CHAPTER - III

SRI AUROBINDO’S SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCES

The philosophy of Sri Aurobindo is entirely based on the firm and concrete spiritual experiences he received through the intense yoga Sadhana for several years. He also received a deep insight into the true spirit and meaning and significance of the Veda, and Upanishads, the Gita and Indian spirituality and Hinduism or the Sanatana Dharma, and also all the minute details of the entire process and discipline of his yoga, direct from the Supreme during his intense and serious meditation. Therefore Sri Aurobindo is a Rishi or Manishi of modern India to the letter as he received the highest and deepest knowledge of these things just as the ancients Rishis received intuitively or heard through their intense meditation which is the real or true meaning of ‘The Shruthi’ or ‘The Veda’. This is enormously evident in all of Sri Aurobindo’s writings and his letters to his disciples over the years.

According to Sri Aurobindo – Spirituality is not a high intellectuality, not idealism, not an ethical turn of mind or moral purity and austerity, not religiosity or an ardent and exalted emotional fervour, not even a compound of all these excellent things. These things are of considerable value to mind and life. They are of value to the spiritual evolution itself as preparatory movements disciplining, purifying or giving a suitable form to the nature; but they still belong to the mental evolution, - The beginning of a spiritual realisation, experience, change is not yet there.

Spirituality is in its essence an awakening to the inner reality of our being, to a spirit, self, soul, which is other than our mind, life and body, an inner aspiration to know, to feel, to be That, to enter into contact with the greater Reality beyond and pervading the universe.
which inhabits also our own being, to be in communion with it and union with it, and a turning, a conversion a transformation of our whole being as a result of the aspiration, contact, the union a growth or waking into a new becoming or new being, a new self, a new nature.

It is quite imminent that Sri Aurobindo was deeply committed to this spirituality to the very letter.

Sri Aurobindo describes a Guru or a Master as follows:

i) "The Master is one who has risen to a higher consciousness and being and he is often regarded as its manifestation or representative. He not only helps by his teaching and still more by his influence and example, but by a power to communicate his own experience to others.

ii) In all yogic disciplines, and more so in Integral Yoga, the inspiration of the Master and, in the difficult stages, his control and his presence, are indispensable. It would be impossible otherwise to go through it without much stumbling and error which might prevent all chance of success. So far as Sri Aurobindo is concerned, his correspondence and evening talks reveal only in an infinitesimal way how he helped and guided his disciples. His help was mostly through inner communication and inner action.

iii) A Guru or a spiritual master is a man helping his brother, a child leading children, a light kindling other lights. The Guru should be accepted in all ways Transcendent, impersonal and personal. Teaching, example and influence these are the three instruments of the Guru. Once a Guru is chosen nothing must be hidden from him. Those who are
not straight forward cannot profit by the Mother's help for they themselves turn it away.¹

It is a fact that for most of the outstanding spiritual seekers and leaders there will be invariably a powerful master or a Guru like Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa in the case of Sri Swamy Vivekananda. But Sri Aurobindo appears to be an exception. Although he admits that he learnt some yoga, Pranayama and some other very useful techniques from persons like a Maharastrian Yogi Vishnu Bhaskar Lele and others, it appears that he never had a Guru in the sense of Indian Philosophical traditions. So in this sense Sri Aurobindo is a born yogi or a self made man, like either Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa or Ramana Maharshi who were attracted to spirituality rather intuitively from their very young age and persued it by themselves till the end.

Sri Aurobindo’s description of spiritual sadhana is also quite significant. According to him, “Sadhana consists of a progressive surrender of oneself inward and based upon it the outward also to the Guru, to the Divine. Meditation, concentration, work, service – all these are means for a self gathering in all one’s movements with the sole aim of delivering oneself into the hands of a Higher Power for being worked on and led towards the Goal.

The Mother guides, helps each according to his nature and need and where necessary, herself intervenes with her power enabling the Sadhan to withstand the rigours and demands of the path. She has placed herself with all the Love, peace, knowledge and consciousness that she is at the disposal of every aspiring soul that looks for help.

The Divine Grace and Power can do everything but with the full assent of the Sadhaka. To learn to give that full assent is the whole meaning of the Sadhana".²
It is with this background of Sri Aurobindo’s definition of ‘Spirituality’. ‘The Guru’ and ‘Sadhana’, I feel, one can understand the spiritual experiences of Sri Aurobindo better and with no ambiguity.

