. The sea god himself listened to her and obeyed her commands. She is the Mother of all life on earth, and she showered her love and blessings and Grace on all. She does the *sadhana* in all, too. She loved India and said India would be the Guru of the world. When the French settlements merged with India, She sought Indian citizenship and secured it. She felt France and India have a common

destiny. The ideal of the Ashram was extended in founding Auroville, where the yogic experiment was extended to a wider cross-section of people.

The whole world is her Ashram, as she sought to kindle the light in the heart of every living being. On the evening of November 17, 1973, a sadhak saw a huge light breaking into a million sparks and shooting to all sides of the earth. Finally each spark lodged itself in the heart of a person. He couldn't understand the meaning. Next morning he heard from All India Radio that Mother had attained Mahasamadhi. She loved all of humanity and lives in its heart.

7. Samadhi Darshan

We go to temples on auspicious days like Fridays or during festivals. Many visit temples on their "*janma Nakshatra*" to conduct an *archana*. When we go there, we carry coconuts, camphor, flowers, etc., known as the articles of *archana*. We pay a *dakshina* to the priest to recite our name, *nakshatra*, and conduct an *archana* in our name. Normally we visit the temple during the daily puja, after which the priest distributes *prasad* and *thirtam*. All this we know, as it is our tradition. We hear of The Mother and Sri Aurobindo, their Ashram, their Samadhi and conceive of going there, impelled by faith and *bhakti* in these *avatara purushas*. One does not know what to take with him or what to expect there or what to do. When he finally gets to the Ashram, he finds no deity, no *puja* or *prasad*, and has no way of conducting an *archana* in his name. He finds a Samadhi covered with flowers and a meditation hall with a bed at one end. It has the touch of Chidambar *Rahasyam*. This vast difference is there simply because temples are created to organise religious worship for the masses, whereas the Ashram was founded for the spiritual realisation of the soul. Religion carries with it the deity, *puja*, worship, *archana* etc., whereas spiritual realisation is by the opening of the human soul to the Divine reality. The Ashram does the latter.

"*Gopura darsanam papa vimochanam*" ("The sight of the temple tower will deliver you from sin") is the old adage. A visit to the *samadhi* gives the individual the opportunity to open his soul to the Supreme. Mother has said that the *Samadhi* is a place of realisation. A young unmarried girl during her first visit to the Ashram was part of a group going to Sri Aurobindo's Room. As the room would be open only at 11:45 a.m. and there were fifteen minutes more, she sat at the *Samadhi* and simply became lost within. The party became concerned after it passed 11:50, but still she did not open her eyes. As it was not proper to disturb someone lost in meditation, nothing could be done. The silent calls of the party finally made her open her eyes, and she got up. She explained, "I was lost in ecstasy and had no desire to open my eyes. As you called out my name I awoke and came away." Indeed, no one had called her name. She 'heard' the calls of the party. She heard like that because she was at the *Samadhi*. That is the power of the *Samadhi*.

If you plan to visit the Ashram, it is best to make it an exclusive visit to the Ashram, so that the heart will be focussed on it. A simple, pure, silent aspiration qualifies a person to wish for a visit. The two articles that are taken to the *Samadhi* are flowers and incense.

As the Presence of Sri Aurobindo extends to seven miles from the Ashram, one can feel the spiritual peace before reaching Pondicherry, as Nehru felt it and as an American devotee felt in the plane even when he crossed over Indian soil. On reaching the Ashram one can visit the *Samadhi* in which the bodies of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo are interred and also visit the meditation hall.

8. Mother's Life in the Ashram

Mother says that, when Sri Aurobindo was there, he took charge of her yoga, and she looked after his needs and the Ashram management. She adds that in those thirty years she was able to manage the affairs of the Ashram without the least trouble.

In 1920, the 'Ashram' was a dozen disciples around Sri Aurobindo. One who was there at that time says, "The first thing Mother taught us was how to keep our books and things in a proper order. In those days we had no shelves and kept the books on the floor." This shows the magnitude of the work she had to do, especially when she had to start with the merest physical details. It was she who did the cooking and the serving too! Those were the days before the Ashram was officially formed, and there were only a few houses in which the disciples lived. Only in 1926 when Sri Aurobindo retired into silence did the Ashram come into official existence, and Mother took charge of the disciples' *sadbana* along with the material-physical management of daily affairs.

In those days the present rule that disciples should wake up at 3 a.m. was introduced. Each had his own round of activities woven around the schedule Mother had given. Mother used to appear at the Ashram balcony at the rear of the Ashram building at 6.15 a.m. All the disciples would gather on the road to receive her blessings. She used to stand there, meditating, invoking Grace on the day's activities. She would silently give each sadhak a special help for the daily work. This came to be known as the Balcony *Darshan*, which she continued till 1962 when she retired into her own room where she stayed until 1973.

Whenever work demanded, she even undertook journeys to Cuddalore and Chidambaram or places around Pondicherry itself. I remember Alampoondi Bashyam Reddiar narrating the visit of Mother to his house at Cuddalore in the 30s. He was coming to her till his old age and met her on his birthday a few days before his death. She once visited a timber shop at Cuddalore to buy rosewood and teakwood for making new furniture for Sri Aurobindo. Generally in the afternoon She undertook those visits.

She spent the forenoon in meeting all the *sadbaks* once again, receiving the heads of departments to whom she allotted work, and receiving those *sadbaks* whose birthday fell on that day. The Ashram later developed over 50 departments of activity, but all of them grew gradually. She met each department head periodically to discuss the work. Some of them, such as the manager of the Ashram, secretary, and cashier, met Mother everyday. As the Ashram later came to own 100 buildings and to rent about 300 more, as well as owning a press, a workshop, a woodworking unit, a

cement casting factory, 2,000 acres of land, several guest houses, an international school, a book shop, photo studios, sports ground, restaurants, etc., the daily load of work for Mother was considerable.

Mother considers the birthday of a sadhak as a special occasion. She says during that day and around that day his capacity to receive the Divine Blessings is greatest. Therefore, birthdays are special occasions in the Ashram. Each sadhak would meet Mother with a bouquet of flowers on his birthday. She would bless him with flowers, a birthday card on which she wrote her blessings and signature, and any special gift, such as a book that she wanted to present to him. *Sadhaks* cherished their birthdays and Mother's blessings to them on that day.

In the evening Mother would go to the tennis ground to play tennis for a while. Until she was 80, she was playing tennis. After this exercise, she would go to the playground, where the *sadhaks* do their physical exercise. At the end of those activities, the *sadhaks* used to file past Mother, receiving Her blessings once again. She conducted meditations in the playground on Wednesdays and Saturdays. She started classes on yoga for children on those days. Of course, every sadhak joined the classes for children, as all are truly her children.

On every first of the month *sadhaks* used to receive their personal requirements such as paper, pencils, ink, soap, toothpaste, etc. Mother distributed these items herself. Those days came to be called 'prosperity days' in the Ashram. She would distribute clothes to the *sadhaks* on a Sunday preceding each of the four *Darshan* days. As sarees were given to the ladies and napkins to men, these came to be called 'saree distribution' days.

The four *Darshan* days were February 21st, Mother's birthday; April 24th, Mother's final arrival day at Pondicherry; August 15th, Sri Aurobindo's birthday; and November 24th, Sri Aurobindo's *siddhi* day. During the days of Sri Aurobindo, *Darshan* on these days meant *Darshan* of both Mother and Sri Aurobindo. Outside his room where he did his yoga sadhana for 24 years, they sat together on a sofa in a small room. The queue of *sadhaks* and visitors filed past through his room and came for *Darshan* one by one. The disciples that were with Sri Aurobindo would explain who the next person approaching was-his name, age, and any special detail-before the person came in front of them. The disciples came before them and made *pranams*. Sri Aurobindo would put his hand on the head of the disciple and bless him. All that took one or two minutes for each person. It was a solemn occasion and a new birth for many.

Mouni Sadhu, a member of Ramanashram, once came to a *Darshan*. Before coming in front of Mother and Sri Aurobindo, he had to pass through Sri Aurobindo's room. On entering the room, he said, his mind went blank and silent. Even if he had wanted to talk, he said, he could not have done so.

Once an American wrote to Sri Aurobindo asking for an interview. He was asked to come on a *Darshan* day. On seeing the line and learning that he would have only one minute with Sri Aurobindo, he said to a nearby sadhak in a tone of disappointment, "I have come from 12,000 miles away, can I not be given some time to meet him?" When he had his *Darshan* of a minute and came

downstairs, the same sadhak went to him and found him filled with peace, silence and richness. The American had apparently lost his speech and was so full inside that he could barely talk. The sadhak asked him, "Was it too short?" He replied, "The one minute was too much." Such was the spiritual power Sri Aurobindo transmitted in a minute.

After He left his body, She alone sat on a single seat at the opposite end of the same veranda and blessed the *sadhaks* and disciples on the same four days. Apart from that, she gave *Darshan* to the *sadhaks* on January 6th every year. She also gave *Darshan* on days dedicated to Maheswari, Mahalaxmi, Mahakali, and Mahasaraswati, and on *Deepavali*. On December 5th, when Sri Aurobindo attained *Mahasamadhi*, and December 9th, when his body was laid in the *Samadhi*, she also gave *Darshan*. Christmas was another *Darshan* day when Mother used to sit under a big illuminated Christmas tree and distribute several presents to the children. On that day she gave cakes and gifts to the elders too.

New Year day has always been the merriest day at the Ashram. Mother herself used to distribute calendars to the *sadhaks*. It was the prosperity day of the year at the Ashram. Calendars always carried her picture with a special message from her chosen for the occasion. Until 1962 she carried on all these activities personally. From 1962 until 1973, she continued most of them from her room. In 1973 on November 17th she attained *Mahasamadhi*.

9. Coconut Garden

One day on my way to Pondicherry I reached the bus stand where I happened to see a friend standing with another man. I stopped for a moment and enquired why he was waiting near the bus stand, more to make conversation than to elicit any information. My friend introduced the other man and said they were on their way to the Ashram. I happily invited them to join me. The other man tried to be very friendly and started a conversation. He said it would be his first visit to the Ashram. In reply I said it would be good if he remembered this date one year later and took stock of his position, as anyone who came to Mother would not remain in the same position after a year.

After about a year these two people called on me at my house. I was very happy to see them. The man explained that it was the same day the previous year we had met and reminded me of my earlier statement. He said he had a shop, a good extent of lands, a business in Singapore, a coconut garden and some shares in a few other businesses. He was happy and said that my statement the previous year about Mother's devotees not remaining in the same station of life for more than a year was true. He summarised his position saying, "Every establishment of mine is doing twice as well. Now I see the truth of what you said. Only in the coconut garden it doesn't work."

His coconut garden was situated at the junction of three rural roads and surrounded by paddy fields. As it was a one acre garden, it was not economical to employ a full-time watchman to live there day and night. As long as his father was alive, things were different. Coconut harvests were regular and plentiful. Since his father's death a few years before, he had expanded his activities to

more than one field, and there was no one who could fill the place left vacant by his father. Since then, he had not had a single harvest of nuts, as all the nuts were stolen. He started harvesting them as tender coconuts with a view to salvaging as much as he could. I explained to him that apart from his father's prestige it must be true that now attention to the coconut garden must be less. He agreed. He was in a difficult situation. He could neither appoint a full-time watchman with his family living in the garden, nor was it possible to prevent pilferage in view of its location. As the pilferage now reached 100% of the harvest, apart from the loss, it was not nice to have one's produce stolen like that month after month. There was no advice I could offer him in terms of farm management, as he seemed to be more experienced in these matters than I.

Besides all this, I said, trees love attention. Now his attention was diverted to many other establishments. The thieves were constantly thinking of the trees and nuts. Therefore the coconut plants responded to their 'attention' by yielding their nuts to these rogues. I asked him to pay a visit to the garden at least once a week for an hour and evince keen interest in their upkeep. Also I suggested that he should remember the garden as often as possible wherever he was. If he could do both these things and pray to Mother that the pilferage should stop, it would be good, I said. About a month later he came to me bringing some coconuts. He said that it was the very first harvest after many years. The theft had stopped suddenly and mysteriously. One day after he had started the prayer, two men came to him and requested an appointment in his fields. They were apologetic. He could not understand their behaviour until they disclosed the full story. They had been part of a gang of four that was stealing his coconuts month after month. Recently their chief had suffered an electric shock, while climbing an electric post, and his fingers were so mutilated that he could not climb coconut trees anymore. Another one of them was caught by his own villagers and beaten for being a shame to the hamlet. They threatened to hand him over to the police, if he resorted to stealing anymore. Now that the gang had broken up, the other two, being camp followers, were on the lookout for jobs.

The story made me happy. I said Mother is great and Her ways are infinite. Also, I added, his remembrance of the garden and weekly visits were a more powerful medium for Mother's Grace as it was the attention of an owner and hence superior in quality to the 'attention' of vile men.

10. Ph.D. Thesis

He is a scientist devoted to his subject. He used to glue himself to his microscope, often until 10 p.m. His profession was teaching in a college. He was not only respected by his students but loved for his sweet, soft manners and devotion to his pupils. No strike, however universal, would prevent him from taking his classes. He was a devoted scholar, devoted to his subject, his students and his professors. After his M.Sc. he did his Ph.D. The Principal of the College was his professor and guide. As ill luck would have it, this man who was universally loved and respected, who identified himself with his duty and fixed himself at his post of duty, who was soft spoken, had for some inexplicable reason fallen out of favour with his Principal, who was also his guide. His course in

Ph.D. was a shining success. His expertise was in grapes, jasmine and tomato culture. His thesis came out very well. Even before the thesis was out, his findings were recognised outside.

His guide was more of an administrator than a scientist. When a thesis was written by a research worker, it was necessary that the guide certify it as a bonafide work done under his guidance before the thesis could be submitted to the university for evaluation. This guide, for reasons best known to him, refused to certify this thesis as bonafide. The scholar was dismayed. The entire campus felt outraged. Such a treatment to such a devoted scientist over so valuable a research work! Soon the Principal left the college for a higher job in the Central Government with his office in North India. The statutory rules allow that any thesis may be submitted within four years, though the work is only for two years. If a thesis is not submitted within that four years, the whole work gets cancelled and procedure requires that the scholar must start over again from scratch. For this scholar, the expiry date was only a few weeks away. As he had already given up all hopes, his disappointment was less keen. His friend brought this incidence to my notice at that moment and asked whether a way out was possible. A way out was possible, I said, if the scholar agreed to pray to Mother.

A few weeks later a stranger called on me. He introduced himself as one sent by a friend of mine. I recognised the circumstances. I invited him in and asked where he was coming from. Slowly he warmed up and said he was coming from the Ashram, where he had an occasion to sit in meditation in the Room in which Sri Aurobindo had been in *tapas* for 24 years. After a while when we felt a little more comfortable and friendly towards each other, he explained as follows.

"Your friend returned from the Ashram and spoke to me about my thesis and asked me whether I would pray to Mother. I know nothing about Mother, but I have often heard from him that She is Divine. I had no difficulty in accepting the idea of prayer, but there was a great practical difficulty. The last date for submission of the thesis was just two days away. I had no idea where my guide was. As a last resort I left for the university office the next day, having hurriedly collected all the relevant papers, certificates and documents in one day. There I met the Registrar and told him my position. It was the very last day, 10 o'clock in the morning. The Registrar took a great interest in my case, appreciated my difficulty and was willing to offer any help, but he said it was totally invalid without the signature of my guide. I told him frankly that my guide refused to sign it and I did not know where he was at that moment. The Registrar agreed to receive the thesis as submitted on that day but also offered a suggestion. He told me that my guide was in the city on that day and I could try my luck in obtaining his signature. I hesitated. He explained that my guide was leaving for America that afternoon to receive an honorary degree and, perhaps, in such a mood he might agree to sign. With a heart filled with anxiety I went to his house. To my surprise, the guide was outside and received me with a big smile. My greater surprise was when he asked me about my thesis and offered to certify it. With a relief felt all over my body I held out my thesis. He readily signed and said he was taking the 2 p.m. flight that day and it was nice I could come in time. From there I went to the Ashram with a sense of wonder still hovering around me. That was my first visit. I offered my gratitude to Mother, about whom I yet do not know much. Straight away I am coming here."

He was really a very soft-spoken man and very cultured in his ways. Since then he has presided over international conferences and has risen to the highest position in the university in his own subject. Just now there are six professors working under him.

11. Industrial Expansion

He was an industrialist who had made his money in foreign countries and returned to India. He decided to start the same industry here in India as he had acquired an expertise in that field. Around the time he was supposed to found the factory, he was introduced to me when he needed help in digging his first borewell. The man was grateful for the initial help he received and expressed it appropriately whenever the occasion permitted. He personally came to me to extend an invitation to the foundation stone laying ceremony for his factory. At the function, when I found out that outside his family he had invited only six people, all placed very high in the society, I was touched by the man's attitude.

He was over sixty but was in perfect health. The money he had earned, several crores, seemed to weigh him down. Occasionally we used to meet in a friend's house, at a function or even on the road. He evinced interest in visiting my projects and knowing the details about them. During these meetings, he told me how he became Mother's devotee and some related incidents that reinforced his faith in The Mother.

As he had made his money outside India, all his wealth was in foreign exchange. When he started the factory here, he bought all his costly machinery outside India and imported it. On the day the machinery arrived in India, he and his son were at the port filled with enthusiasm and excitement. When the machinery was being shifted from the ship to the wharf, something went wrong with the crane. Suddenly his machines started moving down over the water, instead of up. The machines were worth several *lakhs* of rupees. The father and son were shocked. The dazed engineers in charge of the operation stood there helplessly. The machines were slowly slipping down towards the water and in another few moments would disappear beneath the surface. What a loss! He said, "I was in tears. My son stood there with his kerchief over his mouth unable to control his grief and fear. My head was dizzy. I could not even shout out. My world seemed to have come to an end. What a beginning for the company! With greatest difficulty I steadied myself, thought of Mother and sent Her the calls of a heart that would burst at any moment. Then a miracle happened. The ropes of the crane that were moving down suddenly stopped. Hope showed in the engineer's face. Their alert action was able to save the situation. After the safe retrieval of the machinery, the engineers disclosed that the cranes were not meant to lift such a weight and they had taken a risk. My son and I heaved a sigh of relief when the machinery was brought onto the wharf. I have since told this story of Mother's Grace to several people." He had told me this already three times, so vivid was the impression on his mind.

One day he came to see me. He was friendly and nice. He did not seem to have anything particular in mind. He said he had read our Society's monthly letter and found it interesting. Obviously he had something on his mind to consult. After a little while, he said, "I am over sixty, but doctors find all aspects of my health are all right. From any point of view of life-health, food, nourishment, rest-I have everything I need. But there is an overpowering tiredness coming on me in waves. I feel exhausted all the time. Doctors are of no help. I have been in this condition for some years now. Can you suggest anything to overcome this lack of energy?"

I asked him to meet me the next day with a good quantity of Chrysanthemum flowers. The next day he arrived with the flowers. Mother calls this flower *Life Energy*. Devotees have a certain receptivity and openness to Mother. Devotees are not *sadhaks* who relate to Mother intensely through concentration, as yoga is not their primary aim. Devotees think of Mother when they do their *puja*, after which they lose themselves in daily work. This man is an industrialist who is buried in his work. He would naturally think of Mother during his *pujas* or when something goes wrong. I could not advise him to constantly think of Mother, except during times of crisis. Flowers are a receptive medium and help the devotee to better relate to Mother. We can ask Mother for energy, peace or anything, and can receive it in the measure of our receptivity. I explained to him briefly the meaning of flowers and this flower in particular. I advised him to offer this flower to Mother's photo at home in the morning, let it remain there for some time and be charged with Her energy. In the evening when he prays, he could hold the flowers and pray for energy from Mother. I told him he could pray like this for a week and then we would see. He came two days later and said, "Three fourths of my exhaustion has already left. I have already started my evening walk. I feel a lot better. Now I would like to consult you on another problem that has bothered me for 20 years. It is an unknown fear that powerfully churns my stomach."

He was anxious to explain all about it, but I discouraged him from explaining the details. As Mother has given the name courage to **எருக்கம்பூ** (*Calotropis flower*), I said he could use it in the prayer as he had done with the Chrysanthemum flower.

The following week, he sent word that he did not want to bother me this time but wanted to meet the American *sadhak* who had written in our monthly letter about Mother's principles in running a business. They met and had a discussion. It seemed that this man's factory had started only a few years before and had become a great success, but it had some serious trouble getting raw material a year before. As Mother was alive then, he sent word to Her about his raw material difficulty. The difficulty vanished, not only for him but for the entire industry. Later that raw material was produced in such abundance that a little of it was exported, too. Now his company had earned a good name all over India. His company's name was a household word in many parts of India already. This very positive development encouraged him to expand the factory two-fold. The board approved of the expansion plan and money was there. He ordered the machinery from abroad. All the other connected plans were well drawn up. Everyone in the management was jubilant over the turn of events. But news came that serious labour trouble was brewing. He managed to secure every detail connected with the plans of the labourers. He was alarmed, but he was happy that he had got

wind of this trouble before it expanded. The character of the trouble was such that he almost seriously considered dropping the expansion plan for Rs.2.5 *crores*. As a last resort, he said he thought of consulting the American sadhak whose article on Business Management was recently published. He invited the American to come to his place and address his officers.

My American friend went there the next day. All the officers of the company were assembled in the hall. My friend spoke to them in great detail about the principles of Mother in running a business. At the end of the meeting everyone felt somewhat encouraged. Before my friend left the factory, the industrialist asked whether he could come again on another day to speak to the officers. My friend explained to me that, although everyone listened with interest, they had no idea of how to go about warding off a labour situation which had not yet precipitated. My friend suggested that both of us could visit the factory the next time. I agreed.

This time I spoke to the same officers again, but I could see that they wanted a practical clue. Seeing this, I explained, "You are planning for the welfare of the company but find the labour attitude a hindrance and a threat. In such circumstances Mother suggests that if you work for the welfare of the labourers, this trouble you anticipate must disappear." Having said that, I asked them to fill in a questionnaire that would give all the details of the labourers families, viz. number of members, property holding, lands owned, other income, diseases suffered, recreation practiced, etc., so that on seeing the details, the company could draw up a serious welfare plan for the labourers in their own homesteads to make their lives richer and better. Before winding up I repeated, "You must truly wish for the welfare of the workers. If that wish is true, right results will issue. The key lies in the truth of your wish. The rest is a matter of procedure."

