

Could you tell us about that reunion?

I returned to Kerala at the end of January 2001 with some French people. One day we were travelling by bus along the coast. As we drove through Trichur, I noticed on a wall a poster with a picture of Śrī Tathāta, announcing one of His public programmes. My heart leapt with joy as I felt it was a sign. One of my friends thought I was imagining things. Two hundred metres further on I saw a second picture of Śrī Tathāta. This time, the picture came to life and He smiled at me. From then on, the name of Śrī Tathāta began to reverberate in me continuously.

We arrived in Bekal in northern Kerala, where a long beach of white sand bordered with coconut trees offered a complete change of scenery. It was glorious. I immediately felt an urgent need to meditate. Instantly, I had a vision of Śrī Tathāta who informed me that a serious disaster was going to occur. He asked me to warn everyone I knew and encourage them to pray. I immediately called my friends in France. The next morning, 26th January 2001, we heard about the terrible earthquake in Bhuj, Gujarat, where the death toll would eventually rise to over twenty thousand.

I decided to go to Anandashram, the ashram of Swami Ramdas⁹³, to meditate at the *samadhi*⁹⁴ of Mother Krishna-

⁹³ Swami Ramdas: a spiritual Master (1884 – 1963).

⁹⁴ Samadhi: in this sense, the burial place of a saint.

bai⁹⁵. For nine consecutive nights, I could not sleep and had constant visions of Śrī Tathāta insistently urging me to come and join Him.

In the afternoon of 8th February, unable to bear it any longer, I tried to telephone the Kollur ashram but nobody there spoke English. I felt helpless, especially as I no longer had the address and telephone number of His other ashram. Also, I suddenly felt a deep unease. I had the insistent feeling that I should be at the ashram by the next evening and that time was short. Fortunately, divine grace operated through the man running the phone booth, who became quite paternal towards me and took matters in hand. He telephoned the ashram to make an appointment for me. However, that wasn't the end of my difficulties!

The next morning at the station I was devastated to learn that a train had derailed, blocking the track for an entire week. My friends began to see portents in these events and tried to dissuade me from going on. But I reacted quickly and decided to take a taxi for the whole of the three hundred and sixty kilometre drive. The first driver smelled so strongly of alcohol that I could not trust him. I immediately removed my luggage from the car. Another driver came forward asking twice the price. Of course I turned down the swindler. My friends saw in this the final sign that I shouldn't pursue my intention. But I

⁹⁵ Krishnabai: the Mother of the ashram of Swami Ramdas.

insisted and a third driver came forward, who turned out to be the right one – at last.

Finally, on 9th February, late in the afternoon, after a nine hour drive, I arrived at the Varishtapuri ashram where I was welcomed very graciously. A sanyasin announced that Śrī Tathāta would see me the next morning. I was introduced to Jayanthi Ji, Śrī Tathāta's niece by marriage, who has provided me accommodation in her house ever since. I was served tea. For a while I sat in the patio of the ashram which was covered with palm leaves. The natural beauty surrounding the ashram is idyllic. All around are rice fields and coconut trees, framed by a chain of hazy blue mountains.

It happened to be Friday, the day of veneration to Divine Mother. The women and the young girls were preparing garlands of flowers. The laughter of the children added to the gaiety of the occasion. I attended the ceremony and then it was time for bhajans. Those inspiring songs filled me with joy. Then I was introduced to the eleven *Maytris*⁹⁶ of Śrī Tathāta. I was not housed in the ashram itself as the rooms were reserved for men. So Jayanthi Ji welcomed me into her home with incomparable respect and devotion. She introduced me to her husband, her son and her brothers. They are a happy and very united family.

The next day, 10th February 2001, one year to the day after our first meeting, I was excited and impatient to meet Śrī

⁹⁶ Maytris: initiated brothers.

Tathāta again. At 10 o'clock one of the maytris led me to the *Parnnashala*⁹⁷. Śrī Tathāta came down the steps. He welcomed me with a broad smile. Then we sat down facing each other.

Śrī Tathāta asked:

“Why did you come today?”

I answered:

“Last year when I arrived at your ashram in Kollur, you offered me some water. On that day, you quenched the thirst of my body and my soul. Now, I have returned to drink at the source.”