It can be said that Sri Aurobindo was a born yogi. He received some very significant experiences in his early life without his slightest knowledge about yoga or even without slightest effort on his part in that direction. On Feb. 6\textsuperscript{th} 1893, when he was coming back to India after having spent 14 years in England, a darkness which had entered his being when he was a small boy in India and had clung on to him all through his stay in England, fell off like a cloak. And when the ship touched Appollo Bunder, Bombay and he stepped at last on Indian soil he had a strange experience. A vast calm and quiet descended on him and remained with him for months thereafter. About this he told some time later that it was the experience of calm and silent self, a realisation attained by yogis after years of Sadhana, and yet it came to him without his seeking it. He was not a yogi at that time; in fact he knew nothing about yoga then, and was not even interested in it. In another instance in the first year of his stay in Baroda, he got an experience in a most unexpected manner. Sri Aurobindo had then a very old fashioned horse carriage known as Victoria carriage. One day when he was going through the city streets in this carriage, suddenly the horse went out of control. A serious accident was imminent. Sri Aurobindo at once willed that it must not happen and immediately a Being of Light emerged out of him and took control of the situation. Later in a splendid sonnet “The Godhead” he has narrated this experience.

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

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

His hair was mingled with the sun and breeze;
The world was in His heart and He was I:
I housed in me the everlasting’s peace,
The strength of One whose substance cannot die.

The moment passed and all was as before
Only that deathless memory I bore."³

Sri Aurobindo recalls this experience. This was probably the first experience of the Divine within himself. In 1903 he had another remarkable experience in Kashmir, when he had gone there with the Maharaja of Baroda, while walking on the ridge of the hill of Shankaracharya, which he has experienced in his sonnet ‘Adwaita’.

This experience is best described in his own words, “one stands upon a mountain ridge and glimpses or mentally feels a wideness, a pervasiveness, a nameless vast in Nature; then suddenly there comes the touch, a revelation a flooding, the mental loses itself in the spiritual, one bears the first invasion of the Infinite”."⁴

Adwaita:

I walked on the high-wayed Seat of Solomon
Where Shankaracharya’s tiny temple stands
Facing Infinity from Time’s edge, alone
On the bare ridge ending earth’s vain romance.
Around me was a formless solitude:
    All had become one strange Unnamable,
An unborn sole Reality world-nude,
    Topless and fathomless, for ever still.

A Silence that was Being’s only word,
    The unknown beginning and the voiceless end
Abolishing all things moment-seen or heard,
    On an incommunicable summit reigned,

A lonely Calm and void unchanging Peace
On the dumb crest of Nature’s mysteries."

Sri Aurobindo’s life is full of such unusual and unexpected experiences.

In around 1903, Sri Aurobindo once visited a temple of Kali on the banks of river Narmada. This he did on the Persuasion of his friends, as he says at that time he had no faith in idols or image-worship. “With my European mind I had no faith in them and I hardly believed in the presence of God”, (6) Sri Aurobindo said, but when he looked at the image of the Goddess, he found a living presence, deathless and divine. A form that harbours all infinity. About this experience he writes “For the first time I believed in the Presence of God. You stand before a temple of Kali beside a sacred river, a sculpture, a gracious piece of architecture, but in a moment, mysteriously, unexpectedly there is instead a presence, a power, a force that looks into your eyes, an inner sight in you has regarded the World Mother.” He has described this experience in the poem ‘The stone Goddess’.

“In a town of gods, housed in a little shrine,
    From sculptured limbs the Godhead looked at me,
A living Presence deathless and divine,
    A Form that harboured all Infinity.

The great World-Mother and her mighty will
    Inhabited the earth's abysmal sleep,
Voiceless, omnipotent, inscrutable,
    Mute in the desert and the sky and deep.

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

We can but wonder at such experiences, rare even amongst those who have dedicated their entire lives to the practice of yoga. Diren Roy a close associate of Sri Aurobindo wrote in 1899-1890, that his self-control, detachment, equanimity, compassion for the poor, which are all signs associated with a yogi far advanced in the path. Before he turned to the practice of yoga Sri Aurobindo had started on certain practices of Pranayama having learnt some rules from an engineer friend – Devadhar. Sri Aurobindo said “I practiced Pranayama for five to six hours a day for nearly four years. As a result, the brain became full of light (Prakashamaya). The mind worked with great illumination and power. My power of writing poetry as well as prose increased tremendously. Usually I wrote about 200 lines poetry every month. After this rigorous pranayama I wrote pages and pages in a single day, that flow I never lost. I used to feel that an electric energy was all around the brain because of which mosquitoes did not bite me during the Pranayama. My health too improved, even the skin became fair and there was a peculiar substance in the salvia,
which probably produced these changes, I adopted a vegetarian diet. That gave lightness and some purification.”