The industrialist disappeared and I didn't meet him for over a year. One day I happened to meet him in an Ashram function. He came to me eagerly and inquired about my work, family, project and friends. I asked him about the expansion. He said, "Oh, you don't know. I have finished the expansion and the new wing will be commissioned in a few weeks." He neither explained to me about the labourers, nor did I ask him about it.

12. M.A. in English Literature

One evening when I was sitting upstairs reading, I saw a group of Ashramites coming to my house in a jeep. Soon my friend brought upstairs a letter from USA which was delivered to me from the Ashram post office. The Ashramites, who expected an important information from the USA, wanted to know whether my letter contained it. It was a personal letter written by an ex-colleague now in New York. The letter that disappointed the Ashramites contained a surprise for me. This friend and I had been colleagues at a high school for many years. Later, each of us had followed a

different line in life. Now, after more than six years, he was writing from New York. Surely it was a surprise to me.

He and I were teachers in a high school. He was very popular among the students and more popular with the teachers. Everyone considered him a perfect gentleman. He was amiable, a conscientious teacher, a pleasant companion and never rubbed anyone on the wrong side. He came from an ardent Catholic family and was well versed in the Church doctrines. He was one of those who spent a good deal of time with me. He was particularly interested in knowing what attracted me to the Ashram. When he knew Mother's original name, he was delighted, as it was a Catholic name. He would ask me about Mother, Ashram, their practices, beliefs, etc. and compare them with the practices in their church. Over the years I have communicated to him the basic tenets of Mother's life. Each time an important issue came up in the school, he would ask me how Mother would act in such a situation. Once, when someone mooted the idea of starting a college in that town, the question of funds arose. This friend at once asked me Mother's view on collecting money for public service. I explained that Mother had said if the service was genuine, money would gravitate to the service. For the Ashram She never collected funds but accepted only what was brought to Her unasked. This made a great impression on him and he commented, "It requires a great ideal to attract money. This view is really marvelous."

Once he disclosed to me that he had chronic diarrhea and was able to digest nothing but milk. And he said he had had it for several years. As he was a native of Madras, he had consulted many doctors there in vain. He wanted to know whether I had any thoughts about his ailment. I gave my idea that he had a deep insecurity about his job and his future in life. The illness was only an outer symptom. He agreed that he had a deep insecurity, but did not agree that the illness was its result. After a year, an old classmate of his who had gone to London for medical studies returned and set up practice. My friend wanted to examine his illness afresh through the help of this doctor friend. As this friend was an ENT specialist, he could not do it himself, but introduced my friend to the leading doctors of the locality. The diagnosis of six of them was unanimous that the patient had T.B. and the diarrhea was the symptom. X-rays were taken and the diagnosis was confirmed.

He prepared to leave for Tambaram Sanatorium where he had relatives as doctors, so that he could get personal attention. The whole school was immersed in gloom. Personally I knew that no harm would come to him for the simple reason that he had listened to me about Mother so often. I knew Her protective power extends to all who come into contact with Her directly or indirectly. When he came to take leave of me, I said, "All the doctors have made a mistake, as they all go by the disease symptom and simply overlook the fact that your health is in fine fettle. It may be true that T.B. is indicated by diarrhea, but it is also true that diarrhea has many other causes." He asked me how he could take my words to be true against the unanimous opinion of six doctors. Then he left for Tambaram. In three days he returned full of smiles and announced that at Tambaram they found out he did not have T.B. Everyone was happy. When he saw that the result at Tambaram confirmed my opinion, he began evincing greater interest in my way of understanding.

Personally I knew he had no real disease. Not only that, but a great opportunity was possible for him. Though he was conscientious, popular and amiable, he had neither much talent nor ideals. He was an ordinary man, but a good man, who believed in his religion. The very fact that he constantly asked about Mother and discussed Her ways of life and admired certain aspects of it brought a new force into his life. Therefore, a new high opportunity was possible. As he was not a direct devotee of Mother, this force lay there unused. When I saw that he was threatened by a chronic disease at a time when he should be rising higher, I decided to speak to him a little more freely. I knew that he could move up in life and forget once and for all disease, disappointment, etc. What was needed to accomplish this was an effort on his part in the positive direction. After some deep consideration of the matter, I recalled he had an excellent endowment for understanding human nature. If only this capacity could be utilised, his life could rise higher. This capacity is a valuable asset to students of literature. So, I suggested to him that he join M.A. English literature and that way his fears about T.B., the reality of diarrhea would vanish. The effort of the individual is necessary in such cases for Mother's dormant force to act. He dismissed my suggestion summarily, and we continued in the school as colleagues, he with his chronic diarrhea.

That summer he visited his home. Life took a different turn. For what reasons he could not imagine, his father asked him to join M.A. Literature. He could not agree to the idea, but he had never disobeyed his father's wishes. A Vice-Chancellor was a good friend of his sister's husband, who was a high-ranking army officer. His father disclosed that the Vice-Chancellor had already agreed to give him a seat in M.A. Half with fright and half with hesitation, he went to the university, submitted the application and was called by the professor of English for an interview. The professor took one look at the certificate and was in a fury, as he had secured only the minimum marks for pass in English in B.A. in a second attempt. His intermediate certificate showed that he had failed in English once. The professor was red in the face. He burst out, "You can never pass M.A. English in this lifetime!" He was shivering with fear and begged the professor to return his certificates, so that he could return to school.

As the candidate was highly connected, the professor could not but admit him. He joined M.A., but was mortally afraid of his professor. But there was some deep satisfaction in joining a higher course. The day he joined M.A. his diarrhea totally disappeared, never to return.

A week later he visited our school and met his old friends. To me he confided his mortal fear of the professor's anger. I replied that he would be liked by the professor when his buried talents came out. In six months he became very popular with all the M.A. students, as well as his teachers, and became the favourite of the professor, who started sending M.A. students to him for help in the subject and clarification of doubts. Life had turned a full round. Disease was gone. Fear was gone. He was respected for his knowledge, goodness and, above all, his latent endowment. He passed M.A. and became a teacher in a college. From there he joined the staff of his own university, where he was considered by students and teachers as an authority on the subject. Another university that was reorganising its English department sent a special invitation to him for a higher job in the teaching hierarchy.

After he left his own university, I lost contact with him, and at least six years had passed. It was at this point that I received a letter from New York. He said in the letter, "I came to New York a few years ago and am employed as an editor of an accounting journal. As a part-time student I have joined Ph.D. (English) in New York State University and have finished the course. I am awaiting the degree."

13. Rishyasringar

It was a rainy morning in November. As I went to bed after twelve in the night, I was still asleep. There was a steady downpour of rain outside. Robert came up to my bed and urged me to come down saying, "There is water all around our house. Water has entered the neighbouring houses. They have come over to our house for safety. Come quickly. We have to decide what to do." I went downstairs and looked outside. Our house was at the far end of a new colony and, as usual, the roads were not yet laid. There was a sea of water everywhere. Inside the other two adjacent houses, already there was one or two feet of water. The colony was close to the main drainage canal of the town. The canal's banks were overflowing, and the watermark was more than a foot above the bank. By then the entire colony had vacated their houses and shifted to a raised place two streets beyond. Rescue teams had come with men, ropes, vans, etc. helping people to evacuate. The water level was just about to reach my doorstep. I could see men wading through hip-deep water at a distance and deeper still just outside my house. The rescue team announced that a lake had breached and it would be dangerous for us not to vacate. We contacted the Collector's office and police headquarters to find out the truth. We were informed that no lake's bunds were broken, rather the rainfall had been 14 inches that night and, hence, the heavy flooding of all low-lying areas. I was relieved to know the facts and decided against vacating the house. We moved upstairs.

Robert had returned from America only two days earlier. I joked with him saying, "You have brought with you heavy rains. Mother calls rain Grace. You carry Her Grace and that is why this downpour. You are like *Rishyasringar* of our *Puranas*." On his request I told him the story of *Rishyasringar*. He was interested and intrigued. He said that wherever he went there used to be rain, even in off-seasons, and he used to consider it a bother. He said that I put a positive construction on this aspect of his life, which, he said, might be true in some measure. Suddenly he recalled his very first visit to the Ashram during a non-rainy month. He very vividly remembered that there had been heavy rain at the time. I assented because I had met him at the gate of the Ashram when he came with my friend, and I took both of them to the *Samadhi* and other places. I too remembered that it was a rainy day. But neither of us had noticed until then that wherever Robert went there was rain.

I know that when we come to Mother and accept Her, our life undergoes a transformation. Generally in one year man rises to a social level twice as high as before. If he is part of an institution and accepts Mother's way of life in his own life, sooner or later he rises to the topmost post of that institution, however low he started. If there are any capacities in him such as writing, dancing, speaking, skills of organisation, luck, etc. these capacities will continue to increase. If there are

defects such as short temper, ill luck, etc., they will soon disappear. It struck me that Robert had had this capacity to invite rains wherever he went before he came to Mother. Now it had increased beyond all proportions and brought down the deluge of 14 inches in one night on his arrival from the USA.

Though Robert continued to give me instances of rain in places that he visited, as a Westerner he found it difficult to accept the *Rishyasringar* in him. Anyway, I decided to keep a watch over the future. He too amusingly agreed to report to me in future about his visits from this point of view.

After a few months stay in India, he returned to California. Southern California is a desert where the rainfall in a year is less than 10 inches. Drinking water for the largest city there, Los Angeles, comes through pipelines from a river a few hundred miles away. Robert on his return wrote long letters. At the end of one he mentioned there had been 30 inches of rain in one month and there were floods in Los Angeles, which were unheard of. After some time, he said he was moving to his aunt's house in New York. That year water scarcity had affected the eastern part of USA. Even newspapers in India began to report on those details. New York City announced that there was water in their reservoirs only for forty more days. Another city nearby had only seven days supply left. Tight restrictions were imposed on the use of water. Robert reached New York in February. In New York it rains every month and the rainfall is about two inches. February has a normal fall of 2.1 inches. A few days after Robert reached there, there was a heavy rainfall for one full week and the reservoirs filled up again. The rain gauge recorded six inches for the month.

After his stay in USA, Robert wrote to me saying he was returning to India in October. I wished him to return in summer, as we still lived in the same house and the municipality had not laid the roads. I was afraid of another flood around the house. I wrote back to Robert saying, "You are most welcome and the rains you bring are God's Grace. That too is equally welcome. But please bring down the rain only in installments!" Robert did arrive again in November and the rains arrived too in copious measure with him. But this time it was only six inches on the day of his arrival.

Once we had an occasion to work with the Tata organisation. They liked the ideas of our Society regarding rural development. Fifty years ago, the Tatas had chosen to install a chemical plant in a desert. They wanted the factory in a place with the least rainfall, as they made large quantities of common salt in open pans to be used in the factory. As the salt would be lost in the rain, they located their factory in Kutch, where the annual rainfall is less than 10 inches. Around the factory they chose 40 villages from which their workers came for rural development. On their request, we sent Robert to them to study the area and report. He did so. Two years later, it was reported in the papers that Kutch was visited by heavy rains that season. So, I was looking for Tata's speech on the occasion of their annual meeting. When it did come, it quoted Tata saying, "Unusually, this year there were heavy rains in Kutch. All salt was washed away. In one day the factory area recorded 20 inches of rain, a thing unheard of in the history of Kutch."

14. Unsold Stock

Perumal was a young man running a 110 year old shop. He was the son of a local rich man of a traditional type. His uncle was the richest man in that place. The wealth was traditional and the boy had the manners of an affluent, traditional, respectable family. He was very able and efficient, but he was timid and lacked initiative. He was visiting the Ashram off and on, following a friend of his who became Mother's devotee. Each time he visited the Ashram, he used to pay a visit to me. Being very timid, he spoke little. Our conversations were formal and limited, and his visits were brief.

One day when I was busy with visitors from afar, I was told Perumal had been waiting for me for a long time. I know he would wait for me ordinarily, but it appeared he had something on his mind. I excused myself from the visitors for a short while and met Perumal. He was, as usual, calm, quiet and pleasant, but sad. Casually he mentioned they were closing his shop. I explained to him that those who had come to Mother need never fail in their work. As that was not the right time for me to deal with any serious affair, I asked him to meet me at another time. He came on the appointed day.

He told me, as a foregone conclusion, that his father had decided to close the shop, since the sales were dipping. "Unless we sell for Rs.500 a day, we don't break even. Sales are far below that level. We have waited for a few months. There is no point in postponing the decision." Being in his early twenties, it is natural that his father makes all the decisions. Though he is formally consulted, Perumal had no say in the matter. Also he seemed to fully understand and endorse his father's decision.

Closing a shop of 110 years' standing is a major decision. They seemed to have taken it already. He was not even asking me whether it should be closed. I saw he did not understand his relationship with the Ashram, his visits to the Samadhi, *Darshan*, etc. I was sure he would pay attention to my words. I was anxious to prevent the closure of the shop. Therefore, I said, "Perhaps you would not close the shop if the sales picked up." He answered, "Surely not." I continued, "If you can postpone the closure for about a month, the sales will rise to Rs.1,000 per day. You can reconsider after a month." He asked, "Is it possible? If that is the case, then there is no difficulty in postponing the decision. What am I to do?" I replied, "It is enough you don't close the shop. Simply remember Mother. Try to spend more time in the shop. Let us see."

A month later he met me. He said, "I went home thinking about what you told me. I had no courage to open the subject with my father. I did what you said - spent time in the shop, thought of Mother, and the next day sales were better. At the end of the day father disclosed that sales were near Rs.1,000. Since then sales have never fallen below Rs.1,000." Now that he had seen this result, I told him that we generally do not think of Mother in Life, we think of Her only when we go to the Ashram. Nor do we relate our life to our devotion to Mother. We function as if life is different and Mother is different. Devotees of Mother carry Mother's force on them. If they think of Her during their work, the work will flourish. What happened in his case was that his constant remembrance of

Mother helped to pull up the sagging sales. This movement was helped by his staying in the shop longer than usual. He left pleased and beaming.

After some time, during one of his visits, Perumal said he had unsold stock worth Rs.25,000 and asked whether something could be done in that regard. I asked him to explain in detail how this accumulation had occurred.

"This is no accumulation. My father bought this particular product in huge quantities. Ever since, this stock has been lying idle. Let me explain. Ours is a state capital and there are over 100 shops of our description in the town. This particular product is sold in backward places. No one would buy substandard products in a city like ours. The company tried to introduce this product in several parts of our state and failed each time. This time the company sent two of its dynamic salesmen here. They knocked at every shop for a week. No one would buy even one rupee worth of this product. This was the talk of the town during that week. The salesmen approached our shop, too. We refused. They came again with some very attractive gifts of glassware and started on their sales pitch. My father gave in. As clever as they were, the men pushed in Rs.25,000 worth of stock. I was standing by, helpless. I could not protest. For the last seven or eight months, we have not been able to sell one piece of it. It stays there."

This time Perumal asked for my advice. I explained in some detail Mother's ideas of running an establishment, touching upon cleanliness, orderliness, soft speech, etc. For him, the one important thing was to get rid of this unsold stock. I gave him the following advice: "Mother speaks a lot about giving attention to children, things, even material objects. She says even inanimate objects respond to attention. The case you present seems to be a hard one. Let us first try attention. If it does not work, let us try another method later. You may ask how to pay attention to a dead stock. In your storeroom, try to clean up the place and put the stock in some order, particularly these cases. Dust them well and arrange them in a nice order. That is one way of giving attention. Each time you enter the storeroom, think of Mother and think of them at the same time. Whenever this idea of unsold stock comes to mind, try to think of Mother without worrying yourself. By this you are passing on your burden to Mother. That way your faith in Mother grows. Do it for a few days. Let us see. When they are sold, bring a token offering to Mother from that money."

As such things begin to show results instantaneously, I was expecting Perumal every day from the following day. He was never to be seen for a week. Finally he came and gave a token offering, saying, "Ever since I left you, I sincerely tried to follow your suggestions. In a day or two people started asking for this product. From that moment onwards only this product sells. Customers came in large numbers and asked for this product. All sales were in retail for Rs.10 or 15. I was pinned to the counter. For several days this went on till late in the night. Totally Rs.12,500 worth of goods was sold. The product had originally come to us in two lots. One lot is now sold fully but in dribbles."

A few weeks later Perumal again visited me to say someone came and bought the rest of the product worth Rs.12,500 in one lot.

15. Bankruptcy

There is a Western sadhak who has been here for many years. He once received a letter from his family that his brother was going to file for bankruptcy. This turn of events in his brother's life made him sad. As his mother only informed him in one sentence about this and had not given any details whatsoever, he was unable to exercise his imagination, and just felt sad.

This sadhak had come to Mother several years before. At the time of joining the Ashram, he gave Mother all the money he had, a few *lakhs* of rupees. A few years ago his father and mother visited the Ashram and had Mother's *Darshan*. His brother was a talented man. He had expert knowledge in more than one field. Before joining his father's business, his brother had been in a highly paid job. His father himself was in business. Though it was a small company, by virtue of its quality and nature of service, it had attained nationwide popularity. In the 60s a multinational company was attracted by his father's business and offered to buy the entire company and make it an independent part of their company on very profitable terms to the father. The negotiations for the sale were handled by the father and son. The father attended to the financial aspects of sale and his son concentrated on the legal aspects of transfer to the multinational. The multinational company was so much impressed by the son's ability that they offered to employ him at a very high salary. The son had greater faith in his future prospects and preferred to remain with his father. Years later the father's company was doing so well as one unit of the multinational that they opted to leave the parent company to function on their own. The father was the president of the company and the son, the brother of the sadhak, was vice-president. The company was innovative and introduced new concepts of work in their business. The company rose from height to greater height with every passing year. It is when the company was at its best, with the father and son at the helm, that the other son opted to go to India, join the Ashram and settle down in India permanently. Generally people who are unable to make a success of themselves in life seek out an excuse to hide their weakness and wind up in an Ashram. The brother in business was elder to the sadhak by four years. He surely felt that his younger brother was a fit case to seek asylum in an Ashram. Even when his parents visited the Ashram, the elder brother never showed any interest in the Ashram.

As years passed, the father who had founded the business took it to great heights, made good money and felt it was time for him to retire and leave the helm in the hands of the elder son. He retired and the son became the president of the company. He introduced several improvements, opened a computer division, and made himself a greater success than his father. He was married into a wealthy family. Soon after the father retired and the company became a greater success, differences of opinion began to arise between the son and the parents. The son stopped giving the parents any news of the company, which they were anxious to hear. The parents got little information of how the company was doing, and the sadhak got less information about his brother's affairs. From other sources news came that the company's computer division had a great potential as a money spinner. More information came that the company was shifting to the most prestigious locality in the city. All this reached the sadhak through second hand means months after the actual event.

If news took months to reach the parents, the sadhak brother at Pondicherry, if he ever heard anything, received only a trickle of news many months later. When it did come, it was only one sentence or a hint. After a successive string of positive news, a letter came saying, "He is not doing well, perhaps." The company began to cut down its staff in big slices. At one point, the sadhak learned there were now only two employees in the company left. Next in line the office was vacated, the brother was working from his home, and he had no employees at all. What happened to the big business the father had built up, the great potential of the computer division, the prestigious office, God knows! It is at that juncture the final blow came through the letter mentioned in the beginning, that the brother had decided to file for bankruptcy. The sadhak brother was sad, but what was there in his hands except to feel sad. The sadhak was lost in thought, rather, he felt lost.

I ventured to speak to him. "I know you are not in the habit of writing to your brother. Also I know your brother would not take your words seriously. But this is a certain special moment in his life, when he may listen to you and may even consider your words seriously. I don't know what has gone wrong where. All that is immaterial. One thing matters. You are here. That is enough to prevent your brother going bankrupt. If you are bold, conceive of a means of writing to him either directly or through your parents." He said his sister-in-law wrote to him and she would listen to his words, but he was not sure how far his words would carry any meaning for them, as they all considered him a failure in life.

This was enough. I encouraged him to write to his brother's wife about Mother's way of running a business. He agreed. Together we prepared the contents of the letter. First, the letter said, "Do not file bankruptcy, if you have not already done so." Then we cited a few examples of broken men finding their feet, rising again when they came to Mother. Lastly we added some principles of Mother's way of running an organisation. I told the sadhak, "What is most important is a token offering from them, but in this precarious relationship, I desist from asking for it." We ended the letter asking for \$10 as an offering. Two weeks later we received a telegram from his parents: "Bankruptcy not filed. Brother will try your ideas. He has sent \$20 offering and we add another \$100 to it."

Again, for weeks and months there was no news. But we were happy we did not receive the news of his filing bankruptcy. The brother's wife wrote a formal letter of thanks and said they were seriously practicing the ideas given by the sadhak brother. Months passed. The rift between brother and parents became complete. He moved to another town to avoid his family. A few more months passed. Then news came that the rift was vanishing and a rapprochement was building up. Business for the brother was 'all right.' After 15 or 18 months we got news suddenly that the brother was doing well, perhaps very well. Still the news was all second hand and in trickles. One month later came a phone call on the father's birthday to exchange greetings. Now we heard that the computer potential had started its initial yield and big customers were after the computer programme. There were signs of the brother making big money. Gone were the days of gloom, rift and bankruptcy.

16. Sri Aurobindo's Room

One day I was starting for the Ashram with my family. When we were about to lock the front door, my sister-in-law arrived with her husband. We had planned to be out of the town for the day. To receive them just at the moment of starting was embarrassing. We could not leave them behind alone, nor did I feel free to invite them to the Ashram, as it would amount to introducing them to my faith. Sensing my embarrassment, my brother-in-law asked if they could accompany us to Pondicherry. That was a great relief.

Our visit to the Ashram was not for any special occasion there such as *Darshans*. But it was special to my family, as Mother had permitted us to visit Sri Aurobindo's Room on that day. Now-a-days Sri Aurobindo's room is open to all visitors, but in those early days Mother Herself was giving permission to visit the Room. She used to permit only a few people and, that too, not on all days. That was why I could not stay behind postponing my visit.

My brother-in-law was a superintendent in the Regulated Market. He had been there for four years temporarily and was trying to take a permanent post in the government through the public service commission. He had applied for various jobs and he was selected for the cooperative department as an officer. When he received the order of appointment, he and his wife came to our place to give us the good news and make arrangements for his training period, etc. I was happy that on his fresh appointment he would add Mother's Blessings to it, as he had volunteered to visit the Ashram.