I then described the visions in which He had appeared and given me instruction in spiritual practices. I told Him about His accurate predictions concerning some serious natural disasters. I added that I had gone without sleep for the last nine days since He had been calling me insistently. He burst out laughing and reassured me:

“Don't worry, tonight you will sleep well.”

The conversation continued. He said:

“What are you expecting from me?”

“Answers that I have been seeking since I was seven years old. For I do not believe that Self-Realisation is the end of the journey. Ever since childhood, I have known that one has to go well beyond that and transform one's cellular structure in order to achieve the full enlightenment of body and mind. I have been looking for the

⁹⁷ Parnnashala: the home of the spiritual Master.

Master who could teach this to me and enable me to experience it.

Śrī Tathāta smiled. He quietly spoke a few words to the maytri who was translating and the latter said in English: “Śrī Tathāta does not *believe* in that, he *knows* it!”

I was overjoyed to hear those words. I tasted a moment of divine happiness. For the second time my soul was really coming home. After a while, Śrī Tathāta asked me how much time I had available. I had a month and a half left before the expiry of my visa. The next morning the teaching began.

Three days later I received a first initiation. On the night of Shivaratri,¹⁰⁹ Śrī Tathāta requested that I dress in maroon colours. I happened to have a dress of that colour, following a meditation in October 2000 in which the Buddha had asked me to wear that colour when praying to him. Śrī Tathāta offered me a matching shawl.

Although I usually dressed in white, one day, guided by Christ I wore a pink shawl. Surprised, Śrī Tathāta explained with a smile that the three colours of the ashram were white, maroon and pink; white representing meditation and austerities, maroon the way of Dharma and pink – friendship and brotherly love.

¹⁰⁹ Shivaratri: night of celebration of Lord Shiva on the new moon around the month of February or March.

Two weeks after my arrival He initiated me into a particular type of *pranayama*. Śrī Tathāta had received the whole of this discipline as a young man. He had practised it and explored it for a long time before teaching it; and He is still the only one to transmit it by initiation. Given my quest for the enlightenment of both body and mind, this was the key that I had always been searching for. Through regular and intense practice I came to appreciate how much it can accelerate the process of transformation. I experienced moments of infinite grace and had the confirmation that Śrī Tathāta was indeed the Prophet of the Mission.

During that month spent in the ashram, I enjoyed hearing the story of His life as told by the maytris and Jayanti Ji. She showed me albums with photographs of Śrī Tathāta, the oldest of which dated back more than forty years. I was surprised to discover that the young yogi who had appeared to me so often in visions ever since my childhood, was none other than Śrī Tathāta. I was delighted to realise that I had never been separated from Him.

Śrī Tathāta was concerned that I should be comfortably settled in. In addition to our telepathic exchanges, we had long discussions in which I explained the reason for my coming to Earth. During the last week of my stay Śrī Tathāta asked me questions about Śrī Aurobindo¹¹⁰ and

¹¹⁰ Sri Aurobindo: great spiritual Master (1842-1950) with very advanced ideas.

Sweet Mother¹¹¹. I answered that I had had many contacts with Sweet Mother. Moreover, I had been to the *Matri Mandir*¹¹² and to their *samadhi* to meditate. I explained that I had continued on my journey to find the living Master who would give me the Teaching.

(Subsequently, once back in France, Satyakaman organised a small party to welcome Maitreyi Amma. One of the guests who did not know her offered the first volume of Sweet Mother's biography to her. She was amazed!)

A few days before my departure to France, Śrī Tathāta said: "Your life as a sanyasin is over. I am sending you into the world and you will be the messenger to spread my Dharma".

On the evening of my departure from the ashram, I felt an immense, inconsolable sadness: I had at last found Him again and already I had to leave Him. On the flight back to France I overcame my dejection, filled with His strength and nourished by His presence. I looked forward to sharing with others my time with Śrī Tathāta and all that He has to offer us.

¹¹¹ Sweet Mother: the Mother of Sri Aurobindo's ashram, who was of French origin (1878-1973).

¹¹² Matri Mandir: A temple built according to Sweet Mother's wishes and directions at Auroville, near Pondicherry.