Similarly once, all of a sudden the hidden power of yoga was revealed to him. Once his brother Barin became seriously ill when he contracted a 'hill-fever' a violent and almost incurable disease, during his rigorous tour in the Vindya mountains looking for a suitable place to build a temple or Mandir on the lines of Bankim Chandra's 'Anandamath' and had to return to Baroda. One day a Naga Sanyasi arrived at the home and on seeing Barin laying in a hopeless condition, he asked to fetch a glass of water and then muttering some mantra he cut the water cross wise with a knife and asked Barin to drink it. Tomorrow the fever will leave you he said. And truly it did. A fever which persisted for days disappeared as if by a magic.

About this striking incident Sri Aurobindo said “This was the first hand proof of yoga power to me. I thought if yoga has such power why not use them for country's sake. This was immediate cause for my turning to yoga. So he says, “I entered yoga by the back door”.10

It is in 1904 that Sri Aurobindo took to yoga seriously. He said that he had no pull towards yoga to begin with. In fact he thought that it was a life-denying affair and thought one has to retire to hills and become a Sanyasi, while his heart's call was to seek for India's freedom. But the case of Barin's fever opened his eyes and he realized his errors or misconceptions about yoga. He also says “I didn't know what Yoga was. My friend Deshapande was doing Hatha Yoga, Asanas and other Kriyas. Even with much persuasion from him for me to turn towards yoga I was not interested. I thought it required me to give up the world and so it was not for me. But as soon as I learnt that the same Tapasya can be turned towards action, I took it
seriously. I learnt, yoga gives power and that power I can use to liberate my country. At that time my prayer was – if you do exist, you knew my mind, you knew I didn’t care for my liberation; what others want has no attraction for me. I want power so that I may raise this country and serve my dear countrymen.”

Even amidst his extensive political activities Sri Aurobindo was engaged in intense spiritual Sadhana. During one of his brisk tours for political activity he stayed at Baroda for a fortnight. This stay of his took a special significance and importance not so much for political activities, although he was involved in these, but because of a tremendous spiritual experiences which in his own words was the first of the four great realisations, on which his yoga and spiritual philosophy are founded.

From the year 1904 Sri Aurobindo was deeply engaged in the practice of yoga, but because of his increasing pressure of political work he did not have time for regular practice of pranayama and other concomitant kriyas. He himself felt that his progress in Sadhana had come to halt. And being at a loss, he asked his brother Barin, if he knew some one who could pull him out of the impasse and help him to pursue yoga more systematically. Barin arranged for a meeting of Sri Aurobindo with a famous Maharashtrian yogi Vishnu Bhaskar Lele by whom Barin was highly impressed during his previous contacts. Lele was ready to help Sri Aurobindo but asked that he should suspend all his political activities at once for few days and devote completely to yoga. They met in a small room on the top floor in the house of a friend Sardar Mazumdar. The spiritual experiences Sri Aurobindo received was something unimaginable, incalculable and with no parallel in spiritual history. In the words of Sri Aurobindo “Sit in meditation, Lele said, but do not think, look only at your mind; you will see thoughts coming in to it; before they can enter throw them
away from your mind till your mind is capable of entire silence. I had never heard before, of thoughts coming visibly into the mind from outside, but I did not think either of questioning the truth or the possibility. I simply sat down and did it. In a moment my mind became silent as a windless air on a high mountain summit and then I saw one thought and another coming in a concrete way from outside; I flung them away before they could enter and take hold of the brain and in three days I was free. From that moment, in principle, the mental being in me became a free intelligence, a universal mind, not limited to the narrow circle of personal, as a labourer in a thought factory but a receiver of knowledge from all the hundred realms of being and free to choose what it willed unique in this vast sight - empire and thought empire.12

About this experiences Sri Aurobindo also used to say “And the result was that the whole being became quite and in seven days I got the Nirvanic experience which remained in me for a long time. I would not have got out of it even if I had wanted to. Even afterwards this experience remained in the background in the midst of all activities.13 It is indeed a wonder and amazing and unbelievable that any one could gain this experience in three days. About this unpresidented or inexplicable experience of how it all happened Sri Aurobindo said “It was simply through the Divine grace – because it has been done by thousands before me through-out the centuries and millenniums and the Divine did not want me to waste time over that”.14 Yet we can but marvel that he should have had this realisation, which comes as a culmination of a long Sadhana, in only a few days. There are some exceptional features about Sri Aurobindo’s experience, for instance how obedient he was to Lele’s instructions and how he followed them scrupulously to the letter and without questioning. Seldom do we meet a intellectual particularly of Sri Aurobindo’s caliber and attainments with such unquestioning faith. He said “I
followed his instructions with absolute fidelity, not myself in the least understanding where he was leading me or where I was going. Another interesting feature was that he could get this experience and realisation in the midst of intense political activity (of course during his isolation or seclusion and for a few days, for the purpose) and not some where in the remote from the world’s turmoil or sitting all alone in the Himalayan solitudes. This bears far-reaching significance, for it shows that Karma or Action is no bar or bondage to spiritual life. Sri aurobindo has given a spiritual description of this experience in his sonnet ‘Nirvana’.