At the Ashram the sadhak in charge of such arrangements asked us if my guests too would like to visit the Room. I considered this as a special Grace. They agreed and the sadhak extended us the kindness of securing special permission for our guests too at that last moment.

We visited the Room guided by an elderly sadhak who was with Sri Aurobindo for 30 years. The Room was full of peace and silence. His Presence was marked. Having taken us through the Room, the sadhak came out and explained in a soft voice the details, showed us the place where Mother and Sri Aurobindo used to give *Darshan* until 1950, the seat of Mother from which She had been giving *Darshan* after 1950, and how the visitors used to go to them one by one to receive their Blessings. Sri Aurobindo's aura was so full of peace that even during a raging cyclone neither wind nor rain entered into his Room. Inside the Room was his chair, his bed with a tiger's skin spread out on it, and several shelves with his books and papers. We returned home that night feeling elated with the peace of his Room.

The next morning while I was reading the newspaper, my brother-in-law drew my attention to a news item which said the government had raised the basic salary of the Market Committee Superintendents to Rs.200 from the present Rs.140. He was excited about the rise in salary and explained enthusiastically the steps the superintendents' organisation took to represent to the government that the salary should be raised. He wound up saying, "It is all very exciting and good, but I am leaving the department. I am not going to benefit by this raise. In the Cooperative

Department again I will start afresh at Rs.140." He was disappointed that he could not share the benefit for which they had all worked for so long and so successfully.

For me the news item was another confirmation, perhaps the thousandth one, of Mother's Grace that is showered on all, if only they come into contact with it consciously or unconsciously. I wished he had stayed in this department and enjoyed the higher scale. As he was a relative and the husband of my sister-in-law, I could not express all the thoughts that crossed my mind. The situation called for some restraint. He was younger to me and, therefore, I had some freedom of expression, but it had its own limit. He was not a devotee of Mother and did not understand Mother's ways, nor did I feel free to share my full understanding of the situation, which might look like an imposition of my faith on him. I could only speak about the relative merits of the scales, departments and jobs.

He was alternately overjoyed at the new permanent job and frustrated at not being able to benefit by the new scale in the old job. During the conversation I asked whether he would not like to stay on in the old job and benefit by the higher scale. His cryptic reply was, "I would very much like to, but my probation there has not been completed and job confirmed."

Later, when he was not at home, my sister-in-law referred to the subject in detail, expressing the same mixed sentiment of joy and disappointment. I sought a clarification from her for his cryptic statement that he was not confirmed in his old job. Her reply was more concise and explained, "He has not passed the account test." I ventured to suggest that he could reappear and complete it. She said, "He took even the second attempt."

Obviously he and she were very anxious to remain in the old job, now that there was a higher salary, but it was no longer possible. Being a touchy subject, I stopped all my conversation with them on this topic.

In private I spoke to my wife that, if he applied for an exemption, the department might grant it, and he could still complete the exam. Bang came the reply, "Through my uncle, who is a high officer in the department, that exemption was secured last year and that too was not helpful." As my wife is very knowledgeable about Mother's ways of life, I explained to her how this opportunity came from Mother's Blessings and, if pursued, would certainly bear fruit, even if the case appeared to be hopeless. I told my wife that in certain extreme cases the department might grant an exemption a second time. As he has earned a reputation in the department for efficiency, he might still get that exemption.

He and his wife discussed with us arrangements for his family during his training, his stay at the training, and several other things before finally deciding on his profession and he left for his native village, leaving my sister-in-law with us.

My wife privately asked me not to be concerned about his job and his future prospects, etc., as it was a sensitive issue. She also heard from her sister that a second exemption too had been secured through some political influence. That too was in vain. My wife added that it seems there was

another agriculture test also in arrears. What had so far been a riddle to me was now very obvious. There was not even a ghost of a chance for him to remain in the old department.

I mused, "Mother has given them unasked a blessing. For him to arrive at this new salary at the new job will take six years after training. Also he would lose the four years of service in the old department. Ten years of service in the government is no mean thing. Even a day matters. Mother who has given the new scale would also remove all further obstacles, if he only had faith and took the necessary effort fully. He does not understand it and I do not feel free anymore to approach this topic. But I don't think this is the end of the matter. Let me await and see, without taking any further initiative from my side."

Just then a man came to report how he had miraculously saved his six acres of crop, after losing all hope by praying to Mother.

In the afternoon my sister-in-law, who was engrossed in some needle work, put it aside and addressed me, "Do you have something to tell my husband about this new job? What would be your advice?" I explained my understanding briefly and emphatically said that he would steer clear of all the difficulties, if he only had faith and did his part.

A few days later he returned. He came to me and announced that he and his wife had decided to reject the new appointment and try his best to remain in the old job, completing his arrears. Obviously his wife had spoken to him prior to that. I was happy.

After he took this bold decision, life became different for him. Everywhere he went, life was supportive. There was a kind officer who gave another exemption. Someone took interest in him and helped him to prepare for the examination. Contrary to his previous life experience, wherever he went to get a work accomplished in this connection, he found an old classmate, a friend, a relative, etc. All went smoothly and he passed both the exams. He was confirmed in the old department on the new scale.

For a couple of years we did not meet. Again he came, this time alone, to tell me he had been transferred to Ramnad District. I wondered why a transfer to such distant place. He explained that he had been promoted and transferred. He was now promoted as the Secretary for a whole district, under whom all the superintendents worked. He said this was possible because the department was rapidly expanding, many new posts had been created, and he had ten years' experience! Ordinarily this promotion was not his due for another six or seven years.

17. The Touch of Her Feet

Mother is an avatar. Sri Aurobindo says She is universal Mother *Devi* who has come down in her individual aspect. She has lived amongst us for nearly 100 years, during which She headed Sri Aurobindo Ashram for 47 full years. As *Devaki* saw the whole creation in the mouth of Krishna, we

see every aspect of creation in Mother's life in the Ashram. Those who have joined the Ashram have given up family, career, worldly life and all their worldly wealth, seeking only Her Grace in good measure. She had the unique capacity of being over-generous and also a strict disciplinarian. Her Love embraces all mankind and all creation. There are several legends of Her infinite compassion to the dozen cats She reared. Also She is known for very strict disciplinary measures. I would like to relate an incident in Her life that may be considered unique in spiritual history.

People who join the Ashram generally enjoy good health, rather better health than before. Their faces acquire the shine of the inner light. Even in old age most are in good health and are moving about without help or even the customary walking stick. The life span granted to one by destiny itself is given a longer lease when one takes to Mother. All this, Mother says, is because She is centrally lodged in their hearts.

Soon after World War I, an elderly sadhak who had joined Sri Aurobindo at the turn of the century fell ill. He was old by any reckoning. Though there were minor diseases, he was not disabled by any serious disease. The Ashram doctor who attended on him said he was suffering the infirmities of old age that arose out of the wearing out of the parts of the body. In such a general condition of deterioration, it is likely that minor ailments get lodged in the system. Doctors, *co-sadhaks*, volunteers attended on him in turn with love and devotion. His condition grew worse day by day. He lost speech. Movements were nil. The little food he was taking was replaced by a liquid diet, which was not easy to administer. It was obvious that his days were numbered. Those around him were eager to serve him and do any little thing that would please him or cheer him. He was not in a coma. He was awake and conscious. But it was hard to know his present thoughts as he did not speak. His earlier spartan habits did not leave much room to guess what things he would like. The question of calling for his relatives did not arise. Suddenly, one day there was a moment of intensity in the *sadhak's* look. It was obvious he had something in mind. Communication was not easy. Sign language was used by the sadhak in a broken way. His mind seemed to be clear and his face was bright. Unfortunately his understanding could not be communicated back to those around. After some exercise in sign language, guess work, inference, etc., it was discovered that he wished to be taken to Mother. After fully ascertaining that this was his wish, Mother's advice was sought and She readily agreed to bless the departing soul.

He was put on a stretcher and was taken to Mother's Room upstairs. As soon as he came into the Presence of the Mother, his face brightened and his eyes became moist with gratitude. Though he could not move even a little, he appeared as if he was no longer a dying man. Mother left the chair and came near his stretcher, bending over him. His condition was becoming better with every second, but perhaps he was not thinking of death or his dying condition. It became apparent that he wanted to communicate something to Mother. The difficulty of communication that had been there between his *co-sadhaks* and him did not seem to be there between him and The Mother. Each seemed to understand the other very well. There was a gleam of a smile on his dry lips. Suddenly he mustered enough energy to point at his chest and then at Mother's foot. She beamed with a smile

which She alone can give. It was clear that the sadhak was asking Mother to put Her foot on his chest.

Though Mother is generous beyond measure in showering material gifts on visitors and conferring spiritual blessings on *sadbaks*, for Her own reasons She had many discriminations to make. Often, She responded not to the expressed prayer but to the highest aspiration of the devotee which was unspoken and, perhaps, a wish the devotee was not even fully aware of. For instance, a visitor who was childless for ten years came to Mother and prayed for a child. He was rewarded with a rare promotion in his job, which was unusual for that job. Later the devotee explained that this promotion was closer to his heart than anything else. When devotees or *sadbaks* start any work and ask Mother for blessings and an emblem for their department, She gives different types of emblems. The State Bank emblem was given by Her. When *sadbaks* insist on something of hers, She gives her symbol modified, a message, etc. There is a drawing of Mother's feet and a photograph of Her feet. This She rarely gives as an emblem to a department. She did give this as an emblem to a few whose aspiration She knew to be very pure. It is Grace to see Her, which is *Darshan*. *Sadbaks* know it is supreme Grace when She touches their heads for blessings. When we go to Her for *pranams*, the most auspicious moment is when we touch Her feet. This dying sadhak had asked Mother for something unknown in spiritual history, Mother's foot on his chest.

She was gracious and consented to the prayer by a broad smile. The sadhak melted in emotion to know of this divine consent. Large drops of tears of gratitude collected in his eyes. She touched his chest with Her foot. The appearance of the sadhak became transformed. In a trice his eyes which had tears became flowing streams of tears. A very bright light leaped onto his face and quickly spread all over his body. He was in ecstasy. His soul was in front receiving the physical expression of Divine Grace. There was an intense descent of Peace in the room and a strong jet of joy entered the devotee. While he was being carried away from Her room, his eyes stayed on Mother meeting Her gaze, which was turned toward him. He returned to the Nursing Home. His last wish had been graciously fulfilled, but he did not die. Health began to return and he felt better day by day. Every activity, such as speech, motion, etc., which had been lost, now returned. After a week he was up and about. He lived for another 20 years to a very ripe old age.

18. An Experience in Mexico

The main gate of the Ashram is opened at 4:30 a.m. to the *sadbaks* and remains open until 11 p.m. Though there is a strongly felt atmosphere of peace around the Samadhi all the time, the Peace is more easily felt early in the morning and late in the night. These are hours when there are only a few *sadbaks* near the Samadhi. For many years I used to go to the Samadhi at 9 p.m. and remain there till the gates were closed. One night, on coming out of the Ashram at 11 p.m., I found someone waiting for me. He eagerly came towards me and introduced himself as one who had met me three years before. He was a foreigner named Tom. I mistook him to be another foreigner with the same name who had been in the World Neighbours movement and who met me three years before in

connection with our development work. Very eagerly, Tom asked me for an appointment the following day. This was at a time when for four years I had stopped receiving visitors for general discussion. I was hesitant to accept the meeting, but soon I found he was hurt by the fact that I had not recognised him. With great enthusiasm he recalled his earlier meetings with me and repeated the details of our conversation. I quickly reversed my hesitation and agreed to see him the next day.

He came the following morning and was very eager to know more about Sri Aurobindo's yoga. He addressed a great many questions to me which the initial enthusiasm releases. I was trying hard to make up for my previous night's lack of recognition of one who was so interested. Tom is an American. He had traveled all over the world in search of spirituality. This was his second tour of the world. Before reaching Pondicherry, he had visited Mysore, Calcutta, the Himalayas, etc. and met various types of spiritual people. He was also interested in ideas that would better the lot of poor people. He said that though he had visited a great many places, the peace at Sri Aurobindo's Samadhi had made a deep impression on him. Since his last visit he had read many of Sri Aurobindo's major books. It seems during his last meeting with me I had told him about several yogic practices and he kept most of them in mind. Though his quest for the spirit took him to several types of gurus, he was trying to practise what he had heard from me about Sri Aurobindo's yoga. Having said that and taking for granted the earlier reference, he went on developing the discussion. As I had forgotten the earlier meeting, I felt embarrassed. I was anxious not to offend him again, especially because he was so friendly and enthusiastic. Fortunately for me he turned to the topics of his own experiences during the tour around the world, one of which I shall report in his own words.

Tom said, "After my visit to Pondy, I left India and during my travels I read a lot of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy, which I like and admire. I visited Australia and later South America. While in South America the thought occurred to me that I should start practising Sri Aurobindo's yoga. I was looking for practical clues in his book. Sri Aurobindo's books are wonderful but more philosophical than practical. The practices he suggests are too difficult, even to begin with. But the desire to make a practical beginning of yoga began to take possession of me, even though I was not equipped enough. Later I moved to Mexico, where I hired a Volkswagon to tour the country. This was a van which I drove by myself. It had facilities for writing, cooking, bathing and sleeping, like a house on wheels. One day I had been driving since the morning and by lunch time I was tired. I did not want to cook my meal and for a change I stopped at a motel-a roadside hotel for motorists. After lunch I was reluctant to resume driving, since I had been driving the van for more than two weeks by then. I had some rest and felt somewhat refreshed. Feeling better, I started again, but after an hour of 50 or 60 miles drive I felt bored and stopped by the roadside so that I could relax sitting on the grass. After a little while I had to start again, but in another half hour boredom overtook me and again I stopped for relaxation. I was intermittently stopping every half hour or one hour like that.

When I was driving after one of these rests, casually I turned around and noticed that my shoulder bag, which I usually keep at a certain place, was not there. A chill passed through my spine, as the bag contained my passport and all the money I had. I made light of it, telling myself that I should

have placed it on the table behind me and drove on. An uneasy feeling was growing in me and I stopped to make sure the bag was safe. I ransacked the whole van and it was nowhere to be found. I was a foreigner in Mexico and with my passport lost I could be in serious trouble. With all the money lost I did not know what to do. I felt dizzy. I vividly remembered that while in the motel I had the bag and took the money out of it for paying the bill. I had traveled nearly 100 miles from the motel and stopped at four or five places on the way. There was no way of knowing the places where I had stopped. I drove back to the motel and made thorough enquiries, searched at the table where I had sat in the lounge. The bag was nowhere to be found. With utter bewilderment I drove back trying to locate the points where I had taken rest. Stopping at dozens of places which resembled my places of rest, I searched in vain. I started for the car to resume my journey. What journey! In the next couple of hours the petrol would run out. Where was the next meal to come from? How to contact home? I had no dime on me. I was at the end of my wits. Just then I remembered our earlier conversation in which you quoted Mother's words: "If at anytime you arrive at a point that there is nothing more to be done, the situation is hopeless and everything is lost, that is the best moment to call Mother. She answers the call instantaneously. Mother is Universal and She is not confined to Pondicherry." The recollection of these words came to me like lightning and my failing strength returned. I moved to the side of the highway, sat down cross-legged, closed my eyes and began calling Mother fervently. How long I sat I do not know, but I felt a great peace in me. The fear left. Reassured, I walked back and got into the van and sat behind the wheel. Before I could start, something on the roadside, till now hidden by the parked car, caught my attention. It looked like a piece of cloth. Impelled by curiosity at the sight of a cloth near the highway, I alighted to examine it. Going near the cloth, I came upon a bush and in the middle of it lay my bag! To my utter amazement and intense surprise, when I opened it there were the passport and money intact! I could not believe myself. Ever since that time, the experience has been fresh in me. I was anxious to tell you this incident."

His was no mere enthusiasm. It was faith. His eyes gleamed with joy.

19. Ramapuram

Having had a successful experiment in raising coconut palms over 15 acres, I thought of creating a 100 acre coconut plantation. Someone responded to the idea, and I was looking for a hundred acre vacant piece of land for this venture. It was a five year quest and did not seem to lead us anywhere. Finally, it was suggested that it may be possible to buy a 100 acre cashew garden. I had no experience in rearing cashew, nor was I interested.

As there was no alternative, I began to examine the potentialities of cashew and decided upon buying a cashew garden. The garden for sale was located on a hilltop and was part of a 1,000 acre

area officially described as a jungle. It was a deserted place. Agriculture itself had not taken roots there. Water was scarce. In summer there would be no drinking water in any wells in the area, except for one at a depth of 70 feet. I was warned against the folly of buying a property in such a primitive forest area, where one's very physical safety was not assured. As my faith in Mother was great and I felt inwardly the sanction of Mother for the purchase, I went ahead buying a garden for a friend of mine and worked for the improvement of the place in several ways. Everything went according to my expectation and showed greater promise than anticipated. People who questioned the wisdom of that purchase congratulated me on the luck of the venture. More than one person from nearby towns had moved in there to buy large adjacent properties.

I was giving thought to the idea of somehow serving the adjacent village in some fashion. It was a village without electricity, drinking water, road facilities, etc. The population was very poor. The main occupation was raising dry crops in their fields for the annual food supply and walking to the town five miles away in search of daily employment. In these conditions, it is very difficult to think of any financial scheme of assistance to the village. Many of the villagers worked in our garden and I found them very good at work. I asked many of them what kind of help would be beneficial to them. The usual answer was that work in their own fields was very helpful to them as it saved them the need to walk long distances everyday in search of work. Their lands were rain-fed. Their usual crops were *kambu* (millet) and black gram. Some raised rain-fed peanut. For any financial scheme of assistance a surety of property was needed and an assured income from the property. This was before the nationalisation of the banks, and the idea of banks advancing money for agriculture was unknown in those days. As I was toying with the idea of assisting the villagers financially through a scheme, I received copious warnings from friends in the government, banks, the villages, etc. that money traveled only one way and never in the reverse direction.

Just about this time, news came that in a village gathering it was decided that everyone should voluntarily give up drinking. I thought it was a good sign, but when it comes to lending money and collecting it back, these ideal moments turn out to be only skin deep. I myself borrowed money from a bank for improving our lands. A year later another leading bank invited me to their bank. I asked them whether they could serve my village in any capacity. They never liked the idea of visiting a remote village as part of their work. In the meantime the Chairman of this bank was introduced to me. He also renewed the invitation to his bank. I renewed my request that they should come to that village with assistance. Both of us agreed to each other's proposals. But there was unwillingness all around. Other officials in the bank refused cooperation. My own friends on the farm through whom I expected to organise the scheme expressed dissatisfaction at my proposal to lend bank money to the villagers and were emphatic in saying that it would not be possible for them to assist in collection of repayment. The *Karnam* and Village *Munsif* advised me against the scheme, saying it was rash. My proposal to the bank was that they should initiate a trial scheme, lend money, and I would collect the money after the harvest. The idea was to lend crop loans in the first year, and, if that succeeded, follow it up with well loans the next year.

The bank officers paid an initial visit to the village. They were full of doubts but were willing to try with a small amount. This was followed by the visit of the Chairman himself to formally inaugurate the scheme. The next groundnut season was one month away. All was agreed upon. Between the visit of the bank officials and the actual disbursement of cash, I began to receive several warnings, advice, experiences of others, all indicating that I was moving in the clouds. An elderly man who had managed our own garden for the past 40 years said, "I am from this village. I was born here and I know the conditions far better. You are inviting the bank to lend money. I do not think you will be able to collect even a part of it back. Please think it over and then act." A batch of men who had worked in our own garden for five years said, "Money can be lent but not collected back. This applies to us also. No one thinks in terms of returning a government loan. Now things are all right with us. Let us not disturb the conditions." The bank officials said, "We know nothing of village conditions. We are going ahead on the strength of your words."

I was anxious to hear one good word of encouragement from someone. On any side I turned, a warning was waiting for me. The more I listened to people, the more it was discouraging. Though I was not shaken in my original decision to help the village, I wanted to examine again the wisdom of my move. From the practical social point of view, on any showing, it was a wild idea, playing ducks and drakes with money. All the advice I received was right from the other's own point of view. But this was not a work done for charity or philanthropy or for personal satisfaction. This was the first of its kind in India. If this succeeded, there would be a good chance of the scheme being extended to other places. For the very same reason, a failure here could be fatal for any future hope for agriculture financing. The key question for everyone was, "How to collect the money back from the villagers?" In my own mind I had only one answer for this question. If any work is done in good faith, if the money goes to a good use, good yields will be the result and out of that chain, repayment should come easily. This is what I know from Mother. As far as I was concerned, there was no other motive than to help the farmers. The farmers are simple people who would use the money to raise crops, as that was their first priority. I was sure of this. If the yield was good, there would not be any difficulty in repayment. Here I differed from the general opinion that villagers would not repay, even if the harvest was good. I also believed that as long as our motives were good and we based ourselves in Mother, the villagers motives were bound to be good. My mind was clear and the entire amount of Rs.63,000 was disbursed in one week. Our village became the first village to be adopted by a bank.

The groundnut crop that year was a bumper in the village. Prices rose from Rs.90 per bag to Rs.180 per bag. Everyone had his fill and beamed with joy. There was no pest. Farmers who went to town to sell their nuts all returned home only after paying their bank dues. One man even called at the bank at 6:30 p.m. and insisted on paying his dues. All dues were collected far ahead of time and, on the stipulated last date, one remaining farmer paid. Neither the bank officials nor any of us visited the village for collection of dues. The next year this was followed by well loans. Year after year the village gradually moved into prosperity. In the next two or three years commercial banks all over India adopted 2000 villages.

20. Industrial Peace

Many people who run an establishment, institution or an industry generally used to discuss their work with us and often asked whether Mother gave any guidelines for such a work. As these are people in worldly life of family or business (though the money involved is sometimes *lakhs* or even crores) and Mother's consciousness is of great power¹, a deeply felt prayer releases on their work Himalayan energies and in no time any existing problem is wiped away. Some friends desired to know more of this and in response to their request once we made a list of ideas useful to industrialists, collecting the principles from Mother's writings. Following some of them, several people expanded their institutions, settled labour strikes, repaid accumulated loans, averted closure of their businesses and benefited in one way or another. We give below a few examples to illustrate the workings of the principles.

