

Paris 5 April, 2021

**Synopsis of The Penguin ‘Aurobindo Reader’ edited by Makarand R. Paranjape, who was an Associate Professor at Indian Institute of Technology, New Delhi ( 1994-1999 ) .**

I - Sri Aurobindo was born on 15 August, 1872. His father, a Medical Practitioner, wished him to become an ICS Officer to join the ruling class of British India. He was sent to England (London) to study at St. Paul’s school and subsequently at King’s College, Cambridge. In 1890, He cleared the ICS, but absented from the riding test and thus failed to qualify. Then he obtained an appointment from the Maharajah of Baroda, and set his foot on Indian soil in February, 1893. Upto 1907, he worked in Baroda (now called Vadodara) and served in various departments of Baroda state very ably. Thereafter, he took over as Vice-Principal of Baroda College, and met important leaders like Lokmanya Tilak and Bipin Chandra Pal. Thus he elected to take an active role in Indian Politics. From 1906 to 1908, Sri Aurobindo was at the forefront of the Freedom struggle.

II - On 2 may 1908, Sri Aurobindo was arrested and imprisoned at Alipore Jail, Calcutta (now called Kolkata). He was released in 1909 and went into hiding at Chandan Nagar, a French territory and therefrom he departed for Pondicherry (another French Area) in April 1910. And he remained there until he died on 5 December 1950.

III - On 29 March 1914, he met Mirra Richard, who later was known as Mother Meera — a holy name in Indian tradition. **Mother came to live in Pondicherry permanently in November 1920. In January 1922, she took charge of the whole management** and the first signs of an organized Ashram began to appear. Devotees, particularly; K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, Ambalal Purani and 22 others **felt an air of intensity and potency that happened on 24 November, 1926 (thereafter known as Shiddhi Day)**. There was silence absolute overflowing with strange Energy of Divinity-Awareness par excellence. Sri Aurobindo went into **a state of total seclusion and remained in this state for 24 years until he died on 5 December 1950.**

IV - The Mother was an extraordinary manager and administrator. She built India’s most impressive and dynamic ashram with several departments and manufacturing units. She loved the open air and used to exercise and play tennis until well past her seventies. **Mother and Sri Aurobindo together created a unique spiritual community with incredible innovations in all directions.**

V - **Sri Aurobindo did not meet anyone during his long years of seclusion, barring two or three exceptions including Rabindranath Tagore - Sage Poet of Bengal.** However on 21 February (Mother’s birthday), 15 August (Sri Aurobindo’s birthday) and 24 November (Siddhi Day) — the three ‘darshan days’ — the inmates of the ashram could see him.

VI - Sri Aurobindo’s major **Prose Works** are : — 1) The Life Divine - 2) Hymns to the Mystic Fire - 3) The Synthesis of Yoga - 4) The Human Cycle - 5) The Ideal of Human unity.

VII - Though both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother repeatedly warned against the creation of a cult around them, they themselves encouraged it in several ways. Sri Aurobindo himself deified the Mother and vice versa. Such contradictions and difficulties are a part of the ‘Spiritual enterprise’. Mother’s announcement of the Supramental Manifestation on earth on 29 February 1956, certainly contributed to the sense of constant awe and expectation in the ashram community.

## VIII - Four Profound Poems

- All music is only the sound of His laughter,  
All beauty the smile of His passionate bliss ;  
Our lives are His heart-beats, our rapture the  
bridal  
Of Radha and Krishna, our love is their kiss.

### **Bride of the Fire**

*Bride of the Fire, clasp me now close, —  
Bride of the Fire !  
I have shed the bloom of the earthly rose,  
I have slain desire.  
Beauty of the Light, surround my life, —  
Beauty of the Light !  
I have sacrificed longing and parted from grief,  
I can bear thy delight.  
Image of ecstasy, thrill and enlance, —  
Image of bliss !  
I would see only thy marvelous face,  
Feel only thy kiss.  
Voice of Infinity, sound in my heart, —  
Call of the One !  
Stamp there thy radiance, never to part,  
O living Sun.*

### **Life and Death**

*Life, death , — death, life ; the words have led for ages  
Our thought and consciousness and firmly seemed  
Two opposites ; but now long-hidden pages  
Are opened, liberating truths undreamed.  
Life only is, or death is life disguised, —  
Life a short death until by life we are surprised.*

### **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 Floundering 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*

IX - Indiscriminate compassion is the noblest gift of human temperament, not to hurt anyone is the highest human virtue. But 'God' does not practice it! Is, man, therefore, nobler than 'God' ? Yes, Sri Aurobindo said : 'Saubar Upore Manus Satyo, Tahar Upore Naai'!! Human is the highest truth, none can be higher!!

**Jai Sri Aurobindo**