“All is abolished but the mute Alone.
The mind from thought released, the heart from grief
Grow inexistent now beyond belief;
There is no I, no Nature, known – unknown.

The city, a shadow picture without tone,
Floats, quivers unreal; forms without relief
- Flow, a cinema’s vacant shapes; like a reef Foundering in shoreless gulfs the world is done.
Only the illimitable Permanent
Is here. A Peace stupendous, featureless, still,
Replaces all, - what once was I, in It
A silent unnamed emptiness content
Either to fade in the Unknowable

Or thrill with the luminous seas of the Infinite.”

According to Buddhism Nirvana is only a negative state of absence of thirst and desires. It does not seem to be a positive state of bliss. In otherwords it represents the state of only Dukhanivruti but not Paramasukhaprapti. This is more or less the view of Samkya also. Sankyans call the sumumbonum of life kyvalya, characterisitng
nearly a state of peace and tranquility. But according to Vedantins, Moksha is characterised by not only the absence of pain but also the presence of pure bliss. Sri Aurobindo’s concept of Nirvana synchronises more or less Vedantic concept of Moksha. According to Sri Aurobindo in Nirvana there will be no selfish desire or thirst and there will be a positive bliss.

In this sonnet, when Sri Aurobindo says ....... emptiness content, we can reinterpret the Bhuddistic concept of Shunya or Nihil in the light of this phrase, when Nagarjuna, a later Bhuddist refers to the term Shunya he does not mean by it a state of absolute negation. Shunya does not signify a contentless Nihil. In fact it is a positive entity, but it is so called because it is inaccessible to the ordinary faculties of knowledge namely perception and inference or sense organs and mind. This is the modern interpretation of the word Shunya. Another word namely Bayalu is used in kannada, corresponding to it, signifying that it is not restricted to particular space and time. Shunya is infinite both spacially and temporally. In fact the very concept of space and time depend upon the Infinite, for their meaningfulness.

About the experience Sri Aurobindo also wrote “Infact it was a series of tremendously powerful experiences and radical changes of consciousness”. But these came as a surprise to Lele as well for he had not intended it. Indeed to Sri Aurobindo himself the experience came as a surprise for they were contrary to his own ideas – “They made me see with a stupendous intensity the world as a cinematographic play of vacant forms in the impersonal universality of the Absolute Brahman. However the overwhelming impact of this experience did not mean that henceforth he would give up politics. But all along, invitations were pouring in for him to address meetings and meet political workers at various places. But Sri Aurobindo’s
mind had become calm, silent and devoid of all thoughts and as he was not sure as to how he could give speeches or address meetings etc., he asked Lele to accompany him and guide him as to what he should do under these circumstances. Lele told him to make Namaskara to the audience and wait, and speech would come to him from some other source than the mind and so in fact the speeches came. He said “When I rose to speak, the impression of a head line (news paper) flashed across my mind and all of a sudden some thing spoke out”. The silent condition of his mind continued and outside world seemed to be bathed in unreality. Sri Aurobindo has described how at Bombay when he was standing on the balcony of a friend’s house, he saw the whole busy movement of Bombay as a picture in a cinema show, all unreal and shadowy. Yet he continued with his political activities, Sri Aurobindo explains “One result of this silencing was that while I was writing for the ‘Bande Mataram’ the thoughts did not pass through the mind; they came direct to the pen and I did not know before hand what I was writing – some times they passed through the mind, but I was quite passive”. Later in most of his speeches he spoke not as a politician, but as an inspired prophet of nationalism. It made deep impressions on the minds of the audience, for it carried a new note from his new perspective. Here is an example of a fragment of one of his speeches “Look for the Shakti within yourself, bring it forward. Then you will realise that whatever you do is being done by that Shakti not by yourself, there within you is, that immoral, unborn and eternal, whom swore cannot sunder, fire cannot burn and to whom all the power in the world is a trifle”.

Before leaving Bombay Sri Aurobindo asked Lele for instructions and Sri Aurobindo’s words in this connection are most revealing: “He was giving me detailed instructions. In a mean time I told him of a ‘Mantra’ that had arisen in my heart. Suddenly while giving instructions he stopped and asked me if I could relay absolutely on
Him who gave me the Mantra. I replied that I could always do that. Ten Lele said that there was no need for further instructions”.