There is a multi-*crore* Public Sector project which had started accumulating several crores of loss year after year. Labour had come under political leadership and had become a thorn in the flesh for the management. The place became known for unmanageable labour situations. Any small cause would lead to a great effect. Production had come down to about 40 to 50% of the installed capacity. Officers here anxiously accepted other jobs at lower salaries and were leaving the place. For over a decade, life in the project had come to be accepted as such. The wish of everyone was that it should not further deteriorate. One unit of this project is a 100 *crore* section and a key part of the project. The head of the unit had earned a reputation for his excellent efficiency in production, but he too was helpless with labour. He came to a meeting at our centre, where we had gathered on a certain occasion. Incidentally he was also the President of this centre. After the meeting was over, he invited me to his house and his wife received us. She had a long story to tell. She broke out in a detailed narration of her husband's suffering at the hands of the intransigent labour and explained how they both had no peace of mind at all. Any sound, anywhere, she explained, disturbed them as it might be the shouting of a crowd. Life had become miserable. They were allergic to any development there regarding labour. Finally, she asked if there was no way out and whether Mother could not help them. I replied that Mother's help was always there, only that one should approach Her with faith. The problem that was knotty, thorny and appeared insurmountable would soon disappear, if Mother's Grace were invoked, I said.

Both responded with deep interest and expressed that they had great faith in Mother and would do anything I said to get rid of the troubled situation that had become permanent.

I gave the following explanation: "Mother is great. Her Power is infinite. Her methods are complex (in one sense). That is all true for those *sadbaks* who do their yoga and it is for them to understand Her complex philosophy. Yours is a human difficulty and a life problem. However difficult it is and complicated it had become, for Mother's powers it is indeed easy to wipe out. All that one should do

¹ Mother's power acts effectively in the field of creation. Here it is used for yoga. In comparison to these fields, worldly life is a lower plane. Hence Mother's Force acts here with far greater effectiveness.

is to firmly decide to pray to Mother to remove his difficulty. Only that this prayer should be made in good faith. If you agree to do that much, you can take it for granted that the problem will be solved."

He readily agreed. Further, I asked him to write down the history of the installation, so that at several points I could comment from Mother's point of view. Later he showed us around the project and expressed a desire that we should meet his five deputies. I hesitated and said that it might not work and such proposals might not meet with general approval. He insisted and I agreed. The five of them came and formally appeared willing to listen. One of them, perhaps the best and brightest among them, spoke out frankly, "There is no place in India where the discipline is worse. I have no faith in spirituality or anything else. The only thing that could set the situation right is determined enforcement of discipline. Those who disobey must be taken to task." The head of the unit felt embarrassed for creating this situation in spite of my warning. But I explained to him that no one there believed and everyone was simply polite. He who had spoken was frank and honest, but unfortunately it was not possible for him to know what the spiritual force was. I summed up saying, "Send me your summary of the problems you face. I shall offer my comments. Please remind yourself twelve months from now of my present statement: 'Labour unrest will be a thing of the past. You will never be able to see any trace of it.'"

He sent me his summary. I marked some portions and commented from the points of view of soft speech, cleanliness, orderliness, regularity, attention, maximum utilization, etc.-all general ideas of Mother. I added, "As your project is spread over 12 acres, is kept spotlessly clean, and your efficiency in production is already famous, Mother's Force will act more effectively there."

Several devotees were coming from there. The head of the unit began sending word about the vast improvement in labour relationships. After twelve months the secretary of that centre came to me with a special message from the head: "Labour has become quiet and cooperative. The only strike that was in the canteen at the time of your visit moved away the next day. The last twelve months have been without an incident. Moreover, production moved up to 60 or 70% and is presently at 97%. Labour unrest has vanished, not only from this unit but from the entire project. I do remember your words and they are true. Only that I do not understand how it all happened." He may not understand, but every devotee of Mother will. Her power and force are so great that no human problem can survive their healing touch.

About five years ago, we compiled a set of principles from Mother's ideas which would be useful to the industrialist, management consultant, manager, etc. One of our friends spoke these ideas to a section of delegates of the All India Management Conference of that year. Several industrialists evinced interest in following them. We prepared a short summary of this and supplied it to all those who asked for it. We sent a copy of it to the President of the Management Centre Europe. In 1978 the devotee who had prepared this paper attended the World Management Conference as a delegate representing us. The President of the European Centre was also there as a main speaker. The devotee met this man and the latter readily recognised him. He started speaking about the paper we had sent him several years ago. He explained, "I appreciated all these principles and would like to

know more about it. In truth, I followed the principle of 'service before profit' and to my surprise the practice was effective. Unexpectedly, now I am the President of the more powerful American centre." As he was interested in this topic further, we supplied him with additional materials and he constantly asked for more. A year later our friend met him in New York and had a long discussion with him in which he offered detailed explanations to his questions. By now, he was very much satisfied and wanted to test these principles in an organisation. Some months later he informed us, "I have had occasion to use your principles in my own organisation which was losing half a crore of rupees a year. The losses stopped and we are now making substantial profits. In addition, one of my subordinates in South America is spending half his time cleaning. From the organisational profit point of view, he tops the list. It is interesting to see the relationship between cleanliness and profitability." Again he asked our friend for some suggestions for a college in New York that had a budget deficit of half a *crore*. Our general ideas were made particular to suit this place and we submitted our recommendations. Eight months later, he said there was definite improvement in the college finances. We learned that the deficit was reduced to half its original size.

21. Mental Tension

It was 10 o'clock in the morning. A friend of mine who was an officer in an erstwhile British-owned company walked into my house. He was in a kind of despair. He announced with suppressed fear that his boss had come and wanted to meet me. A minute later the boss came in. The boss was in a curious state of mind and his manners were odd. He was polite, deferential, interested, curious but also felt strange about something which I could not guess. My friend would not even sit down. He was virtually trembling and was taking notes of our talk. The boss asked me about the farms, about my job and then suddenly exclaimed that he had heard I was a regular visitor to the Ashram, as if it was a strange act or a mortal sin. In fact, the general population had no idea of what the Ashram was about. In the next breath he said he had been visiting the Ashram rest houses and found that there was peace in those places. He commented, as if to himself, that if there was peace in the guest houses, there should be much more in the Ashram itself. I felt he was incoherent and appeared under stress, being disturbed deep down. As if to echo my thought, he said he had some kind of lack of balance and his visits to the Ashram guest house had a soothing touch. He asked me why I was going to the Ashram, whether I had any imbalance, and what I felt about the place. He was asking the questions for the sake of asking and expected no reply. I noticed a strange pain had descended on my head and was spreading all over. Soon the pain lodged itself in my neck and became excruciating. After an initial spell of an odd exhibition of behaviour, suddenly he calmed down, found himself restored to the personality of the top business executive he was, relaxed and waited for me to say something. Surely, the man was a high-strung difficult case of deep disturbance which had lodged in him decades ago. The case was intricate, the acquaintance was fresh, the man was in no great mood to listen and understand, but something in him was attracted to the peace in the Ashram and was interested. My poor friend, who was himself a high officer, was a spectacle of sorrow at once terrified to be in the company of his chief executive and happy he was introducing

his boss to me. I spoke briefly that Mother was peace, joy, love and sweetness. Her Presence was felt in every part of the Ashram and physically all over Pondicherry. Sri Aurobindo's *Samadhi*, I said, was a place for realisation. The man listened intently. When I finished, he took leave of me. He went up to his jeep and came back inside the house again. He requested that I might call on him at his factory, if ever I visited his town. The pain in my neck intensified and rolled into a knot, shooting shock vibrations from there for almost an hour. My pain directly reflected the intensity of this man's years of suffering, from what I had no idea.

From then on, he began to meet me off and on. Gradually he told me the background of his particular complaint. He was directly under the Chief Executive of a multi-*crore* factory with a history of a hundred years. The factory gave him a high salary, a spacious bungalow, unlimited authority and almost all types of perquisites. Thirty years earlier his father had held the same post and in the previous generation his grandfather had also held that post. Over the generations they had acquired a vast landed property and accumulated wealth of every desirable description prevalent in rural areas. The family was very orthodox and was scrupulously religious. In that part of the district the family was a kind of legend and known for their traditional piety, philanthropy, interest in modern civilisation and high administrative position. Early in life this man had taken with zest to all the religious rituals connected with the tradition. There were many around who spoke highly of each type of *pranayanam*, *japa*, *puja*, etc. He was introduced to the religious scriptures, particularly the Vedas and some powerful portions of it. Unfortunately, this poor man accepted all of this, little understanding the high significance of these scriptures and the equally high importance of taking to them through the right Guru or right traditional method. He avidly gathered all of them in a somewhat undigested fashion and began to follow them with meticulous care. He was still augmenting this 'wealth' of *anushtanam*.

When he became somewhat close to me, he disclosed that in spite of being a kind of favourite child of fortune, he had one serious problem. His mind was under a terrible tension, a devilish fury all the time. He was happily married and had a child. Materially he was affluent; socially he was in the highest bracket; officially, he was respected as an efficient, honest, dynamic executive. There was no known reason for any lack of satisfaction, much less any grievance. Still, he confided, he was under a great inner conflict. He knew no rest or respite. Though everyone knew him to be polite, he explained that he felt like throwing the chairs at others. He felt that his whole nervous system was on fire, but he managed to maintain a quiet front. This effort aggravated the situation even more. Occasionally he said he used to lose his temper powerfully with his subordinates for no fault of theirs. He would soon regret it, call and make up with them. His envy was for any man who could sleep soundly. Peace of mind was something unknown to him. He was jealous of anyone who had a quiet bearing.

It was clear he was looking for relief and was willing to receive it from any quarter. This was a fertile situation for favour-seekers as well as genuine well-wishers. He religiously followed the instructions given by orthodox priests, donated liberally to temples of family deities, celebrated festivals in

famous temples. The whole district was combed out in this relief-operation and a good part of the state was covered. There was a peculiar inevitable result each time. His inner tension increased.

He disclosed that the very first time he had felt any touch of peace was at an Ashram guest house. His perception was true in his nerves and was a real experience, but his extreme orthodoxy stood in the way. He was undecided. Surely this was not an individual to whom anyone can offer advice, even if it is apparently sought for. In a vein of detachment, he said he was prepared to resign, settle down to work on a farm or offer his services to an institution, if only it would bring peace to his turbulent soul. He asked me whether he could join Sri Aurobindo Ashram and whether it would administer a permanent relief. I explained that it was uncalled for, too great a step to seek so small a relief. He was intrigued to see that I considered his suffering too small. I explained that it was too small a problem considering the great spiritual power coming from Mother in the *Darshan*. Anyway, he felt, his condition was less intolerable than before. With that amount of positive response, I ventured to mention he could attend one of Mother's public *Darshans*. He agreed and did so. He felt a substantial relief. Now he could consider the possibility of seeking Her *Darshan* privately. On his suggestion I arranged for it, though it was not a pleasant idea to introduce a mentally distracted individual to Mother. I explained the great stress the man was under and that he desired some relief. Mother was amused and agreed.

A month later, we met. He was sorry he had not told me what happened with Mother. It was a meeting of a split second. As he entered Her room, She turned around and looked at him for a second. The devilish tension that had haunted him for decades dissolved and disappeared. Mother's look was too powerful for him to bear anymore. He left the room as if new-born into peace and calm.

22. Ex-Serviceman's Plot

He was an only child who had inherited some lands and a house and had settled as a graduate teacher in his native place. He had more than one ambition, but was not a dynamic man. As he was comfortably settled, though not on a grand scale, he never ventured to try anything new. His one real hope was an acre and a half of lands suitable for conversion into plots. In the mid 50's the craze for plots was unknown. It was a time when not even one of the present score of colonies in that town had sprung up. As this piece of land was on the fringe of a main road of the town and was facing the most important office complex there, he was pinning his hope on its conversion into plots. He aimed at a sum of Rs.17,000, which was very high at the time for that town.

One day he came with a face charged with depression and dismay. It did not take long for him to disclose the source of his depression. One of his friends employed in the office opposite to his plot had called on him and narrated an important development. The staff members of that office had been feeling the need for a housing colony. Some arrangements were made and all the members had agreed on the idea of founding a housing society. They approached the government for sanction of

housing loans to the members. Many successive collectors had not evinced any enthusiasm for such a proposal. Therefore, no such proposal had taken shape till then. The Collector at that time offered all encouragement to the idea and asked the representatives of the staff society to arrange for a plot. This spurred the office staff and they again approached the Collector with the idea of acquiring the 1½ acres of land just opposite to their office. The Collector readily approved of the idea and agreed to pass orders to acquire the area. The plot had been surveyed, the value fixed, the necessary formalities were being gone through. After elaborate revenue calculations, the compensation was fixed as Rs.2,000 for the entire land according to the prevailing rules. It is at this stage that the owner of the plot got the news. His disappointment and despair were understandable, as the proposal had taken shape and the Collector was personally enthusiastic about the idea. In a matter of a month or two the plot might be taken away and the owner informed and compensated. The one hope of making some money was now slipping away. Being a young man and not placed in a position to move higher-ups to stall the move to acquire the land, he was steeped in gloom. The problem was real to him and the authority he had to face was formidable for his social position. His one lingering hope was to bring some benevolent influence on the Collector and request him to change to another plot. The advantageous position of his plot for the staff of that office was a difficult point to argue against. He mustered courage after some time and started talking to me. The very first question he asked me was whether I knew anyone whose word would weigh with the Collector. Having said this, he gave the above details.

I had a totally different view of the situation. I refrained from answering him but asked him a counter question. My question was how that property had been originally acquired by his family. He asked whether it was possible to save the situation and avert the acquisition. I knew that this man had visited the Ashram and had the *Darshan* of the Mother a little while earlier, not so much impelled by devotion as to oblige an elderly relative's invitation. My view was that no wrong would come to a person who had seen Mother. As he was not a devotee in any sense of the word, if I explained my thought to him, he would only be irritated. I simply said that this property would never be lost, if only he could assure me that it was acquired originally by fair means. He took great pains to give me the details of its original purchase by his father some twenty years earlier. It was done with hard earned money. He was eager to get some right word from someone and obliged me with every possible information. I explained that if only he could give the history of the plot couched in the history of his family, certainly a way out would emerge. He started, "My father was a doctor who joined the active service." I got my clue and asked him to stop any further narration. As an ex-service man's family, they would normally enjoy a special treatment at the hands of the government. I suggested that he move the ex-serviceman's organisation. He in turn entrusted me with the task of drafting an application to their head office in Delhi.

On the seventh day he came to me with a broad smile. He said that on receiving his application the Delhi office telegraphically instructed the District Ex-Serviceman's Association to approach the Collector to drop the move of acquiring his plot. A man from that office called on him that morning and assured him that no one on earth would lay a finger on his property. The Collector (who was

President of the District Ex-Serviceman's Association) was also telegraphically requested by Delhi to drop the proposal. A few years later, the plot was sold for Rs.47,000.

23. Water Diviner

He is a tall majestic figure with white hair, grey with age, and he is clad in sparkling white clothes. A man of austere habits and deeply versed in Tamil spiritual literature, he is a bachelor whose face shines with energy and purity. He speaks forcefully as per the tradition of scholars in *Saivism* and Tamil. He migrated from his native district into our town and settled down to a single life. At a young age, having come under the influence of a realised soul of his place, he shunned family life and the search for material rewards in life. Early in life someone explained to him, perhaps his Guru, that he had the rare endowment of water-divining.

As I was in farming in those days, he was introduced to me as a water diviner. On enquiry in my town where he had lived for 30 years, I realised he was an able water diviner. It was said that no place which he had spotted had failed to disclose a water stream underground. I myself availed of his services for about a dozen wells. Every point he chose proved to have copious water springs underneath. For one of the biggest borewells in South India for agriculture 600 feet deep, he successfully chose the spot.

One day he came to me saying that someone from Auroville had called on him in his absence. He requested me to contact that Aurovilian on his behalf. Auroville is a desert of parched red soil in South Arcot District. He wanted to offer some service to this International city. He was taken there and he located 18 spots suitable for digging wells. All the tubewells that are now working in Auroville are in the spots he had chosen. Mother was pleased by this gesture of service by someone who was not even her devotee. Being a traditional *Saivite*, he looked on these modern versions of religion (like the Ashram) with a scornful eye instead of veneration.

As we now were relating to each other on water divining, we had more opportunities to meet. He is an elderly, respectable man, immaculate in appearance and spotless in character. As I am far younger to him, discussions with him meant that I would listen in silence and in reverence. Difference of opinion or dissent was not part of our relationship. That being the case, the topics of Mother, Sri Aurobindo or the Ashram were respectfully kept out of our conversations.

One day he asked me somewhat curiously what secret was there in The Mother and added that each time he visited the Ashram and returned home, there was an order waiting for him in the room. I became interested, but was not bold enough to offer any explanation of the fact that Mother was the source of all prosperity and his generous service to Mother had begun to show results in his life. On his insistence I began to give information in little bits with much hesitation. After some time, he began to evince more interest in Mother and asked me whether he could have a *Darshan* of Mother. Mother was then over 80 and She had stopped leaving her room, receiving only very few people for

blessings. In special cases of aspiration, She might agree to receive the person on his birthday. I was delighted at his proposal and I knew Mother would be glad to bless him in view of his pure life and the service he had volunteered. Mother agreed to bless him and receive him on his birthday. I had the good fortune to accompany him to Her. The day before that he came to my house and asked me if there were any formalities or procedures to be fulfilled in going to Mother. His age, his forceful personality, his strong adherence to tradition, my deferential relationship with him-all permitted me to explain nothing. I spoke to him about these matters in monosyllables. Now I quoted the tradition that in meeting great souls we should carry an offering of flowers or fruits. He wanted to know the details. I hastened to add that I had already arranged for a bouquet of flowers from the flower service for him to offer to Mother. He wanted to know if there was anything more. After hesitating, again I quoted the tradition that one may make a token cash offering, if he chose, and added that those who sought blessings for the soul carried flowers and those who sought prosperity from Mother often made a cash offering. He expressed his emphatic personality and declared, "No cash offering is necessary, blessings alone are needed for my continued service." My mouth was shut forever on this topic with him.

We both went to Mother. She received us with her gracious Smile. He was introduced as the water diviner who had visited Auroville. She blessed us both. We made our *pranams* and offered the flower bouquets. She gave him a lovely bouquet of flowers and a birthday card and smiled on him. He was touched. Coming out, he exclaimed, "No doubt, Divinity. Mother is great."

For at least six months I could not meet him. Each time I sought him, his room was locked. I didn't know what had happened. The man was totally missing. Finally, he made his appearance, looking tired but happy. He explained how he had been travelling all over the state water divining, as he had been approved by the government as a water diviner. There was something lingering in his mind which he was holding back. Before he left me, he said that in one year he had done as much water divining work as he had done in all his long life. There was something more unexpressed. After much hesitation and beating about the bush, he explained that a great deal of work had come to him, but no money. In one case the government procedure held up payment, in another case some error in the cheque delayed payment, while in certain cases he offered to receive payment when the water was struck, but the farmers did not dig the wells, and so on and so forth. I mustered courage and recalled to him his emphatic statement that he needed only blessings for service and no cash offering was necessary.

Mother says She fulfills the highest aspiration of anyone who meets her, even though the individual never voices it as a prayer. And many devotees have vouchsafed to that fact. Here in this case, the water diviner declared emphatically that he needed only service. And he seemed to have received it in copious measure from all over the state. He sat lost in thought and asked what would happen if he now changed his mind and made a token cash offering. I said it would certainly do him good. Soon he brought me an offering to be given to Mother. I was struck by his generous gesture again. Mother received it with a lovely smile.

Again for several months he was missing. This time as I was lost in a huge pile of work I had almost forgotten him. One day in the midst of heavy work, when there were a dozen guests intending to go to the Ashram, Mr. Mudaliar made his benevolent appearance. I was anxious to know why he had been missing and how his affairs stood. I put aside all work and sat with him. He said he had left for his native place in the neighbouring district, bought a piece of land and a small house, installed a borewell for the land, and arranged for cultivation. Now he had come back to vacate his place here so that he might permanently go back to his place. With a smile he explained that all the money came to him after had made the offering and that money helped him settle down in his old age.

24. Luck

When I went to the shop where I generally buy my stationery, the owner of the shop asked me if I could suggest the name of a good hostel where he could put his ten year old son. He said his son was dull and might not complete *SSLC*. I did not approve of a parent putting his child in a hostel, while he himself lived in the same town. He said, "I have worked hard all my life and earned enough. Of the three children, he is the only son but he is always playful. He never thinks of studying. Though I am not educated, I wish my son to complete *SSLC*." I wanted to meet the child before deciding on the issue. When I saw the boy, he looked brisk, bright, fairly intelligent. Only that he paid little attention to studies. I advised the parent suitably and assured him that his son would certainly take a degree. The father was pleased. The subsequent improvement in the boy's education made us good friends.

He lived in that part of the town which is surrounded by very fertile paddy lands. To own some lands in that stretch was a matter of prestige. When anyone here first acquired some wealth, they would buy a few acres of land in that area. Lands were irrigated from the river. Water supply was copious and unflinching during the years of good monsoon. Even during the years of monsoon failure, these lands would unflinchingly receive good water supply for the samba season, as it so happened that the little water that flows in the river is stopped by a hill and all of it is available for irrigation. In such years a second crop is not possible. As every land owner there was well-to-do, people erected electric motors, so that during years of drought also they can have a second and even third crop. It is an irony of nature that at a place which abounds in surface water, ground water is scarce. Many dug bore-wells there after trial and error. Some did not succeed. It was the ambition of this man to buy some lands there, which he had done. He had a further desire to fit his lands with a borewell. Knowing my experience with borewells, he asked me for ideas and explained the problem there with the ground water. His neighbour unsuccessfully tried ten times and he was still trying for the 11th time, he said.

I spoke to him of the Mother and asked him to pray to Her. He had many relatives in Pondicherry and his business took him there quite often. So he said he would visit the Ashram to obtain Mother's blessings before starting to dig a well. Any other type of help with respect to digging the well I offered to give. Digging started and was finished in two weeks. Water was struck! He came to

me to express his thanks and surprise at striking water in the first trial. He said, "I started life at the bottom, went to Singapore, and worked hard. Now I am well off. I have earned enough for the rest of my life, though I am not one of the richest merchants. But it is my luck that any work that others can complete easily will lead me through detours, difficulties, lapses until frustration mounts beyond measure. However, finally I will succeed. This has always been the pattern of life, achieving through the hard way what is easy for everyone else. This digging of the well has been arduous, uncertain, complicated for everyone else, but it turned out to be easy for me. This is a standing wonder in my life."

I added that once people take to Mother, such a change inevitably comes over their lives and his was another expression of Mother at work.