Sri Aurobindo explained later “The final upshot of this was that Lele wanted to hand me over to the Divine within me enjoining the absolute surrender to its will – a principle or rather a seed force to which I kept unswervingly and increasingly till it led me through all the mazes of an incalculable yogic development bound by no single rule or style or dogma or shastra to where and what I am now and towards what I shall be hereafter”.

Sri Aurobindo was in Alipore jail as an under trial for about one year in the Alipore Bomb case. During this stay of one year in jail he had constant and series of overwhelming Spiritual experiences, which contributed immensely to his Integral yoga sadhana in future at Pondicherry. In fact it is said that Sri Aurobindo entered the jail as a revolutionary on May 2, 1908 and came-out on May 6, 1909, totally transformed as a saint and Rishi, which was evident in all the speeches he delivered afterwards, the most famous of which was the one at Uttarapara on May 30, 1909, where at least Ten thousand people listened to him in pin-drop-silence in a spiritually surcharged atmosphere.

Therefore his formidable experiences in Alipore jail can be considered as a turning point in the life of Sri. Aurobindo. These experiences transformed him from his stature of a social and political activist into a Rishi or Yogi or a spiritual master and from his stature of a revolutionary patriot into a Prophet of Nationalism. Therefore the entire narration go a long way in understanding all his future actions as a yogi of a unique stature.
1) Experiences in Alipore Jail

About this significant and fantastic experience it is better to know in his own words. “When I was arrested and hurried to the Lal Bajar Hajat I was shaken in faith for a while, for I could not look into the heart of his intention. Therefore I faltered for a moment and cried out in my heart to Him, “What is this that has happened to me! I believed that I had a mission to work for the people of my country and until that work was done, I should have the protection. Why then am I here and on such a charge? A day passed and second day and a third, when a voice came to me from within, ‘wait and see’. Then I grew calm and waited. I was taken from Lal Bajar to Alipore and was placed for one month in a solitary cell apart from men. There I waited day and night for the voice of God within me, to know what he had to say to me, to learn what I had to do. In this seclusion, the earliest realisation, the first lesson came to me. I remembered then that a month or more before my arrest, a call had come to me to put aside all activity, to go into seclusion and to look into myself so that I might enter into closer communion with Him. I was weak and could not accept the call. My work was very dear to me and in the pride of my heart I thought that unless I was there, it could suffer or even fail and cease; therefore I would not leave it. It seemed to me that he spoke to me again and said, “The bonds that you had not the strength to break, I have broken for you, because it is not my will nor was it ever my intention that, that should continue. I have had another thing for you here, to teach you what you could not learn for yourself and to train you for my work”. Then he placed the Gita in my hands, His strength entered into me, and I was not only to understand intellectually but to realize what Sri Krishna demanded of Arjuna and what he demands of those who aspire to do His Work.”21
Then Sri Aurobindo goes on to speak of his experience: “He made me realize the Central truth of the Hindu religion. He turned the hearts of my jailors to me and they spoke to the Englishman in charge of the jail. He is suffering in his confinement; let him at least walk outside his cell for half an hour in the morning and the evening. So it was arranged and it was while I was walking that His strength again entered into me, and soon I could see Vasudeva Lord Krishna in every thing, the Jail walls, doors and gratings and trees and in everyone around me. It was Narayana who was standing centry over me, even the coarse blanket that was given to me for a couch, I felt the arms of Sri Krishna around me, the arms of my friend and lover. This was the first use of a deeper vision, He gave me. As I looked at the Prisoners in the jail, the thieves, the murderers, swindlers I saw Vasudeva, it was Narayana whom I found in these darkened souls and misused bodies.”

Sri Aurobindo continues: “When the case opened in the lower court and we were brought before the Magistrate, I was followed by the same insight. He said to me, “When you were cast into jail did you not cry out to me. Where is Thy protection? Look now at the magistrate and at the Prosecuting counsel. I looked and it was not the magistrate, but Vasudeva sitting there on the bench. It was Sri Krishna in place of the Prosecuting counsel and a lover and friend who sat there and smiled. Now do you fear? I am in all men and I over rule their actions and their words. My protection is still with you and you shall not fear. This case, which is brought against you, leave it in my hand. It is not for you. It is not for trial that I brought you here but for something else. The case itself is only a means for my work and nothing more..... I am guiding, therefore fear not, turn to your own work for which I have brought you to jail and when you come out, remember never to fear, never to hesitate. Remember that it is I who am doing this, not you, nor any other. Therefore whatever
clouds may come, whatever danger and sufferings, whatever
difficulties, whatever impossibilities, there is nothing impossible and
nothing difficult. I am in the Nation and its uprising as I am
Vasudeva, I am Narayana and what I Will, shall be, not what others
Will. What I choose to bring about, no human power can stay".26
These words of Sri Aurobindo need no commentary what so ever. Any
one can feel something of the immense vibration they contain. Sri
Aurobindo himself has said that there was the realisation of the
cosmic consciousness – of the Divine as all Beings and all that Is,
‘Vasudevaha Sarvamithi’ and it was the second of the four great
realisations (first being that of Brahma Nirvana at Baroda) on which
his yoga and spiritual philosophy are founded.

After few months because of some security reasons, Sri
Aurobindo was again placed in a solitary cell. But now he was so
immersed in his sadhana, that the prison became truly an Ashram for
him. During this period he had many extraordinary experiences
occult in nature one of the most important of these experiences
covered over a period of two weeks when he heard constantly the voice
of Swami Vivekananda speaking to him in his solitary meditation.
About this Sri Aurobindo said “It was Vivekananda who, when he
used to come to me during meditation in Alipore jail, showed me the
Intuitive Plane. For a month or so he gave instructions about
Intuition. Then afterwards I began to see the still higher planes... It
was the spirit of Vivekananda who first gave me a clue in the direction
of the Supermind. This clue led me to see how the Truth-Consciousness works in everything... He didn’t say ‘Supermind.’
Supermind is my own word. He just said to me : “This is this, this is
that,” and so on. That was how he proceeded, by pointing and
indicating. He visited me for 15 days in Alipore jail.... He would not
leave until he had put it all into my head..... I never expected him and
yet he came to teach me. And he was exact and precise even in the minutest details.  

This can be very well correlated to Swamy Vivekananda’s vision of the future. He was highly optimistic about transcending or transformation of human nature by realising an altogether new entity. He is reported to have said that there is an entity which transcends Maya or Prakriti. If one is able to realize that entity one is sure to overcome the power of Maya. Man is sure to achieve this goal one day or the other. Man is sure to achieve victory over this nature whether it is internal or external one day or the other. Time should come for man to wake up from the dream. This entity Sri Aurobindo called the Supermind. This is a significant proof that these two mighty personalities of wisdom collaborated in this new endeavour of realizing the Supermind using their powerful and profound occult influence.

Similarly he claims to have received the entire knowledge he has described in the book ‘Yogic Sadhana’ in the same occult manner from the spirit of Raja Rama Mohan Roy. The entire book was written in seven or eight days. Sri Aurobindo used to see before him an image of Ram Mohan Roy both before and after writing, and on the last day he saw the figure disappearing from a corner of the ceiling of his room. And this happened while he was experimenting in the first few months of his arrival to Pondicherry, on automatic writing, which he had tried out accentially at Baroda and Culcutta. The book had nine chapters containing instructions and advice on yoga. But Sri Aurobindo always claimed that he was not the author of ‘yogic sadhana’.

Sister Nivedita who was the foremost western disciple of Swami Vivekananda also became close friend and associate of Sri Aurobindo
during the freedom struggle. Of her Sri Aurobindo said “She was a true revolutionary leader. She was open, frank and talked freely of revolutionary ideas. There was no concealment about her. It was her very soul that spoke..... she was fire.... She did India a tremendous service.”

In the cover of these profound and powerful spiritual experiences Sri Aurobindo said, he got a number of Siddhis, for which of-course he did not give any special significance. One of the remarkable developments was the sudden opening in him of the capacity to know and understands all about Paintings. He said “Suddenly one day in Alipore jail while meditating I saw some pictures on the walls of the cell and lo and behold, the artistic eye in me opened and I knew all about paintings all at once, except of course the more material side of the technique”.

Sri Aurobindo’s spiritual experience transformed his outlook on aesthetics After this experience Sri Aurobindo virtually became an artist demonstrating that even a yogi can be an artist and vice-versa. Here we see the close affinity between the spiritual value and the aesthetic value. Man gets the aesthetic talent because of the intuitive faculty unfurling in him. The more man develops deep in to his meditation the more his aesthetic insight into the object of the universe.

One day, during his sadhana he was wondering whether Siddis like levitation were possible at all, suddenly he found himself raised up in the air.

On still another occasion he experimented with fasting for eleven days, to see what spiritual benefit accrued from it. Though he lost about ten pounds in weight, he had no adverse effects and could lift a pail of water above his head, which he normally could not do.
Another remarkable phenomenon was that his hairs always glistened. One of his co-Prisoner asked, “do you use oil for your hair.” Sri Aurobindo stunned him with a reply “No, at present I do not even take a bath, I am passing through some physical changes as a result of spiritual experiences. My hair draws fat from the body”. About his stay in jail Sri Aurobindo has said that, the only result of the wrath of the British government was that he found God.