A few years later during one of his visits to me, he expressed his dejection over the attitude of his partner. His was the biggest shop in the town. There were three partners from its inception, all having equal shares. These were all boyhood friends who went to Singapore during their boyhood. All of them returned together with substantial savings. They desired to remain together in future, too. With that in view, they together bought the biggest shop in the locality. Soon business flourished and all the partners, being in their prime of life, started buying properties, building houses, investing the surplus funds in other trades independently of the other partners. One of them struck gold in another business he chose and began to prosper beyond measure and soon became a VIP. Then he stopped coming to the shop any more, except for periodic visits. The other two flourished in a few other lines, though not rising to greater heights. My friend and this other man together managed the shop. My friend was less dynamic and less ambitious. So he saved all his excess cash in terms of immovable properties. His was a modest outlay fitting his quiet temperament

Now my friend had come to me to unburden his woes regarding this partner, whom he had to meet everyday and work with all the time, co-ordinating purchases, accounts, displays in the shop, floor management, cash handling and the multitude of responsibilities that go with running a business. In spite of being a boyhood friend, his partner now showed a new side of his personality. His daily increasing wealth turned his head. He was no longer level-headed. His interference was often and comments were impolite. His manner was intolerable. His language became objectionable and he became a nagging pain-in-the-neck at work. My friend, who had a quiet sweet temperament, would not retort. But his partner had become a nightmare for him. Not being able to be rude, not being able to stand the situation, he was suffering and oppressed. He told me that he would gladly give up his share and retire into his house, as he had enough money for the rest of his life. He said he could start another shop all on his own and make as much income, but he was polite enough and good enough not to express it to either of his partners. But now a point had come beyond which he could not remain quiet. He said he had decided to take some action to free himself from the trouble, but was undecided on what it should be.

I advised him not to take any outward action. His patience, politeness, self-restraint, and consideration for others were commendable and any action now might lessen the value of his great, good behaviour so far. Instead, he could pray to Mother for relief, I said. He agreed. He added that

he would visit the *Samadhi*, as he often went to Pondicherry. Within a week, I heard he was trying to meet me and thought there should be some developments with his partner. Soon he met me. He said, "I am relieved, relieved of my nightmare under unpredictable circumstances which are almost miraculous. My nagging partner went to the house of the other partner and displayed the wares of his beautiful temperament. The other man was outraged. He offered to buy this man off on the spot and did so. The trouble was over. As to my share of the newly acquired one-third of the shop, it was also paid on my behalf. You see, now I am a 50% shareholder! To my surprise, the other partner, contrary to his wont, asked to be paid back at my own convenience!"

25. Token Offering

An American devotee of Mother returned to the USA after living in the Ashram for three years and met an old school friend. His friend Marc was a salesman for a large computer company. They sat together to exchange their experiences over the last three years. Marc told a sad tale of how he had been the best salesman in the company in the previous year, but now he was the worst. Everything in his life was going wrong. He was unable to sell even half as much as before. He lost interest in his job. His wife was unhappy and he was constantly weighed down by a heavy depression. The devotee also told his friend how he had spent the last three years in Pondicherry. When he spoke about Mother, Marc became very interested and asked him to tell more. By the end of the first hour, his friend's sad face began to smile. In the second hour his friend began to laugh and beam with joy. He said, "I feel wonderful just hearing about Mother. I haven't felt so happy in years." They agreed to meet a week later.

When they next met, Marc was smiling even more. He told the devotee that in one week his whole life seemed to be changing. He felt happy, his wife had stopped complaining and he was invited to an interview for a new job in an even larger company at a far higher salary. But he was afraid that with his poor performance for the last year, they would never select him.

The devotee told him to simply remember Mother during the interview and imagine that the interviewer was Mother. He also suggested that his friend give a small token offering to Mother, which he happily did. Three days later Marc called him to say that he got the job.

In the next few months, Marc and the devotee met often and spoke about Mother. Marc reported one good event after another. Within four months he was offered an even better job to head a new computer department of another company at nearly twice the salary that he was earning six months earlier.

Marc wanted to visit India to see the Ashram before taking the new job, but he was afraid he could not afford the expense of Rs.20,000 and the loss of three weeks salary, which was another Rs.20,000. Anyway he decided to spend his last savings and go.

Marc and the devotee met in Pondicherry. Marc said he had never known so much peace and joy before. After returning to the USA, he wrote to the devotee saying that on his return he had received an unexpected gift of Rs.40,000, exactly the amount he had lost by going to India!

Marc was so happy with the changes in his life that he started talking to many of his employees about Mother. He also began sending monthly offerings to the Ashram as an expression of his gratitude. One day he was sitting in a company meeting and several employees were complaining that their pay cheques were nearly one month overdue. Marc started telling them about Mother and told them to offer the problem to Her. To everyone's great amazement, even Marc's, the company treasurer walked in five minutes later and handed everyone in the room their salary cheques.

Marc's wife also became devoted to Mother. Her father, who lived in a city 500 miles away, called her one day to say that he had been fired from a job he had had for 20 years and he was now too old to ever get another good job. Marc's wife told this to her husband and he told it to his devotee friend. Marc did not like his father-in-law, but he felt sorry for the man's problem. The devotee suggested a way out. The next day Marc's wife called her father and asked him to send her a little money without asking any questions as to why she was asking for it. She was afraid to mention Mother, because her father was a very strict Christian. Her father said that he had faith in his daughter and agreed to send the money. When it arrived, she sent it to Mother as an offering.

One week later her father called back to say that he had been hired as a temporary employee for two week's time. A month later he called to say that he still had the temporary job. Even six months later he still had the same job. After nearly seven months, one day Marc received a call from his father-in-law, who was bubbling over with joy. He told Marc that he had been offered a new permanent job with a reputable company in Los Angeles in the very same building where Marc was working! Marc was very happy for his father-in-law's good fortune, but sorry that they would be moving so close to his own home!

Marc's story of good fortune still continues. The last we heard he had become a partner in a computer company earning five times as much as before he came to Mother.

26. Unemployed Engineer

"Slowly a feeling of frustration begins to develop in me. Within myself I feel confident. I have faith in Mother too. Still, if nothing moves for weeks and months and years, the faith gives way. I am afraid I have to settle down as a teacher in a Polytechnic for life. If that is so, it will be a misfortune. That will bring down to dust all the high hopes with which I entered the Engineering College, worked hard, maintained it to achieve First Class all five years without fail. Also your silence is intriguing to me. I wish you throw some light on my situation," said the young engineer who called on me that day.

What he said was true, but that is not the whole truth. As the job situation in the country for engineers had become bleak and was showing signs of worsening, those engineering graduates who had managed to get some placement or other (like this young man in a polytechnic teaching post) considered themselves lucky but were dismayed by the prospects. I did not have much of an encouraging impact on him, but I knew, in his case, that this was not the end. I wanted to be clear about his future, but brief. I said, "I understand your mind and your dejection. But there is one more element in your case and that is the fact that you had *Darshan* of Mother last year. Ordinarily Mother's *Darshan* or a visit to the *Samadhi* would have an immediate effect. For some reason, in your case, it has not happened. I know that Mother acts swiftly, but if She delays, She has Her own reasons. When it is all over, you will realise that the delay is only for good." He was reassured to some extent, but was not cheered up to his normal level of infectious cheerfulness.

He is a brilliant young man. The one striking aspect of his personality is that he is always found laughing. He generally begins a conversation with laughter. He comes from a very respectable family that has been reduced to hard work. His father was a leader among men during his young days, when the family was flourishing. Later, adversity overtook the family. Everything was lost except the high qualities acquired during days of affluence. Six children in the family, one after the other, died before they reached the age of ten. The only surviving child was this engineer, who received in his upbringing all the affection due to the dead children. As the father was not affluent, the normal course would be to terminate his education at the 8th standard and begin helping the father in his profession. But the child wanted to read, and the father also felt he should study. In spite of poverty, the father was held in great respect among the family members spread over several villages. More than one young man in the family circle had been initiated into life by his father, and all of them were somewhat affluent. They remained grateful to the old man who had put them on their feet. So, the boy was sent to one of his uncle's for high school education.

The boy deserved this support. Without fail, during all the three years he was in high school, he secured very high marks, often standing first in the school. In the SSLC exam he secured over 400 marks. He had cherished ambitions about higher education, particularly as an engineer. He spoke to his father. The father had Rs.500 saved over a period of many years, and in future he could not save much more. It was very kind of his uncle to have educated him for three years. To expect any further help, especially for higher education at Madras, was not possible. In consultation with me, he decided to join a polytechnic with the money on hand. And if he won a scholarship, he could finish the three years successfully. That was the best course open to him. His uncle accompanied him when he was asked to appear for an interview at the polytechnic at Chidambaram. While waiting for their turn, the students exchanged information. Everyone who met this boy, on learning about his high score at the SSLC exam, remarked in passing, "If I had this score, I wouldn't join the polytechnic." The uncle, who was listening to these stray conversations, suddenly decided that his nephew deserved a college education and, come what may, he must provide it. He suggested to the boy that it was better to drop the idea of joining polytechnic and take up the idea of joining a college. The boy cheerfully consented and ended up in Loyola College. He passed *PUC* in first class. His uncle's enthusiasm continued. The boy joined Engineering College. He maintained the high

academic performance of securing a first class. He won a scholarship every year. His uncle made up any gap between the real expenses and scholarship amount. It was a misfortune that on his leaving the College he found the job market bleak. Jobs were scarce and no one would consider him. One of the employers the boy approached offered him a job at Rs.100. This is worse than not having a job, adding insult to injury.

Ever since the boy came to the town for high school education, I knew him and had a share in his life as his teacher. He used to consult me on all major decisions of his life. Now it was a bleak period. He was running for a year to every possible opportunity of a job without success. It was at this time that he visited the Ashram with me and felt the ocean of peace that is Mother. He once said, "When I prostrate before Mother, my being is filled with joy and peace. Often I used to feel that I should continue to prostrate before Her for a longer time." With heroic effort, he succeeded in getting appointed as a lecturer in a polytechnic at Madurai. This was a great relief but not a permanent solution for someone with his qualifications. He was in Madurai for a year and continuing to search for a better job. That search yielded no results. There was no hope of any future results. It was at that time he came to me and expressed the frustration mentioned earlier. I knew that better things were in store for him. Mother delays with a purpose. But my understanding was no solace for his position.

He returned after a few weeks and appeared full of news. He sat down as if he had swallowed something which bothered him. He began saying that he had some very good news but was doubtful of the entire report he was going to give and said that my opinion on the matter would decide the issue. I was happy and anxious to know the news. He said, "My uncle is in the dyeing trade. One of his customers is in Salem. Occasionally this man comes to this depot in Cuddalore OT. My uncle has long trade connections with him, but there is no particular friendship or intimacy. Today my uncle as usual went to OT to collect the dyes. Mr. Mudaliar from Salem had come there. He called my uncle over and said, "Do you know of any of our boys with an engineering degree? My friend is starting a company in Madras with French technology. I am a director of the company. The company is sending six engineers to Paris for training. The Managing Director has allotted one such job to me. The only condition is that candidate should have first class in Mechanical Engineering. I wish to offer the opportunity to one of my relatives. Though I have made money, there is no boy with that kind of education among my relatives. If you can get me any boy of that description from our people, I would happily appoint him." My uncle answered, "There is one in my house fully meeting the requirements. I shall bring him to you at Salem."

The boy told me, "My uncle is unable to believe this, nor can I. Of course, there is nothing here for me to lose, but it is hard to believe. My uncle and I felt we should take your advice." In reply I said, "Always it is hard to believe things when they come from Mother. As you speak, I see Mother's light on your face. This is truly Grace. Accept it with gratitude to Mother."

27. Walter

Walter, a 65 year old American businessman, first came to India in 1972 to visit his son and daughter-in-law who had come a year earlier to join the Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

In 1956 W and his family were living in a house about 20 miles north of New York City. The house had a large yard and a driveway about 150 feet long going from the street to the garage, which was at the back of the house. One night during the winter there was a heavy snowfall. The next morning all the roads were completely covered with snow. The city sent ploughs around to clear the roads as was their custom. W and his family went out early to shovel the snow off the driveway so that he could take the car out and drive to work. While W was lifting a heavy shovelful of snow, suddenly he felt a sharp, intense pain in the middle of his back and he fell over on his stomach into the snow. His family rushed to him and carried him into the house to his bed. He was moaning in unbearable pain and could barely move without crying out. A doctor was called to the house and gave medication so that W could sleep. Later he was taken to the hospital and underwent intensive examination. The doctors discovered that one of the disks in his spinal cord had slipped out of line and was pressing on the spinal nerve. They operated to correct the injury. After that W had to remain in bed for 6 months at home. Frequently his family would awake in the night hearing him cry in pain.

After six months the doctors said he could return to work but for the rest of his life he would have to wear a large girdle 18 inches wide wrapped around his waist. The girdle was fitted with long flat metal rods in the back to hold his back firmly in place. For 18 years W had worn the girdle. Once or twice he tried to live without it for a day or two and immediately the pain would return.

W first visited the Ashram in 1972. At that time his son invited him to have the *Darshan* of Mother in Her room, but W declined. Again W visited Pondicherry in 1973 and again his son asked him if he would like to see Mother. W said to his son, "You know I don't believe in all this religion and spirituality business. I have never bowed before anyone in my life and I am not about to do so now." His son replied, "No one said you have to bow to Mother if you don't want to. You can behave exactly as you please." Finally W decided to see Mother. He was taken to Her room and Mother was very happy to see him. Without even thinking, W went down on his knees before Mother and She held his hand for several minutes."

When W came downstairs from Mother's room, his face was bright red and he was glowing with a big smile. He went up to his son and said, "You never told me it would be like this. There is nothing else you can do except kneel before Mother. When She looked in my eyes I felt my heart swelling so big that I was afraid my chest would burst."

Again in 1974 W came to the Ashram and stayed in a guest house with his son for two weeks. One night W had a dream that he was standing in the Ashram surrounded by a crowd of people and he was presented a special medal or award. The next morning he forgot the dream, but a few hours later an Ashramite came and gave him a present. It was a silver pin with the symbol of Sri Aurobindo. The man explained that Mother herself had worn this pin on her head dress many times.

Suddenly W remembered his dream and he was overcome with emotion and could not even speak to thank the man for 15 or 20 minutes.

A few days later, W's son noticed that his father wasn't wearing his girdle. In reply to his son's enquiry, W said he felt so relaxed and peaceful that he wanted to remove it for a day or two and see what happened. The old pain did not return and so he stopped wearing the girdle for the rest of his visit. When he returned to the USA, W's wife was amazed to find her husband without his girdle on. Still W did not put it on and the pain did not return. Now W is 73 years old. He is retired and works very actively in his garden growing flowers and trees. He has never worn the girdle for a single day in the last 9 years.

28. Damodaran

He is a small landholder owning six acres of dry land. After years of hard work, he had earned this property. Along with that, his status had also grown in the village. He was one of the important leaders of the village though he was only middle aged. He took an active part in politics too. Any government scheme that came to the village would seek his cooperation for implementation. With the progress of the nation, his village too received the benefits of education, roads, electricity, bank aid, and the cooperative movement. He was also an important beneficiary of all these schemes. During these years of progress, his dry lands received electricity, a borewell, crop loans, hybrid seeds, etc. He was a rising star of the village, but with a small base, often shaky because of the uncertainties of agricultural life.

One year circumstances were very favourable. He received government loans in time to raise crops. He could cultivate all his six acres in the primary season for groundnut, but the price was not helpful. So his great hopes of paying off some of his old loans remained unfulfilled. For the second season of groundnut, not many villagers would take the risk as pests would be virulent during this season and water supply would not be fully assured. Only those assured of all resources and capable of taking risks would cultivate groundnut in the second season, which extended into the peak of summer. As the prices during this lean season were always attractive, the season retained its charm for the farmers.

This farmer went for groundnut in the second season. He could do that because he was assured of water supply from his borewell. Favoured by conducive circumstances, he was again able to cultivate all the six acres. The crop was good. Luckily there was no pest. If only the customary high price of this off-season were available, he could turn a corner in his life. In that sense this crop was a deciding one. If all went well, his rising position in the village would become an accomplished fact. Otherwise he could slide down and all his energies would go to keep him from sliding down. Just when every circumstance was favourable, his borewell failed to supply water after the bottom of the hole became stuck with clay preventing water from being pumped out. Normally this could be repaired in a month or six weeks, if everything went well.

This was the peak of summer in the month of May. Soil dries up in minutes after watering due to the heat. During such emergencies, the adjacent farmers used to help save the situation. Unfortunately for him, in his area all lands were dry. He was the only one who owned and operated a borewell. The situation was bleak. An excellent crop was now to wilt before the very eyes of the owner. Indeed, it was a pathetic situation. There was nothing for the farmer to do, not even a line of hope for thought.

Around 10 p.m. this man with this background presented himself at my house, having travelled from his village. His face was dark and sullen, expression pitiable. Before narrating all these details to me, he prefaced it saying, "My hopes were great till yesterday. Now they are dashed to pieces. I feel stung. Life is merciless. No one is in a position to offer me even words of consolation. My heart is heavy. Please be patient with me and let me explain my plight. I may feel somewhat unburdened, if you listen."

He spoke. I listened. He went over every little detail of his misfortune with animation, speaking in a choked voice. When he finished, I noticed he was no longer pitiable, or sorrow-laden. He was somewhat relaxed. Perhaps he had found some relief in speaking. I spoke in turn, inspiring confidence in him. I said as he was a hard-working person and had done meticulously everything he could do in his power, his crop would not wilt. He was intrigued and listened intently. I repeated that God helped those who helped themselves, and he was one like that. It was a riddle to him, but his eyes began to sparkle with a trace of hope.

He had heard of the Ashram but never visited the *Samadhi* nor did he know of Mother and Her personality. I mentioned in one brief sentence, "Your crop is sure to be saved if you pray to Mother." All that he had to do was not to exercise his mind how it would be saved. I told him to go to the *Samadhi* and pray that his crops must be saved. He endorsed my suggestion wholeheartedly and vigorously. I saw his grief vanish and that meant to me that his crops would certainly be saved.

The next night it rained. It was a good rain. His crops would be saved, if only that rain extended to the village. I felt that the rain had come to save his crop and extended itself up to my place.

Ten days later he came with a beaming face twice in size. He said, "Your words put strength in me. I had no question in my mind. I felt I was lifted out of depression. Straight from here I went home and then left for Pondicherry. I scarcely knew which bus I took or who was by my side. There was only one thought in my mind. It was my crop's future. I reached the Ashram and went to the *Samadhi*. That was the first visit for me. I did not know what to do. I stood nearby and voiced a prayer. I forgot myself. I don't know what words I uttered. My body was still and mind disappeared. I don't know how long I remained there like that. When I came to myself, I saw people meditating around. There were flowers on the *Samadhi*. I felt extremely peaceful, relieved and relaxed. Slowly I walked away. Until I reached home again, I was in a kind of daze. In my condition, I forgot the crop too. The next night it rained. It poured and poured non-stop. My heart was filled with gratitude. I offered Mother deeply-felt gratitude. The next morning when I visited the fields, the crop had a sparkle on the leaves. Surely no amount of watering could have had this effect. Luckily the crop

needed only one more watering before harvest. The yield was slightly bigger than expected. The price too was better than last year."

29. Opportunities and Obstacles

Often I hear from devotees, "My prayer is always answered, most of the time at once. Sometimes the answer is delayed, but occasionally I get into a familiar situation. Mother grants me some unheard of rewards, more than I have been thinking of. I am overjoyed. Then one after another difficulties crop up. I am afraid of losing what has come. I pray. Things take a positive turn. A couple of days later again fresh difficulties arise. Each time difficulties arise I pray. Things change. What has come is so far out of my way that I am unable to remain calm. Constantly new problems arise. Things alternate and the end is constantly postponed. I am torn between two sides. The anxiety is so great that I even say to myself that it is better it comes to an end, let the opportunity be cancelled, I don't mind. I am unable to stand this constant anxiety."

I would like to explain what a devotee can do on such occasions to help bring about the best result. I shall quote the experiences of some devotees and comment on them.

"I am an American who has come to Pondicherry for a short visit to the Ashram. I have read Mother's works and am devoted to Her in my own way. A visit to the *Samadhi* is uplifting, fills me with a peace I have not known before. I feel like sitting there for hours on end. My general tension comes down and disappears. My mind falls silent. My heart is full, full of pleasant, happy feelings. A strange fulfilment creeps over me. A friend engaged me in conversation and casually, without any intention, I mentioned to him that I have a pain in the back. At once he asked me why I should not pray to Mother for the pain to be removed. It never struck me. During my next visit to the *Samadhi*, I thought of taking it up as a prayer. This pain is very painful, being a back pain at the base of the spine. Several years ago when I was lifting a heavy bundle from my car's trunk, I sprained my spine. I had medical treatment, but doctors say it cannot be fully cured. Day and night I live with it, though it is now within tolerable limits. My father has had it for over 15 years. Perhaps it runs in the family. I have learned to live with it. As a result, my general posture is slightly slanted to avoid the most painful position. It is much less now than in the beginning, but even at this level it is really painful. I wouldn't wish this suffering even on my enemy.

"I visited the *Samadhi* the next day, concentrated, meditated and after some time, remembered to pray to Mother that my pain should go away. I fell into deep meditation. When I came to myself, I stood up and walked to my room. My friend came to visit me that evening. As our conversation began to touch upon many issues, we came to my pain. Suddenly it dawned on me that for the first time since it began, my pain had not been there at all that day. I was unable to believe my senses. How is it that I did not notice it for the whole day? Mother had given me a gift, really a wonderful gift. My mind began to work. I thought of all the works I used to shun because of this pain. Now I could do them. I had an intimate friend who had this pain. I could tell her too about this. I could tell

my father too. I thought, but I hesitated because there in America people may think I am crazy if I speak like this. My mind was full of a million thoughts.

To my surprise, I found that the pain started coming back after two days. Again I prayed at the *Samadhi*. It left, but this time it left only half way. What a tragedy after that wonderful relief! I was unable to control my thoughts. I didn't want to lose this relief. My mind has been on fire, not being able to go either way. I just do not know what I should do to make my relief permanent."