When the trial opened in the session’s court, his spiritual experiences continued unabated even in the court hall. About these experiences in the court room he said “I began to write many instructions to my defense counsel as to what was false in the evidence against me and on what points the witness might be cross-examined. Then something happened, which I had not expected...... I had a message from within, This is the man who will save you from snag put around your feet. Put aside all your paper. It will not be you who will give instructions to the counsel.” His counsel was C.R. Das, who was then a raising barrister with a growing reputation. He had known Sri Aurobindo in England and was closely connected with him in the Political field. At a great sacrifice he gave up all his other practice and conducted the defense of Sri Aurobindo without charging any fees, toiling at it day and night with one pointed zeal and perseverance. His mastery handling of the case set the seal on his reputation and he soon became one of the greatest lawyers of his day, and later a leader of the Nation in Political sphere also. The final speech for the defense spread over eight days by C.R. Das is still recognized as a master piece of the art of legal advocacy and his inspired words towards the close of the speech addressed to the Judge have become highly famous.

Although the whole narration of this chapter appears to be mere theoretical it is of interest to note that the entire narration is the
practical experience perceived through the course of his intense yoga sadhana for several years, and is elaborately described in his Records of Yoga – which is the day to day record of his yoga practice going into two huge volumes of printed matter, and in his innumerable letters to his disciples. The epic poem Savitri is also believed to be a detailed record of his yogic sadhana and his mystic experiences and visions from elevated levels of mind and consciousness. Similarly in the 'Life Divine’ he has described in detail the structure of the cosmos, identified its components, analysed their relationship and chartered out the path-ways open before an aspiring humanity. Sraddhalu Ranade a renowned Computer scientist at International Education Cenitre at Pondicherry and who has a number of books to his credit on science, spirituality and consciousness writes about the 'Life Divine'. He says “Though most people look upon this book as a philosophical work, to me it has always been obviously a book of physics - the physics of the cosmos as described by one who knows intimately its smallest working”.

His opinion about the description of Sri Aurobindo’s mystic experiences is also notable. He writes “most mystics do not describe their spiritual experiences with the precision that science requires. I used to think that perhaps it was not possible to do so since the experiences are by definition beyond the range of the mind. It was only when I read Sri Aurobindo’s ‘Records of Yoga’ that I was pleasantly surprised to find that his diary notes are objective in the highest tradition of science. The precision of his observations is far superior even to the standards followed by modern scientists. His penetrating analysis cuts through the veil of external phenomena and strikes at the crux of the problem. I was thrilled. Here Sri Aurobindo demonstrates that the methods of science is fully applicable in the psychological and other regions beyond the material. Even though much of the contents of his notes is beyond our range of experience, these characteristics clearly
identify the 'Records of Yoga' as the most important scientific documentation of a yogi's spiritual growth. It justifies completely Sri Aurobindo's assertion to the Sadhak. "I have been testing day and night for years upon years more scrupulously than any scientist his theory of his method on the physical plane".35

The author continues, "One important fact that becomes apparent from his notes is that the method of science is the method by which the mind seeks knowledge. As the seeker progresses to the regions beyond the mind, the other more reliable and direct means of acquiring knowledge come into play. The method of science undergoes another change. The mental analysis and theory becomes increasingly irrelevant even as the techniques and tools become more and more subtle but the importance of an objective poise and precise observation continues. For without the objective clam of the mind the descending knowledge is distorted and without the precision of observation the knowledge is only partially received. This then is the change that the method of science will undergo in the next stage of human evolution as more and more scientists become yogis".36

Now the scientists all over the world are trying to examine by their scrupulous and highly advanced scientific techniques the genuineness of the phenomenon of a number of mental, accult, and yogic powers such as psychokinesis, telekinesis, telephathy etc., and also they have been trying to apply the methods to train others to acquire such knowledge or powers. Similarly psychologists are making the field of Out of Body Experience (OBE) a serious field of their study. The author narrates a number of curious instances from all over the world which have made the scientists of repute to take them up for scientific investigation and the author thus finally concludes by saying "Science and Spirituality have already met. For
the last few decades they have been merging into each other and today
they are one. They only await our realization of their unity”.37

In the light of these profound spiritual experiences of Sri
Aurbondo I feel it is very appropriate to end the chapter with some
observations about Sri Aurobindo by a few prominent personalities of
our times the world over.