Let me quote another man also:

"I am a retired government servant who at the time of retirement was sanctioned a pension of Rs.45 per month. After retirement I started selling *casurina* firewood for a living. Over the past 15 years I have progressed in my business and purchased lands and raised casurina myself. Now I have a good property and I am 75. I would like to sell the casurina lands and take rest, but the 27 acres are worth only Rs.10,000 in the market. I could sell it if someone offered me Rs.27,000. I have been trying to sell the lands for the last five years. Once a buyer agreed for Rs.27,000, but the sale did not come through. After great efforts, a buyer came to me, anxious to buy it at my price of Rs.27,000. At this point I was invited to Mother's *Darshan* by another old man of 70. When I returned home, to my utter astonishment, my lands had become very valuable. A fertilizer company wanted the lands. I finalised the bargain at Rs.81,000. The man was writing the agreement but stopped in the middle. He said he would come back in a week. Two months have passed. He has never come back. I am almost mad. Every car that I pass looks like his car. Every person who comes to my house looks like that man. I have lost sleep and my peace of mind. What an opportunity came my way and how quickly it faded away. My mind considers thousands of possibilities. Finally I have decided to give up and go to the man who had offered me Rs.27,000. This opportunity has become like a torture and I would rather not have it."

Surely the man's plight is pitiable. It is one thing not to have the opportunity. It is another thing to get it and lose it. On these occasions, the more the mind thinks, the more the opportunity is cancelled. What can we do? Is there anything that can be done to save the situation? Is there anything we can do to control our thoughts?

A girl of 31 says, "No one who has looked at my face or even photograph has wanted to see me again. So far dozens of grooms have come and gone. The last man, a man of property, a graduate, came to our house with his parents, saw me and agreed to marry me. This was a surprise to me. Between now and the wedding my one fear is that the groom's party may cancel it. My mind runs in all directions. The anxiety is so great."

An engineer says, "I am working in a simple situation. People who are starting a factory for Rs.1.5 crores have offered me a share. This is too great an opportunity for me to lose. My one fear is they should not change their minds before the documents are signed."

We can give a dozen more examples. As a rule, on these occasions the mind is activated, one is beside himself, daydreams, builds castles, plans for the future, and again, as a rule, the expectations cancel the opportunities or shrink them to a tenth of what was first offered.

I would say that Mother gives, but Man cancels. This is to reverse the proverb that Man proposes and God disposes. It is true that I would suggest that one should keep the mind calm so that Mother can act effectively. It is not reasonable for me to advise a person in this situation to keep his mind calm, knowing it is nearly impossible. Is there a way out? There is.

We know it is Mother who brought this great opportunity to us. We also know that She cannot act through impatience, anxiety, excitement or nervousness. We know Mother acts best in calm, quiet steadiness, firm faith, and great patience. People who are in such anxious conditions should try to understand this truth and resolve to be calm and unthinking. They must resolve not to be excited, not to activate the thoughts in a hundred directions. If thoughts persist, one should try not to indulge in the thoughts. Mind will become partially calm. In some cases, this resolution makes the mind fully calm, too. If, in spite of this resolution, the mind is still restive, pray to Mother for calm and patience. She certainly gives it. One by one the difficulties recede and the originally given opportunity always emerges in full measure. All who have consulted me, including those mentioned in this article, have happily and fully solved their problems in this way.

30. Manivel

Today I received a letter from a devotee in which he says his daughter, who is an M.Sc., has secured a job in his own native town on the day he got my letter. He is an ardent devotee for many years working in the government as a non-gazetted officer with a spotless record of service.

All his four children are brilliant and often top the list in the college. Being a non-gazetted officer, he was unable to offer them the very best in life, but he did his very best to give them higher education. Several years ago when his son passed *PUC* with shining scores, he was faced with his son's burning desire to join engineering college and his inability to support him in a college for five years. The government rules work in a strange fashion. As his salary crosses the income limit prescribed for eligibility for scholarship, his son could not apply for scholarship! Prior to studies is the hurdle of admission. Scores of applicants with distinction compete for seats. If merit alone were the criterion, his son would surely win.

There are other considerations. As a government official, he knew many influential persons. But in matters of getting a favour, though it may be a deserving case, these contacts do not yield results. Still he called on a local VIP. When he arrived there, many bigwigs were waiting to meet the VIP. He was not willing to wait and make his representation too. Reluctantly, however, he waited his turn. The VIP was polite enough to promise to do his best for his son. Not finding any warmth in the promise, he returned home. He later met me and described his plight. He is an ardent devotee, but

at that moment of despair to console him with a reference to prayer or faith could be embarrassing. He left remarking, "I have faith in Mother. Let us see." I was happy he said that.

When the results were out, his son had been selected. He called on me with great joy and constantly exclaimed his surprise at the selection of his son, saying "Mother is truly great."

He often used to meet me and narrate his experiences with Mother. Once when he was cycling home, he saw a woman loudly wailing, surrounded by a crowd. He stopped to see what it was. The child of the woman was lost and she had given up hope of finding the child after half a day of search. The more he heard about the details, the more he was moved. He thought he would cry if he listened any more. He moved to one side of the road next to a house, parked his cycle and called Mother to relieve the distress of this hapless mother. He was so absorbed in his prayer that he almost forgot what was going on around him. His eyes began to close and he felt lost inside. Suddenly there was a shout which jerked him back to awareness. He rushed towards the crowd to know if anything untoward had happened to the woman. On the contrary, someone who had found the child brought it to where the mother was and hence the shouts of joy.

He was introduced to me thirty years ago when he came to my native town to work in the taluq office. We used to meet at the house of a common friend. My friend used to describe to me, after he left, how efficient this man was at the *taluq* office. He earned a reputation at the office for efficiency, integrity and, above all, for his soft behaviour towards friends and a great willingness to work hard. Later, for several years we had not met. Our contacts renewed after about seven or eight years when both of us moved to another town and ran into each other.

That was at the prime of his life and mine too. He was promoted in his job and was working hard to build up a career winning the good remarks of his superiors. So we met rarely. One Sunday morning he appeared at my house with worry writ large on his face.

He explained to me that things were not going smoothly at the office and his next promotion was at stake. I was wondering how such a person could ever miss a promotion. He said that in circumstances like this anything could happen. It was impossible to predict, he said, who would be promoted and who would be denied. He added, "I am frustrated by life around and knowing how I am denied the promotion. This is clear injustice. But what worries me more is what is in store for the future. I was not even selected for the list of candidates from which the promotees will be selected. I appealed against that decision. The government has rejected my appeal. The implication of this rejection causes me greater worry. It means I am ineligible for any future promotion."

He came to me that day to find out whether someone in Madras could be approached to rectify the mistake and have justice restored to him. That was a decade when, among youth, it was a fashion to be an atheist. At that time he was an admirer of those ideals. Those were the first years of my coming to the Ashram. He was not one to whom I could speak about spirituality, much less prayer. I did not have the courage to propose to him that his prayer to Mother would restore justice to him. But that was a moment when such an idea could be spoken. Maybe he would listen to me. I mustered courage at last and briefly explained to him Sri Aurobindo's role in national freedom, his

yoga and the powers of Mother, giving a few examples. I ended up suggesting that he could visit the *Samadhi*. He seemed to listen with approval.

After ten days, he called on me with excitement to say that his name was there in the selected list of Deputy *Tasildars* and he would soon be posted elsewhere. I asked him to clarify whether it was the list from which selection was to be made. He corrected me by saying that his name was in the selected list.

He explained that he had visited the *Samadhi* on the very day he met me earlier and felt uplifted. He came away with a feeling that his cause would be upheld. "I never expected that things would move so fast and so well. I don't understand how it all happened. For me it is very surprising," he said. That was how he became a devotee long ago.

31. Sri Aurobindo, The Writer

The Life Divine, the magnum opus of Sri Aurobindo, says the American Sri Aurobindo Library, has been acclaimed as the greatest book of our times. It goes on to say that *The Life Divine* is a landmark in human thought and aspiration. Sri Aurobindo was also the author of the epic English poem *Savitri*, which runs into 24,000 lines of blank verse.

As Sri Aurobindo attained *Mahasamadhi* before the Nobel Prize committee could implement its decision to award him the prize for literature, the prize was never awarded that year.

Sri Aurobindo says that his is not merely a philosophy or an ideal towards which one strives, but a Force in action. The Force enters into those who are open to it and urges their march towards the Supreme. And to authors his writings have a special message. He was unique as a writer in the entire history of the Eastern and Western civilized world, in that he started writing five of his major books simultaneously in 1914 and he wrote them in installments for his monthly journal 'Arya', completing all of them in 1921. They are only a sixth of his total writings which run into 30 volumes. History tells us that neither Aristotle nor Shakespeare nor *Vyasa* nor *Shankara* undertook such a phenomenal effort of writing at the highest level of human thought.

Writers are endowed with several faculties such as imagination, a right turn of phrase, inspired language, a knack for a striking plot, a capacity to maintain the readers' interest, suspense, vivid images, descriptive narratives, etc. When a writer reads Sri Aurobindo's writings or takes to his teachings, His FORCE enters the writer and energizes all his faculties. The writer finds that his imagination is more active, the right phrase comes to his pen more easily and more often, his ordinary writing becomes inspiring and his inspired moments creative, his dull plots change structure to become striking, his readers never tire of reading his writings, more images constantly present themselves and are live with energy, and descriptions become long and very interesting.

It is common knowledge with the devotees of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother that after their Force enters the lives of devotees, in whatever profession they are, the devotees steadily rise in their profession, often ending at the top. That is true of writers too, only that being writers, the effect is two-fold in their lives. The writer's main faculty is thinking and the Force's main expression is light. The light of His Force shows in the mind of the writer as higher capacity of the already existing faculties and also it creates new ones. On this score alone, the writer becomes a better member of the profession. In its general expression of inherent progress, the Force takes the writer to higher levels of his work.

In life, the writer finds his unpublished works are solicited for publication, long awaited recognition sails to him, rewards are announced for unexpected works, his services are sought for by the profession and the public at large, and above all, the intrinsic value of his thought, so far unrecognised, is now fully appreciated. He becomes a creative writer credited with wider recognition at all levels of the society.

32. Lost Speech

I was returning home from the Ashram. In the bus I met a friend who was also returning home from Pondicherry. By way of conversation I asked him on what assignment he had visited Pondicherry. He said he was returning from JIPMER Hospital where his brother was an in-patient for the last three weeks. I had never known that he had a brother, but I continued my general enquiries about how old he was and why he was hospitalised. To my utter surprise he explained the developments. "My brother is 17 years of age and he is in the 10th standard. Some three weeks ago he noticed some difficulties in his speech, but he had not clearly explained it to the other family members. It seems he knew that some throat trouble was developing and while speaking it manifested itself. It is not clear whether he himself was fully aware of it or not. One day we found him not answering our questions. As he is generally reticent and not given to talking, we were not initially struck by his not answering. After some time it dawned on us that he could not talk. Everyone in the family was upset. Some made light of it saying it may be a passing phase. Others were frightened. My brother himself did not make light of it. He was frightened beyond measure. In minutes his fright spread all through the family and there was overhanging gloom generating indefinable fear. After prolonged consultations within the family and with well-informed friends, it was decided to take him to Jipmer Hospital. The face of the boy became gloomier and gloomier, as he listened to the various stories of loss of speech narrated in his presence by the never-ending stream of visitors. Some said in these cases speech suddenly disappeared but reappeared with the same suddenness. This cheered the boy up. There was a faint smile on his face. Others cited cases of speech lost and only restored with a stammer. This was worse. No one was able to control their narration. Anyway, all of us hoped that as his speech had been lost abruptly, it may be restored in a spurt. There was hope, fear, gloom and, above all, a gnawing uncertainty.

"We had him admitted to Jipmer Hospital. Now it was the turn of the doctors, nurses and co-patients to tell stories of lost speech. During the first week, the visiting doctors explained that the boy was under observation. We all anxiously awaited the results of observation. Doctors continued to visit but did not give us any explanation. In the second week we learned from the hospital staff that there was no known medical therapy for loss of speech. This smashed our hopes and we wondered why he was being kept in the hospital. Some of us felt that being hospitalised makes the patient feel that medical attention was being given and this helped to keep up his hopes. This appeared reasonable. We decided to continue in the hospital but our hopes were lost. We did not communicate our hopelessness to my brother. A few days later, one doctor suggested that in such matters one can only pray to God. We have all prayed to several gods ever since the boy was afflicted. What more is there for us to do?"

This is a friend of a friend. I know him well enough, but he was introduced to me by someone else and my relationship with him is limited. I know only one incident in his life. My friend and this man were boyhood friends. My friend graduated, but this man stopped with SSLC. After that he tried to join in a clerk's post somewhere. As he had not been selected by the Madras Public Service Commission, to secure a permanent post was ruled out. He was very efficient, in spite of his not being selected by the service commission. He secured a government clerk's post on a leave vacancy for a month. He was so efficient, so amiable, alert, and cooperative that his boss was unwilling to part with him at the end of the month. He secured another temporary job for fifteen days. Here too, his boss and colleagues were impressed by him, but how could the temporary job be continued. He disposed of twenty files on one occasion in hours, whereas the man whom he had replaced could not handle that much in a day. This sweet treatment and short employment continued. There was no office in the district that he had not served in; there was no department he missed. He was now well versed in the rules of all the government departments and respected for it, but his jobs continued to be of short duration of months or weeks as they were all leave vacancies. About ten years had passed like this. My friend was sore over this misfortune of his boyhood friend. He once explained to me that the very first prayer he addressed to Mother after coming to the Ashram was that his friend should get a permanent job. Soon a new rule was introduced by which anyone who had put in a total of ten years temporary service could be made permanent. And so he earned his permanency. My friend also explained to me that he had never spoken about his prayer to his friend.

As soon as the bus reached our town, I took this friend to a quiet corner and started talking in a serious tone. He was also seriously listening. I said, "It so happens that today is August 14 and tomorrow is Mother's *Darshan*. If you choose to pray to Mother, your brother will get his speech back." He agreed. I continued, "Please come to Mother's public *Darshan* tomorrow and pray that your brother's speech must be restored. Take a flower petal from the *Samadhi* and give it to your brother. If you can persuade your brother too to pray, it will be good."

The *Darshan* was on a Thursday. I saw him in the *Darshan*. Visitors who had come to my house for *Darshan* all left on Friday or Saturday. On Sunday night I was sitting up late with a friend who still remained on an important work for Mother. At 11 p.m. we finished our discussions and went

upstairs to sleep. No sooner had I lay down on the bed than my wife came up saying someone wanted to see me. Who could come at 11 p.m. and on what business? Surely, it must be something important. I decided to go down and meet the visitor. It was none other than the friend whom I had met on the bus and later at the *Darshan*. I asked if there was any news from the hospital. He replied, "I came here to meet you at 6 p.m. to convey the glad news that my brother spoke one full sentence in a spurt this afternoon. This gave all of us hope and I thought I should first inform you. As you were not here, I returned home thinking I could meet you tomorrow. My brother and all others returned home from Pondicherry at 10 p.m., and I found his speech was fully restored late in the evening. I thought you won't mind being disturbed at this hour, if I bring this news to you."

33. Lessee

When I decided to buy a cashew garden on the hill-top known as Caper Hills, my studies concerned the soil, climate, variety of cashew, the characteristics of the cashew plant, its present yield, its greatest capacity to yield, etc. These were all studies in cultivation of a crop. My friends and relatives were constantly reminding me that scientific studies of a crop may be important, but there was something more important, viz. the human factor. I was proposing to buy a piece of property officially described in the government records as forest. Wolves and jackals still lived there in good number. One has to carry drinking water from outside as there was no possibility of finding water anywhere on the whole property. Leave alone drinking water, life was not safe. The physical safety of a person was in danger in those places. All of them constantly asked me how I was going to feel safe and secure in such a place and how I was going to protect the property in such an atmosphere. I was well aware of these dangers, especially after I paid a few visits there before purchasing it. As I had in mind an idea of founding a modern farm, I was planning to create an organisation there in the coming years. When dozens of people were trained and employed, several supervisors recruited working under a farm manager and a crew of watchmen going around, the dangers described by the well-wishers would be overcome. Until then, it is surely a risk and an adventure. And no success can ever be gained without risks. Therefore, I overlooked the good advice given by many and purchased the garden.

The very first thing I did there was to appoint the man who was in charge of that garden for the last 20 years as my lessee. Before I took the effort to contact this man, he was on the look-out for the buyer and tried to explain to me the advantages of keeping him in continued charge of the garden. I spoke to him at length of my plans to found a modern farm there. Promptly he reacted to the idea saying that nothing of that kind would work there, as property of any description-equipments, sprayers, etc.-or, for that matter, anything of value could not be kept safely.

My original plan was to clear the jungle, level the land, put up bunds in every place that needed them, plough the fields as often as necessary and saturate the soil with manure. All this work needed a great deal of investment and a long wait of three to four years for results to show. I was prepared for the effort, investment and long wait, as I had calculated the income of the garden would rise

several fold in four years, dwarfing the effort. Those were days when an acre of cashew was giving Rs.50 return collected as jungle produce. No one ever spent any money on cashew trees, except the wages for collecting the nuts. Even for groundnut cultivation, only Rs.250 was spent, while my planned expenditure for modernising cashew cultivation was Rs.300 to 400 per acre. If only I succeeded in completing all the improvements, the rewards would far outstrip my investment. But that was four years away according to my calculation. My work started as planned and proceeded season after season to greater heights of success, confirming at every stage the calculation of results I expected. Two full years had been completed. The same lessee continued as my manager. He did all the work and spent all the money himself. I visited every morning to check the work.

The lessee, who was the manager, contrary to all warnings, proved to be loyal. He was interested in the progress of the work; rather, he was excited about the future prospects for the garden and for himself. He almost identified himself with the work. My friends quipped that I was lucky to get a good man as lessee, as otherwise their fears would have come true.

Though the lessee was very good and honest, our relationship was not without those subtle moments when he would hint that my safe operations on the field were only because he was there. Often visitors would allude to the fact that I was lucky in my lessee. But I had seen occasions when the lessee would put me face to face with field situations that only local people could overcome, whereas I, as an outsider, could not. That he did very rarely to drive home to me his importance for me. Once in a threatening situation I took the lead and decided to handle the situation myself and the situation did come under my control. In a flash the *Rudra* in him came out and he asserted himself against the pilferers. By and large he was a good man.

My third year arrived with the third season for me in the garden. The trees were fantastic, with flowers as no other garden around looked. People commented that my expected results came a year or two earlier. They said my three years investment, including the original purchase value could be retrieved in that one year. The flower laden trees spoke for themselves, and it looked as if everyone had spoken the truth.

Before I could lay the foundation for a modern farm, create an organisation, put up a few buildings, appoint an educated manager, I felt caught unawares by this prospect of a great yield. Had the yield waited another year or two, I could have prepared myself to handle it all with an organisation at my disposal to handle the collection of nuts, ward off intruders, drive away cattle, etc. Now I entirely depended upon the goodwill of my lessee. If he continued to be good, there would be no problem. He suddenly showed signs of greed. He knew I was at his mercy. As the enthusiasm all around was great because of the success of the work sooner than expected, this issue did not occupy my mind more than as an information.

Just then my *jutkawalla*, who was close to my lessee, brought the news that the lessee had changed his attitude. It seemed he had told my *jutkaman*, "Give the garden to me on lease. Ask him to sit at home. Let him not worry. I shall give the lease honestly at the end of the season." It came to me as a jolt. What everyone warned me against had come true for no fault of mine. Had the success waited

longer, I would have been right. It was well known in the ten gardens around us that no lessee gave the owner more than half the lease amount and there was no way of collecting it from these poor people. Mine was a new situation. It was not easy to fix the lease amount as the yield expected was five to ten times. No one in the village was able to assess the yield because it was new to them. The only reasonable course would be to collect the produce and at the end of the season to reward the lessee suitably after realising the real extent of produce. If I gave in now, even if I succeeded in creating an organisation later, the lingering results of having given in to the lessee would be there. Perhaps my giving in might stand in the way of creating an organisation. The lessee seemed to be actuated by greed and the trump was in his hand. It weighed on my mind heavily. In those days, I never used to pray to Mother for any particular reward or results. When faced with a problem, I used to meditate. The weight would be lifted from the mind and the problem would melt away. In fact, in the early years of my coming to the Ashram, there were very few problems at all in my life.

This time I meditated, but the weight did not fully lift itself from the mind. I went to the *Samadhi* and meditated again. There was greater relief, but not full relief. This was a new experience for me and I had to solve this problem before I met the lessee again. As I was visiting the garden every day the time left was short. In those days Mother Herself was issuing passes to a few people to visit Sri Aurobindo's room. I obtained one and visited the room. I meditated and came out. Champaklal, who had attended on Sri Aurobindo for 25 years, called me and asked if there was anything important at home that made me visit the room. In trying to answer him, I recollected that I had a problem with my lessee which had gone out of my mind till then.

The next day I met my lessee. He had lost his usual smile and appeared serious. We retired to a secluded spot. I began the conversation asking him for news. Quickly he answered it was I who should bring him news. I started an explanation of what I had done in the garden and came to the harvest. I said we must settle between ourselves the terms for that year's harvest. He stopped me short and burst out, "You have spread thigh high manure in this place. You have spread knee deep currency notes here. All the money I spent with my own hands. And now when the results come, it should go entirely to you. I am not one who will ask for more than my due. Give what you please. No one will give more than you. I am not one who will lay hands on your share." I felt he was speaking my thoughts and was moved to see tears in his eyes. I proposed a rate per bag. He readily agreed and jumped up laughing. He said, "Come, let's go. There is a lot of work to do."

34. One Crore

Om is a North Indian businessman. He is a craftsman par excellence. He carves out of soft stone very attractive artwork in the shape of boxes, vases, etc. His goods sell like hotcakes all over Europe. Buyers come to him, pay the price in advance, sit in his factory for the order to be produced and take it with them. Otherwise, if they ordered from their own countries, they may not get the goods in time or may not get them at all. Such is the demand. Such is its beauty.

One of our Society's American members bought a small shipment of goods from him. Later he visited Om in his place. Om was nice, friendly, cordial and treated our friend as if he were an old friend or family member. Our American friend bought occasionally and in small quantities. Naturally, as a business contact, we were of little value. After a few months of our member's visit, Om wrote saying he was going to visit us in Pondicherry. Strange! We are absolutely of no business significance to him. He has no other friends here. Why on earth should Om call on us here, we all wondered.

He came. He was very pleasant. He had not heard of the Ashram or the Mother up there in the North. Now that he had come, our friends spoke to him about Mother, suggested that he could visit the Ashram. He paid his visit to Sri Aurobindo's room and made an offering of Rs.1,000.