2) A Few Prominent Personalities On Sri Aurobindo

i) Sri. Rabindranatha Thagore commenting on the personality
of Sri Aurobindo “My acquaintances with the literature of our
contemporary politics being casual and desolatory, I do not even to
this day definitely know what is the political stand point of Aurobindo
Ghosh, but this I positively know that he is a great man, one of the
greatest we have and therefore liable to be misunderstood even by
his friends. What I myself feel for him is not mere admiration but
reverence for his depth of spirituality, his largeness of vision and his
literary gifts, extraordinary in imaginative insight and expression. He
is a true Rishi and a poet combined, and I still repeat my Namaskara
which I offered to him when he was first assailed by the trouble which
ultimately made him an exile from the soil of Bengal.”38

ii) Subhash Chandra Bose a brilliant scholar of our times an
outstanding leader of Indian struggle for freedom and for some time
President of Indian National Congress and later a revolutionary and
founder of India National Army (INA).

“In my undergraduate days Aurobindo Ghosh was easily the
most popular leader in Bengal, despite his voluntary exile and absence
since 1910. His was a name to conjure with. He had sacrificed a
lucrative career in order to devote himself to politics. On the congress
platform he had stood up as a champion of left wing thought and a
fearless advocate of independence at a time when most of the leaders would talk only of colonial self-Government. He had undergone incarceration with perfect equanimity. When I came to Calcutta in 1913, Aurobindo was already a legendary figure. Rarely have I seen people speak of a leader with such rapturous enthusiasm and many were the anecdotes of this great man, some of them probably true, which traveled from mouth to mouth.

Aurobindo’s letters would pass rapidly from hand to hand, specially in circles interested in spirituality cum-politics. In our circle usually, some body would read the letter aloud and the rest of us would enthuse over it. We felt convinced that spiritual enlightenment was necessary for effective national service.\textsuperscript{39}

\textbf{iii) Romain Rolland}, an eminent French Savant, thinker and writer and Nobel laureate for literature in 1915 has said “Sri Aurobindo is one of the greatest thinkers of Modern India. He is the most complete synthesis achieved up to the present between the genius of west and the east. The last of the great Rishis holds his outstretched hands, the bow of creative inspiration”.\textsuperscript{40}

\textbf{iv) Gabriela Mistal}, a Chilean educationist diplomat and writer and also a Nobel laureate for literature in 1945 wrote “while Tagore awakened the latent music in me, another Indian Sri Aurobindo, brought me to religion. He opened the way to my religious consecration. Indeed my debt to India is very great and is due in part to Tagore and in part to Sri Aurobindo.

Sri Aurobindo the master, the highest of mystics, happily presents the rare phenomenon of an exposition clear as a beautiful diamond, without the danger of confounding the layman. This is possible because Sri Aurobindo is a unique synthesis of a scholar, theologian and one who is enlightened”.\textsuperscript{41}
v) Tan Yun-Shan, a Chinese scholar and director of Chinese studies at Visva – Bharathii University, China's cultural ambassador to India in 1939 wrote "----- as in the past China was spiritually conquered by a great Indian, so in the future too she would be conquered by another great Indian, Sri Aurobindo, the Maha-yogi who is the bringer of that light which will chase away the darkness that envelops the world today".42

vi) Times Literary Supplement, London once wrote "________. In fact, he is a new type of thinker, one who combines in his vision the alacrity of the west with the illumination of the East. To study his writings is to enlarge the boundaries of one's knowledge... He is a yogi who writes as though he were standing among the stars, with the constellation for his companions.

Sri Aurobindo is no visionary. He has always acted his dreams. So from individual self-discipline he has gone to the life of humanity. The psychology of social development', 'Ideals of progress', and 'the Ideal of Human Unity,' should be carefully considered by all those who are busy preparing blue-prints for the future".43

vii) Pithrim Sorokin, an eminent Russian Sociologist at the University of Leningrad and later a Professor of Sociology at Minnesota and Harvard writes "From a scientific and philosophical stand point the works of Sri Aurobindo are a sound antidote to the pseudo - scientific psychology and psychiatry, and educational art of the west. Sri Aurobindo's 'Life Divine' and yoga treatises are among the most important works of our times in philosophy, ethics and humanities. Sri Aurobindo himself is one of the greatest living sages of our time, the most eminent moral leader..."44

viii) Alexandra David-Neel a famous Tibetologist of French origin. "He belongs to that common category that I so much
admire, the reasonable mystics. I am truly grateful to the friends who advised me to visit this man. He thinks with such clarity, there is such lucidity in his reasoning, such luster in his eyes, that he leaves one with the impression of having contemplated the genius of India such as one dreams it to be after reading the noblest pages of Hindu philosophy."