Just before he was about to leave, he asked our American member if he could meet me. When I met him his face looked sad for some reason. I spoke briefly to him about his future life and business. I told him great things were in store for him, perhaps things he could never believe. He was happy and took leave. On reaching Madras before he took the plane, he called his office in North India on the phone. To his great disappointment, he learned that the tax officers had visited his office for some enquiry. From there he sent word to me asking why this disturbance should come to him just after a visit to the Ashram. I explained in a letter that I had expected great things for him, but this incident shows even greater things await him. I continued, "Mother lays great importance on keeping accurate accounts, because that helps more money to flow in. Perhaps you can improve your accounting system. Only when greater things are in store and Mother wants the devotee to be better organised, such things happen."

Two years passed. He again visited us here in Pondicherry. This time the sadness on his face was not there. For him it was an important visit because a shipment of Rs.50,000 worth of goods sent to us had arrived in America all damaged due to poor packaging. We had earlier written to him about this. We sent our purchase officer to his factory to inspect the packaging. In spite of this, a lot of breakage took place. Om was disturbed at this happening and came here to settle the matter. He said to our friends, "I send shipments all over the world without the buyer's inspection and they are all right. Because your officer was there, I left it to his care. But this has happened and I am sorry. I offer to reimburse the entire Rs.50,000."

Om was not at all responsible. It was entirely the fault of our officer. This attitude of Om's cannot be seen anywhere in business. He had come 1500 miles to explain this to us and make this offer! I am sure he is a rare individual. We owned the fault entirely and it was a job for our friends to refuse his return of money. He was firm. Now that he was firm, my friends came to me and told me. I went to meet him. He explained to me, "I was a successful businessman earning ten *lakhs* a year, but I lived the life of a businessman. Your member visited me. After that my business expanded very much. Now I believe great good has come to me after his visit. Therefore, I do not want him to suffer any loss from my shipment. Two years ago you said great things awaited me. All that has come true since then."

I was amazed at this young man, his gratitude, his attitude of friendliness to us, whom he knew very little of. This time I spoke to him at length and finally summed up, "It is excellent of you to return Rs.50,000 for the breakage. Truly it is not your fault. It will be equally nice if we do not accept the money. I shall accept your good will but please withdraw the offer of money." He was happy and reconciled.

After he left I explained to my friends that Mother reaches devotees in the measure of their receptivity. Om's feelings of gratitude were noble. Surely Her blessings would reach him in a large measure, even if he did not actively think of Her.

Three more years passed. Now our friends in USA suddenly received a special order for Om's goods. After placing the order, another American friend visited him in his office. I give below the story he brought in Om's own words:

Om said, "I am very sorry your company in America does not buy much from me. My goods are in great demand. People from Holland, Australia, and America constantly come here for goods. They pay cash on delivery. They pay any price I ask. It is enough they get the goods. In your case, you buy rarely and in small quantities. I wish you constantly buy at least a small quantity to keep in touch. None of you ever come here, whereas every other buyer constantly comes here. I would like to sell to you. When I take your invoice and change the prices to ten percent lower, everyone in the office is intrigued. My son, who is now in business with me, often asks why I do that. I believe good things started coming to me in life ever since your friend first set foot into my factory. Later in Pondicherry I was told that great, unbelievable things awaited me. At that time, I could not imagine at all what those things could be. It has happened to me just now this year. My goods are made out of a special stone, which is not easily available. I spotted a very good source and applied for quarry license. To my great dismay Tata and Birla companies entered the competition. The license became a hot issue and went from one office to another. Finally the issue entered the courts and went up to the Supreme Court. Am I a match for these industrial giants? I won, of course, after a great struggle and expense. I firmly believe I could win against these industrial houses only because I carried Mother's Blessings with me. To tell you the truth, I will earn a net income of one *crore* a year from these new mines allotted to me."

35. Balaraman

Balaraman is a *mirasdar* living in his native village. He is devoted to the Mother. His entire family is devoted to Mother. His thoughts come to him as images; rather, he thinks in images. Whenever he meets me he used to describe the many visions he had. Some are of Mother and others are of life. I used to think the *Rishi* was in him. One day late in the evening he came out of his village house and he was struck by a vision whose immensity immobilized him. Standing on the edge of the road outside his house, he saw a huge light (*Brahmanda jyothi*). To his great surprise, it fragmented into a million bits of light that spread all over the world, and each bit lodged in one human being. He was

overwhelmed by the vision, but by itself it explained nothing to him. The next morning the All India Radio announced that The Mother of the Ashram had attained *Mahasamadhi* and She had left her body at 7: 30 p.m. the previous day. This news and the time of Mother's departure immediately helped him understand his previous day's vision. It showed that Mother had not merely left the world but was enshrined in every human heart where a soul lodged.

A trader used to visit his house periodically to sell cloth, particularly sarees. This man was known for a long time to Balaraman. Once the trader brought his son, named Tirumoorthy, who was reading in *PUC* and introduced him, saying the son would continue his trade from then onwards. The son was attracted by the picture of Mother in Balaraman's house. After some time Tirumoorthy evinced greater interest in Balaraman as a devotee than as a customer. He became a devotee too and started visiting the Samadhi and attending *Darshans*. Tirumoorthy is one who sees visions very often. This common faculty brought Tirumoorthy and Balaraman nearer. Tirumoorthy was an ardent young man who desired to know everything about the Ashram, The Mother, Sri Aurobindo and yoga. He spent a few years listening to devotees, particularly to Balaraman, and avidly reading all available literature. He began to talk about Mother. Soon people found him talking only of Mother. A large contingent of young men gathered around him, feeling the same devotion to Mother.

Tirumoorthy brought people to the Ashram quite often. They were men and women, young and old, from far and near. People saw that he devoted his entire time with others speaking of Mother in great admiration and in utter devotion. God knows what happened to his business. Some felt Tirumoorthy had abandoned his business and devoted all his time to visiting the Ashram.

But the facts were different. His business multiplied several-fold. His standing in the profession rose considerably. He had by now earned a good bit of savings too. He shifted to Bangalore, collected a few *lakhs* of capital from friends and relatives, and started something like a wholesale business, supplying cloth to men like himself who sold in the villages. His income too rose considerably. Among his friends whom he brought to the Ashram were college students, traders and college lecturers.

Tirumoorthy was anxious to do service to Mother. When he came to know a devotee from Madras was sending rose flowers for the *Samadhi* on *Darshan* days, he too offered to send flowers from Bangalore. Mother had a special liking for good roses and white lotuses. Once Tirumoorthy came to know this, he started collecting the best available roses in Bangalore and carrying them himself to the Ashram one day prior to *Darshan*. These flowers were offered to Mother's room, Sri Aurobindo's room, *Samadhi*, mediation hall and other places of importance. Not content with this flower service, he bought lands in Pondicherry to cultivate flowers for the purpose of offering them to the *Samadhi* and Ashram. He once suggested he could bring a team of young people and offer service to Mother Estates during a cashew season. When his offer was accepted, he brought more people than the work required. Among the group was an M.A. who was unemployed.

This unemployed young man had applied to Canara Bank and UCO Bank for a clerk's post a year earlier. At that time he wrote a long letter to me explaining his position. He sent offerings to the

Ashram and received the blessings. He was very well qualified, intelligent and stood every chance of being selected as a bank clerk. He used to write quite often, that is, at every stage of his application. He was very anxious and impatient. But he was selected by neither of the banks and was sorely disappointed. In cases like this there is always a hidden factor, a higher factor. Man has not learned to appreciate disappointments. How can a young man whose application for a clerkship was rejected console himself that it is all for good, and that, maybe, greater things awaited him because he is a devotee of Mother? It goes against the grain. In this condition he too offered to come to Mother Estates for a brief period of service. There he met another young man who had just finished his B.Sc. and had come there for service like himself. On enquiry he learned that the man was preparing for the IAS examination. This put an idea into his own head, as he was an M.A. and was very intelligent.

On returning to his home, he waited for the IAS examination, preparing very thoroughly and with great care. He took the exam with confidence and passed it. This man, who had been sending me long letters the previous year during his hunt for a bank's clerk post, now started sending me telegrams announcing every stage of his progress. In the interview he was not selected. But this time he was not fully dejected or completely disappointed. He gathered courage and decided to seek a job better than that of a clerk in a bank.

The State Bank invited applications for the post of Agent. He applied for it and was easily selected. The last I heard of him was his telegram informing me of his selection and his joining duty.

36. The Greatness of Service

It was the first time he met me and he was talking with great interest of many things. His manners were pleasant and his bearing cordial. His face was clear and calm. In the course of his talk he mentioned that he was employed as a car driver, which was difficult to reconcile with his poise, manners and appearance. Sensing my surprise, he explained, as if to clear my doubt, that his family had been a well-to-do one and later went bankrupt. They had owned lands, houses and two lorries. Now everything was lost, except the house where he and his elder brother lived with their families. I was sorry to learn of the family's misfortune and was contemplating whether I could offer any helpful suggestion to him that could restore him to prosperity. Unaware of my thoughts about his life, he continued to ramble on, in the course of which he said he had chosen to employ himself in a workshop of the Ashram, as it was a good place to work.

That clue gave me an idea. If he had been working for the Ashram as it was a good place to work, then it must be possible for him to regain his lost wealth. With this thought in mind, I began to scrutinise his conversations with me to discover what opinion he had of the Ashram, Mother, etc. To him, the Ashram was just an employer, nothing more. "Maybe Mother and Sri Aurobindo are great, but I have nothing to do with all that," was the attitude he took. He had reverence for them as great people, but could not understand that his indirect service to them was collecting *punya* in his

being. The *punya* was only collecting in his soul, but was not showing itself on the surface of his life as prosperity.

It is my personal observation that people who directly or indirectly serve Mother with or without conscious intention rise in their level of prosperity continuously. They may not even know that ultimately the work they had done for someone would reach Mother. Still Mother's Grace reaches them. The Ashram runs more than fifty departments and the inmates live in about 400 houses all over the town. Naturally, services of all descriptions are required from almost every profession. For several years in the beginning, I missed this aspect of Mother, the aspect of Her Grace reaching everyone indirectly related to Her. In later years when I began to see more of the Ashram activities, several phenomena explained themselves to me, of which this too was one.

I would like to refer to an observation from my own work. The villagers who came to our garden for work did not even know of the Ashram in Pondy, but if any man started working there, after a week his face acquired a shine. Constantly we heard of good news to his family. After a few years LUCK was thrust upon the village by the bank and overnight field incomes quadrupled.

An engineer bought a drilling machine and was hunting for customers. He drilled a well for us. After a year I happened to meet him with his bank agent and asked how he was doing. The agent answered on his behalf that in four months the engineer had paid ten monthly installments!

A contractor leased out the pressmud of a sugar factory to be sold to the farmers as manure. He sold us a great quantity over a year's time. He used to tell me that it was not a lucrative business, as he was compelled to sell his pressmud on credit to the farmers and they always left a good bit unpaid. He showed me once a bundle of almost 200 promissory notes due for the past 17 years. After his supply to us for the year was over, he came to settle his accounts with me and said, "This is a lucky year for me. For one thing, I was able to collect all arrears outstanding for the last 17 years. During the latter part of this year, I sold only for cash. The era of credit is over for me. I purchased my own lorry for this year's work and after a few months added one more."

Another man was managing our gardens. He would never evince any curiosity as to what the Ashram was about. He would confine himself to the work in the garden. He had on his own a few acres of land and had dug a well there some years earlier. It turned out to be dry. There was no water spring inside. His was dry cultivation. His one ambition was to strike water, but that failed. After two years of working on the garden, one day he came with a beaming face and said, "Not being able to give up my well project, I once again tried to deepen the well this week. Fortunately I hit upon a big spring. It is a fulfillment of a lifetime's ambition for me. I wish you visit my fields once."

An agriculture income tax officer once levied Rs. 2,000 as tax on our lands. A sadhak went to his office to remit the amount. The officer said, "I know your institutions are working for the public. I was sorry to levy the tax, but it was my duty. Since I levied the tax, I was looking for some rule that speaks of exemption for people like you. Only yesterday I came upon that rule. Now I am happy. You do not have to remit this amount." A few months later someone who came from his office

told me that that officer had been promoted as deputy collector and transferred. He added that as the officer was old, he had been expecting no further promotion in service.

A bank agent who took personal interest in our village schemes was given three promotions in three years, whereas normally one gets one promotion in three years.

To go back to my visitor now: I told him if he would try to regain his wealth, he would succeed. He replied that as soon as they had lost it, for several years they tried to regain the lorry service. Each time they tried, they failed and each subsequent time it became harder. He had lost hope once and for all. Without touching upon spiritual things, I spoke for ten minutes and said it was worth trying again. Towards the end, his interest seemed to have been sparked, but it was not supported by hope or experience.

About ten or twelve days later, when I was just entering the Ashram, someone rushed towards me in great excitement, walking briskly on the pavement, as if he were going to physically prevent me from entering the Ashram. It was he. I was interested. Without going inside the Ashram, I moved to one side of the pavement to listen to what he had to tell me. He burst out, "You asked me to try last week. It all worked miraculously." He explained he had been trying to meet me and convey this news for a few days, but had missed me. After leaving me the other day, he had gone home and spoken to his elder brother about taking one more effort to revive the lorry service. The brother was equally dejected and would not agree. Two days later someone who wanted to sell a lorry approached them with a request to buy. The conditions of the sale were favourable, the party was known and reliable and, particularly, the terms of the sale were such that he took over a credit on the vehicle and had to pay very little cash. The deal was closed. The lorry was on the road in another week.

A year later they had regained their original position, put two lorries on the road, and added one more wholesale business for the family.

37. Eyesight

A good friend and a longtime devotee who is an agriculturist was waiting for me since morning outside my room, while I was engaged in a serious discussion with some Aurovillians. I had not known that my friend was waiting outside. I felt sorry and somewhat outraged that he should wait for me without informing me, as this was a meeting which would be prolonged for hours.

Immediately I excused myself from the meeting and went outside to see my friend. I planned to be severe with him for not informing me and had a prepared sentence to deliver, "Why should you not come in and join the meeting?" On seeing him, I understood why he could not come in and join as usual. He was with two other people. One of them had come requesting a blessing packet from the Ashram, as he was going for an eye operation. He was a college student and a relative of my

agriculturalist friend. I promised them to secure a blessing packet and asked all of them to meet me later. I had different ideas on his proposed operation than he had.

Later my friend and the student met me at the appointed time, and I gave them the blessing packet I had secured from the Ashram in the meantime. The student was not a devotee in the full sense of the word, but had accompanied my friend, who was his cousin, several times to the Ashram, Mother's *Darshan*, etc. as his native village was very near Pondicherry. He often visited my agriculturalist friend as part of family work. As soon as I delivered the blessing packet, both were visibly pleased and were about to leave. Perhaps they were in a hurry or some other people were waiting for them elsewhere. On my enquiry they explained that neither was the case, but they were anxious to go to the *Samadhi* now that they had received the blessing packet.

Knowing their mind, I persuaded them to wait and explain to me the history of the eye disorder and gently hinted that the operation might not be necessary. My hint electrified them and they lost their hurry. The boy narrated, "From my early childhood I had no sight in one eye, but no second person could discern any defect in the formation of the eye. Over the years we went to several doctors. Each time I was advised to undergo an operation. Neither my family nor I approved of the idea of operation. Thus, it was going on ever since I was a child. I had never lost the hope of having my eye cured without an operation sometime or other. With that in mind, whenever I went to another town or heard of an expert eye doctor, I would contact him. Again and again I got the reply that it should be operated upon. Now that I am in this college and the volume of study causes strain to the sight, finally my parents advised me to have the operation. They took me to Madras, had me examined by an eye surgeon, fixed a date for the operation, and made arrangements to move to Madras for ten days. That was why I requested uncle to secure a blessing packet for me. I am very happy I have gotten one. Uncle tells me a lot about Mother and the power of the blessing packet. I have heard him narrate so many events to so many people about all this, but I do not fully understand it all. I too believe in Mother and have faith that Mother will bless me to have my operation successfully and restore my sight."

As soon as he finished, I clearly saw that his faith was pure, though simple-minded. It was obvious that my hint of avoiding the operation was of great interest to him, but his faith could not match it. As his explanation showed, his faith was there in Mother that She would help the operation to be successful. So I spoke as follows: "I see you have faith, but what the doctors have told you over the years has a strong hold on your mind. As your operation is not something urgently called for, I wish that you speak to your parents to have the operation postponed by a couple of weeks and try Mother's method. I will be happy if you agree to my suggestion and your parents endorse it, unmindful of the appointment fixed and arrangements made. Mother has a place here called "School of Perfect Eyesight". It is run by a devotee who is a famous doctor. He has borrowed some ideas from a New York doctor and developed a new method of curing illnesses of the eye. He bases himself on Mother's Force more than on his method. Please go to the school and let us know what they feel about your eye condition. Let us try and see. If anything cures you, it will be Mother's Force."

They both seemed happy. I could see in their faces some ray of hope that the operation can be avoided. On their part, both agreed to try, but had to consult the elders in the family. They returned after a few days to announce that their family consented, and they proceeded to the eye school. Later in the evening when they returned, they reported that the school had given them confidence and prescribed eye exercises for thirty days. The school asked the patient to stay in Pondicherry for the first seven days and said that if he learnt the exercises well, he could go home and practice. They ended saying that the school too emphasized that Mother's Force alone cured.

I could see that they were really satisfied, but the very routine fashion in which the twenty year old problem was handled somewhat mystified them. Fortunately, it had not shaken their faith.

My friend, who used to meet me often, was regularly reporting improvement by the treatment. After a week the boy felt a marked improvement. His confidence grew. He continued the exercises. Full eyesight was restored within one or two months.

My friend brought the boy to me when all was over. His face was full, his eyes were gleaming. After my friend finished speaking, I turned to the boy to listen to him. He looked at me with a full face and a dumb mouth. I could see his heart was too full for him to speak.

38. Calling the Mother and Her Response

Mother often used to stop Her work and concentrate for a second. This She would do during her writing, eating, interviews and any other work. She once explained that often Her children (devotees) 'call' her for help, to which she responds by sending Her force. One night at 1 a.m. She heard someone calling her frantically and she concentrated, then sent her force and 'saw' who it was. It was a man getting up from his bed, going to the door, leaning on it and calling her intensely. It was not clear to her who it was. The next morning news came. Lal Bahadur Shastri, the Prime Minister, had passed away in Tashkent. Shastri had been in correspondence with her and before going to Tashkent meeting he had asked for Mother's Blessings for the meeting. He was devoted to her and it was his dying call that She had heard at night.

When devotees call, Mother gives two kinds of responses. One goes out of her wider personality without her knowing. The other emanates from her individuality. For those who are personally known to her and intensely call, Her individuality responds with her knowledge.

A boy of five years got a broken porcelain piece stuck in his throat and was choking. The family became panicky and a turmoil issued. Luckily the father was at home at that moment. As good luck would have it, there was an ENT specialist down the street. As the child weighed more than what the father could easily carry on his shoulder up to the specialist's hospital and no time could be lost looking for a rickshaw, in his fright he tried to lift the child, holding him around the waist, and rushed out of the house. The child was hanging precariously, with the father's arm around his stomach, and was bent over. The father's one thought was that the doctor must be in and give

immediate attention. It would be a great thing if the doctor was able to recover the obnoxious porcelain piece by some instrument that could reach down into the throat. Otherwise, an operation would be necessary. How long would it take? How much suffering was in store for the boy and on his account for the parents? These things haunted the father's mind. He was an ardent devotee. In his hour of trial, he deeply prayed to Mother to extend Her blessings to the suffering child. His mind refused to wean itself away from the possible consequences of availability of the doctor, instrument, operation, etc. and fix itself on the prayer. Being a devotee, one part of his mind said that after all if any help comes, it should come only from Mother with the doctor only as an instrument, and therefore it is best to pray to Mother. But the human part in him refused to be under control. In this dilemma, suddenly he thought of the power of calling 'Mother' and began to call Her intensely. Soon his wandering mind came under control and he was able to call Mother from his mind. In half a minute the call began to shift from his mind to the heart. Within seconds he noticed that he was not calling anymore. Something from inside took up the call. A smooth, sweet vibration of calling began welling up from inside his heart dissolving his panic, fright, helplessness and suffering at the thought of the child's plight. Already the father had crossed two thirds of the road and was only yards away from the hospital entrance. The child who was precariously hanging from his father's arm began to wriggle and shouted, "Appa, it has fallen." The malicious porcelain piece was rolling on the road before the unbelieving eyes of the devotee. Mother usually answers through the help of the doctor; but in this case Mother's help came before reaching the doctor.

39. Employment

"I am happy to inform you that I have gotten the appointment, after I met with a great disappointment when the list was published with my name missing. I don't know what happened after the publication of the list and how I have been awarded the post. Anyway, one thing is sure. This job does not come to me by the strength of my thirty years of service nor by all the influential contacts that tried on my behalf. Nor does it come by any desert of mind. It comes to me purely by Mother's Grace and I accept it as such," wrote a distinguished educationist of Tamil Nadu, when he was appointed professor emeritus after all his efforts had proven in vain and he had given up.

Mother constantly performs miracles in the life and faith of devotees without making them seem like miracles. "My gazetted government job is a fairly well-placed one and gives me Rs.650 a month in all (in 1969); but I know I have greater talents which if well-employed can give me Rs.1,000 in private industry. I was itching to get into a better job and intently prayed to Mother for a long time. I finally gave up seeking another job than this one. The very next day when I was on tour, an officer spoke to me of a public sector company needing the services of someone like me. While he was speaking, the man who gave that news walked in and was introduced. He said his establishment had interviewed 80 highly qualified persons and rejected all of them, as they did not have the one particular qualification they needed. I possessed it. I dashed to the company, where I had a warm welcome. After the whole interview was over, they expressed full satisfaction and asked me to

choose my salary. I asked for Rs. 2,000 and they readily agreed," said a highly qualified scientist devotee of the Mother.

Mother gives whatever we ask for and often more. In 1982 a mother commented, "My son secured M.A., M.Ed, and is now doing M.Sc. He would rather take up a job than acquire a degree. These are hard days and life is full of cut-throat competition. Even those well-wishers who genuinely want to help the boy secure a job find it difficult. Finally I fixed my central reliance on Mother and did whatever we could to get him a job. Life turned around and every unhelpful situation slightly altered. All the people who had been giving an empty promise sounded sympathetic. On our part we shifted our reliance slowly from men and matters to Mother. At last, the boy got a good job, and the pay is over Rs. 1,000. In the circle of our relations and friends this is great news. We are unable to answer this question they ask: 'Who got you this post?' Not only for them, but for us also, it is a standing wonder."

A young engineer, after five years of service, rose to a position of earning Rs. 1,600 in a private company in 1974. He was ambitious and applied for a Chief Engineer's position in Goa carrying a salary of Rs. 3,000. Though he was qualified and talented, his experience for the post was too short. Before going for the interview, he came to me for Mother's Blessing packet. I got him one. He was not satisfied and wanted me to pronounce the outcome of his interview the following month! Obviously, I could not. He was insistent. Thereupon, I spoke generally of some practices connected with employment as follows: "You are young and this is a senior post. Of course, they have called you for the interview because you are fully qualified and talented. What Mother would do I can't say. I can say that whatever happens will be very good for you." He wanted me to be more explicit and asked whether he could do anything special, such as repeating a mantra or making a big offering in order to secure the job. I explained that though an offering is essential, a token is enough. If one wants to give more to Mother, it is to serve Her and Her cause. It is not necessary as an offering. Long-standing devotees whose children take up fresh jobs offer Mother the first month's salary," I added and left it at that. He appeared for the interview. Two weeks later he wrote to me that they had not selected him for the position, but added that he received by the same post an appointment order from another company for the job of Chief Engineer at a salary of Rs. 2,600.

I told all of this to a young man whose father brought him to me when he was seeking a job. This young man was an apprentice under an auditor. He didn't like it because there was not much scope to learn accounting under that auditor, as he was located in a small town and had small traders as clients. The boy's family had a lot of landed property, houses, a trade, etc. and he was seeking a job as he needed a career. In the early 70s when jobs had become scarce, I could not give him any idea or help in the matter. However, I said that if he had faith in Mother and related to Her or Her work in some token fashion, it would do him good. As he was not living in Pondicherry I could not easily suggest any service to Mother or to the Ashram. After some hard thinking, I asked him if he would come forward to sell some copies of a Tamil journal of the Ashram which was being published at that time. When he readily agreed, I made myself bold and said he would secure a job, if he could sell ten copies of it.

The young man went about ardently selling the journal and soon found out that not many people were interested in spirituality. But he was persistent and maintained his efforts. In the meantime, he was surprised to be called for interviews from many places, whereas up until then he had not been called. One interview was for an accountant's post in the Food Corporation. He appeared for the interview, did well and returned very satisfied. He was selected for the job and posted in the same town! He was touched and moved by Mother's Grace and Love, and exclaimed that he had till then sold only three copies of the journal. His enthusiasm did not flag; rather, it increased. One day he declared he was going to sell copies of the journal by going house to house. He sold and sold, up to 100 subscriptions and went beyond that too.

Mother's ways are many. One can never anticipate. The son of a *Tabsildar* was frequently visiting me ever since he completed B.A. in 1970. He continued and took his M.A. degree. He used to come to *Darshans*. One day he came asking me to get him a job. I asked him to accompany me to the *Samadhi*, which he did. I told him he could try for any job and he would get it.

After a month he came to announce that he got a Lecturer's job. He explained that they had advertised for one post. Several people appeared and a Ph.D. holder was selected. Impressed by the boy's performance in the interview, the interviewing professor recommended a temporary post could be created and he be selected!

40. The Grace That Always Helps

About fifteen years ago I was seriously engaged in agriculture. Coconut and cashew were my chief crops. My coconut garden was near the seashore. The backwaters formed the borders of my garden on all sides, except to the West. People used to buy coconut husks in the backwaters and let them soak for four to five months. Then they would draw fibers out of them and make ropes. If such soaked-up husks are beaten with a stick, the non-fibrous parts fall down as powder on the ground and make good manure. Such manure helps keep the moisture in the soil.

The distance between the rope-making units and my garden was three miles. I used to bring the coconut husks to my garden by bullock carts and lorries. Neither the lorry nor the cart could come into my garden as the backwaters formed a barrier. Therefore, the husks had to be brought into my garden only by head load for a distance of two furlongs. A few years passed in this fashion. Then some coir workers told me that right in my garden itself they could convert the husks into fibers and make ropes. They also told me that this was a very profitable industry. I had a few husks soaked and extracted the fibers to practically verify their proposition. It proved to be true. I thought this was a very good way to get a lot of manure.

One had to buy the husks from coconut merchants. The husks were in great demand, as the industry was very profitable. It was the custom to pay the coconut merchants as advance the price of a year's supply of husks. I decided to start this industry with an advance payment of Rs. 7,000. I approached

the biggest coconut merchant in the town and shared my thoughts with him. He took my Rs. 7,000 as advance and gave me a promissory note. He agreed to supply coconut husks and said he had taken an advance of Rs. 7000 from the co-operative society.

That year it did not rain well. If it does not rain well for a year, the next year the coconut harvest gets reduced to a quarter of its size. Therefore, that coconut merchant could not sell enough husks to earn the money due to the co-operative society. The next year also it did not rain well. It became plain that the merchant could not supply the husks I needed. So I went and spoke to him. He said to me, "You know the nature of the coconut business. There is nothing anybody can do."

In the meanwhile I had arranged bank loan facilities for the villagers of Ramapuram and had started planting banana, jasmine and *Crossandra* flowers in the estates there. That kept me busy, so I had no time to visit my coconut garden. Hence, I decided to give up my coir business and spoke about it to the merchant. He also agreed and promised to return the advance.

He was a big merchant with houses and lands as assets. His properties were easily worth two *lakhs*. He also had a money-lending shop. As such, there was no difficulty for him to repay my advance. Naturally, I expected to get it back soon. However, the state of affairs was different. The response of the merchant was not convincing. It seemed as if he was not willing to give the money back. He delayed for six months. Then I personally went to his house and met him. Though he spoke politely, there seemed to be no truth in his words. He said his father-in-law had planted ten acres of sugar cane and he hoped to repay me through that cane harvest. Those cane fields were in Pondicherry and, he said, he would have to get my money from the Pandy sugar mill.

I felt a little confident, as I knew the owner of that sugar mill. I asked the merchant to give me a letter asking the mill owner to give me Rs. 7,000 of the money due to him from the cane harvest. I thought I could get the money in this way. The merchant hesitated and refused to give me the letter. He said he would anyhow give the money from the cane harvest.

I enquired about the man from people who knew him well. They all told me, "You can forget your money. That man has earned all his money only in this way. Why did you give your money to him?"

Though I had his promissory note with me, going to the court was not appealing. I had decided to get the money without going to court. Then an acquaintance of his came and met me. He said, "You can go to court, but even then you won't get your money back. Before you take action please note the pros and cons of this problem." What he said stirred my thinking seriously. I thought of all the advice I had given to friends in a similar situation and followed them myself. But nothing seemed to work.

I prayed to Mother to help me get my money back. My prayer was heart-felt and I felt free from worry. It seemed like there was no serious problem. Though all signs were positive, the merchant still kept giving negative replies.

A few more months passed. The problem did not get solved. If another few more months passed, the promissory note would become invalid. I had to take some action before that. I started thinking seriously. Soon a friend came and sat by me. He asked me what my problem was and I shared my feelings with him. He listened and kept quiet. I thought of asking for his views on this matter. I told him, "You know that prayers to Mother get answered quickly. But, with respect to this merchant, it has failed. What do you think can be wrong from my side? I don't think there is anything wrong." He said, "You are wrong in having given him the money." I said, "Everybody gives him advance. He is a propertied man who has given me a promissory note. What can be wrong?" His reply was, "This won't work for us, it will work for other merchants only." When he said that, a simple thing which I had been unaware of suddenly dawned on me.

If I get a promissory note from people who are at my level, it will be honoured. If the merchant gives promissory notes to others at his level, they will also be honoured. As I did not have the resources to enforce his payment, I realised that what I had done was fundamentally wrong. With that realisation, I felt unburdened in my feelings. The problem seemed to be solved and a prayer seemed unnecessary. The first time I relied on my positive feelings, but it did not work. Why rely on them a second time. However, I placed my hopes on my positive feelings and decided to meet the merchant the next morning.

The next morning I left in my car for the estate in Ramapuram. On the way back I stopped to meet the merchant. My driver showed me a coconut garden and said, "The man dressed in a white shirt is the merchant."

I proceeded towards the garden and on seeing me, the merchant also began walking towards me. We met halfway and unusually he looked cheerful and spoke pleasantly. I opened the topic of money. He said, "The harvest is over. My men are threshing the paddy. I will give you the money this evening." I did not believe him and even thought of sending a worker to the paddy-threshing place. He asked if I did not believe him and took a paper out of his pocket. He showed me the paper and said, "Look, this is a list of all the people I am going to give money to this evening. Please see the top of the list." I saw that my name was on the top of the list with a figure of Rs. 7,000. He said he could not give the interest then and promised to give it to me at the next harvest. I expressed my wish to have my due in the form of paddy. He agreed. Accordingly, I sent my men and had Rs. 7,000 worth of paddy bags brought to my house. Just as he had promised, he paid the interest at the time of the next harvest.

If one is active, interested, and responsible and functions by basing himself on Mother, there is no need to pray. The Mother will help execute our tasks with ease. If obstacles arise, then prayer will move things. If things do not move, then it can only mean that something is wrong with our feelings, acts or way of life. If we find out that fault and feel sorry, then as usual the problems get solved.

41. The Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo

The world regards men like Einstein as geniuses. Men like Socrates, Bernard Shaw and Newton have attained the peaks of knowledge. The human mind has reached its highest limits in them. Human thought matures and shines through these people, giving illumination to the world. Great men of philosophy also merit this distinction. Men who offer new ideas to the world belong to this category. In life, the human mind is able to achieve this level. Beyond this, there is no greater level to achieve in worldly life. However, there are still higher levels within the reach of the human mind. They are not possible within the scope of worldly life. They are possible only if one takes to yoga.

The yogi who meditates on God tries to still his thoughts and eliminate them altogether from his mind. Such efforts bear fruit for those yogis who sit in meditation for 20 to 25 years. Their minds fall silent and become devoid of thought. If universal silence settles in them permanently, they earn the name of *Muni*. The sage *Vyasa* was such a great *Muni*. The power of such silence is incalculable. The sage *Durvasa* gave a boon to Sri Krishna that nobody could harm him physically in the body. Such is the power of silence that it enables a *Muni* to grant a boon to an Avatar.

When yoga goes to the next higher stage, the thoughts that come in the yogi's mind come in the form of images. Then he becomes the *Rishi*. He acquires the power of mental vision. It helps him see things that happen at a distance. When he is able to see what happened in the past and what will happen in the future, he becomes the *Rishi* with *Jnana drishti*.

At the next stage, the *tapasvi* enters into direct relation with the divine light. Without the help of either thought or vision, the divine light is able to reach the *tapasvi's* mind. Those who hear him speak from such a stage feel he has attained illumination. He then becomes the Yogi. The word yoga means union. The state of union with God is called yoga. It is of different kinds.

Those are called *Jnana Yoga*, *Raja Yoga*, *Bhakti Yoga*, *Karma Yoga*, *Hatha Yoga* and *Tantra Yoga*, etc. The goal of yoga is to become free of the cycle of birth and death and attain union with God. The soul that is afflicted with birth, death, sorrow, falsehood, disease and ignorance wants to escape from them. What gives the liberation to the aspiring soul is yoga *sadhana*.

The mind, heart and body are parts of the being. Each is capable of becoming the gate of liberation for the soul. Before that, it has to become purified and lose its ego. Then *sadhana* can make it the door of liberation.

The *Jnani* makes thought the key to open the mental door. He purifies it and turns it into light. When his mind comes under the influence of the soul, it takes on the shine of the soul. Those people who persist in such a state have their mental doors opened and attain liberation.

The *bhakta* seeks the Psychic being that is in the cave behind the heart centre. If devotion is to ripen, then the devotee must become free of attachment. He must detach himself from the wife, children, house and possessions. Purified feelings form the basis of devotion. When the *bhakta* sits in

meditation wishing to be one with God, such devotion opens the emotional doors and gives the soul the release from birth.

The *Hatha* Yogi seeks *moksha* with the help of the body. He purifies the body through *asanas* and acquires an amazing power. The body takes on a shine. He can even stop the heart for some time. Through *pranayama* he releases the *Kundalini shakti* lying coiled up in the physical centre at the bottom of the spine. He raises it gradually and finally makes it go out through the mental centre at the top of the head called the "thousand-petalled lotus". It goes out and merges with God, giving him the liberation he wanted.

The aim of all these yogas is to give liberation to the soul afflicted with the bonds of death and birth. The mind, heart or the body becomes an instrument for this task.

The purpose for which God has made this world and made millions of souls take birth is to attain the Truth while remaining in the physical realm. The soul should take on a body, be in life, and realise and manifest the light of the Supreme. That is the first and primary ideal of the Supreme. That is why great souls like the Buddha and Vivekananda have chosen to remain in the world in a subtle form and help in the liberation of each and every human being on earth. Sri Aurobindo says, "The soul seeking liberation is contrary to the ideal of the Supreme. What is fitting is for the soul to remain in the world and help manifest the Godhead."

Jnana yoga makes the mind luminous, but the *Jnani* ignores his body as something perishable. There are *jnanis* who even ridicule men of devotion. Therefore, the feelings and the physical body of the *jnani* do not get the purity that the mind enjoys. Even if the *jnani* with mental realisation wants to stay in the world, the imperfection of the rest of the personality will not allow the soul to stay on. For that, each and every part of the being must become perfect.

What applies to the *jnani* applies equally to the devotee and the *hatha* yogi.

Sri Aurobindo calls his yoga Purna Yoga or Integral Yoga. For this yoga, the method of using a single part of the being is not sufficient. The soul that encompasses all the parts of the being should itself become the tool of the *sadhana*.

In Purna Yoga, the soul does not seek liberation. The first task is to purify the mind, heart and body. The mind mistakes its own ignorance to be knowledge and feels satisfied. It gets released from that delusion and attains true knowledge and light. The heart frees itself from its attachments and has union with God as its only aim. One does not neglect the body as perishable and false. One takes an effort to make it luminous. In brief, what the *Jnana* yoga, *Bhakti* yoga and *Hatha* yoga seek as their goals becomes the basis for Purna Yoga.

As parts of the being are ruled by emotions such as love and hate, the soul itself is stained by the ego. Only when the ego gets fully dissolved does the soul become totally pure. For that pure soul, the illumined mind, heart and body open their gates of liberation. Such a soul is in a position to attain liberation.

However, in Purna yoga, liberation not being the goal, the soul does not choose to be liberated. With the body purified, the soul is in a position to stay on and help in the manifestation of the divine.

The Supreme is not satisfied with the realisation of a single integral yogi. The Supreme's purpose must be realised in each and every human being.

The man who is identified with his body regards others only as physical beings. The man who admires the mind notices only the intelligence of others. But the Purna Yogi does not consider either the body or the mind of others as important. Being a realised soul, he is able to see the soul of others. He sees every other man as another soul. It is not a mere mental knowledge for him, but is true in his very feelings. Therefore, he is able to communicate with others at a soul level. When Sri Krishna sat in meditation on the *Govardhana* hill, he saw that he contained the whole world in himself. What Krishna showed to *Arjuna* in his *Vishvarupa* was the same thing. That is the result of Integral Yoga, too.

The soul of the integral yogi strengthens its relationship with its origin when it meets the divine consciousness. Since it is already in touch with the millions of living beings in the world, it is able to be a good instrument of the divine.

The integral yogi does not aspire for liberation for his soul. He only tries to liberate the parts of his being from falsehood. He turns himself into an instrument of Truth and works for the salvation of the rest of creation from falsehood too. He works so that Truth may descend and reign on earth. This in essence is the "Integral Yoga" of Sri Aurobindo.

42. Mother's Name, Repetition of Mother's Name and Calling Her

Mother's name as word and sound is very powerful. Repetition of Her name is known to relieve devotees of their problems, answer their prayers, and even evoke a personal response from Her. Repetition can be verbal, mental or taken to the heart centre, each being more powerful than the previous one. When the repetition by the devotee turns into self-repetition by something inside, the power begins to spread all over the being. Sometimes it is felt spreading all over the nerves and the body. As long as the devotee takes an effort to repeat, the power generated is enough to relieve a problem or answer a prayer in mind. The moment the repetition is taken over by the thing inside, problem-solving and prayer-answering become a small part. A greater spiritual energy is generated, and it begins to fill the being. This is a conducive state for one to strengthen his concentration or aspiration or any other spiritual faculty.

The same can be done somewhat differently too, if one is so inclined. One can start concentrating on oneself and keep pushing the centre of concentration deeper and deeper as far as it can go. It may stop at any one centre like the mental, vital, etc. It may begin to deepen its hold in the centre where it has stopped. At any given moment, each man has a deepest possible concentration and that

has a corresponding centre. It is possible for one to reach there. When the repetition is made from there, it turns into a CALL. One can see the whole being responds to the call with a gentle inner movement. Mother, too, can be felt entering the being and filling the whole being with force and joy. This can be kept up for hours or days. Normally after about a week's intense calling, one will be able to see that he is in a different world. If he is one who is beset with a host of insoluble problems, he will find all of them giving way. If he is one who has no known life problems, all his psychological deficiencies will open to the force and lend themselves to dissolution. From that time onwards, it is only a matter of time for them to disappear. If he is one not endowed with such deficiencies too, he can find or even actually feel that his parts of being are filled with new forces, new capacities and talents being shaped. At a very high level of perfection in one's consciousness, such a call gives birth to god-like powers in one's being. It is then we say that such and such a god is born in someone.

By Mother's name, we mean "MOTHER", the word mother itself. It carries mantric power.

Glossary

Glossary of Italicized terms:

adiparashakti - the original divine female principle, the Divine Mother.

Advaitic -- monistic

agarbathi -- incense

Agastya -- a Vedic sage

akanda mounam - wide Silence

Ananda -- bliss

ananda loka - the world of bliss

anushtanam -- rituals

Anusuya - wife of a Rishi

archana - shlokas recited in worship

Arjuna - the hero of the Gita, one of the five Pandava brothers

asanas - physical poses as part of yoga

asuras -- titans

avatara - God descended as a human being

Bhagavad Gita -- The sacred Indian scripture recited as part of the battle of *Mahabharata*

Bhagavan -- God

bhakta -- devotee

bhakti yoga -- yoga of devotion

Brahma - God who created the universe

brahmachari -- celibate unmarried spiritual disciple

brahmamanda jyothi - infinite light

casurina - an Indian tree used as fuel

chakras -- subtle centres in the body
Chettiar -- the third caste in India
chit loka -- the world of consciousness
crore - ten millions
dakshina - token offering
darshan - audience that God grants, literally meaning 'seeing God'
darshans -- the four important days in the Ashram when Sri Aurobindo saw devotees
Deepavali - festival of light
Devaki - mother of Lord Krishna
Devi - female god
Divya Prabhandam - a devotional hymn of an Indian sect
drishti -- seeing
Durga - Kali, an Indian goddess
Durvasa -- a Rishi
Ganesh - son of Lord Shiva, a member of the Indian trinity
Gayatri mantra - mantra that worships the sun god
Govardhana - a hill
hatha yoga - a form of yoga where asanas are prominent
Indra -- a God
janma - a period of one birth
japa - repetition of a mantra
jnana drishti - vision of knowledge
jnanalaya -- temple of knowledge
jutkaman - driver of a horse carriage
jutkawalla - driver of a horse carriage (another term)
jyothi - flame
karma -- a person's actions in one life determining fate in the next
karma yoga - yoga that sacrifices, that makes an offering of life actions
karma yogi - one who does karma yoga
karnam - village revenue official
Krishna - Lord Krishna
kundalini shakti - spiritual power in the subtle centre at the lower end of the spine
lakh - hundred thousand (100,000)
Lakshmi - a goddess of beauty of wealth
Madhvachariyar - a south Indian rishi, founder of a sect
Mahakali - Great Kali (* one of the four aspect of the Divine Mother)
Mahalaxmi - Great Lakshmi (*)
Mahasamadhi - state of body of rishi when he voluntarily withdraws from the body
Mahasaraswati - Great Saraswati (*)
Maheswari -- Great Ishwari (*)
mandapam -- hall

mirasdar -- landowner
moksha - realisation of God
mukti - another term for moksha meaning fulfillment
muni - one who has attained silence
Munsif - village official
naga -- serpent
nakshatrathirtam -- star
Narada -- a god interested in creating quarrels
Narayana - Lord Krishna
nishkamya - without desire
nishkamya karma - work done without desire
paan - betel leaf
Pillaiyar -- Ganesh
poorva janma punya - virtues of the last birth
pradakshina -- perambulation
pranams - prostrating before the guru or elders
pranayanam - breathing exercise
prasad -- blessing
PUC - pre-University class
puja - religious ceremony, worship
punya - virtue
Puranas - ancient scriptures of India's early history
purna -- total
Purushas - gods; being of god; male aspect of Shakti
rahasyam -- secret
rahukalam - inauspicious hour
raja yoga - King of Yogas
rishi -- saint
Rishyasringar - a saint mentioned in the Puranas; wherever he went, it rained
Rudra - Another term for Shiva
sadhaks - disciples of yoga
sadhana -- yoga
Saivism - religion worshipping Shiva
Saivite - follower of Saivism
samadhi - trance; tomb
samipa -- near
sanyasi -- one who has renounced life
Saraswati - goddess of learning
sat loka - world of existence
Satchidananda -- Existence-Consciousness-Bliss
Shakti - female aspect of Purusha

Shankara - an Indian saint of the 9th century who won India back to Hinduism from Buddhism

Shiva - a member of the Indian trinity

siddhi -- realisation

SSLC - Secondary School Leaving Certificate

swabhava -- nature

swar -- paradise

taluk - a division of a district

tamas -- inertia

tantra yoga - a form of yoga that worships the Divine Mother

tantric - follower of Tantra yoga

tapas -- austerity

tapasvi -- one who practices tapas

tapasya -- tapas, austerity

tahsildar - a revenue official

tejas - glow of light on the face or skin

Tirumurthis - Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva

uttara yogi - yogi from the North

vijnana loka - Surpamental world

Vinayagar -- Ganesh or Pillaiyar

Vishnu - one of the Trimurthis

Vishvarupa - God revealing his universal form

Vyasa - a Vedic sage