

Collaboration

Fall 2008

Journal of the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother

Vol. 33, No. 2



The Sri Aurobindo Relics Shrine in Lodi, California

**A journey of the relics by Dakshina Vanzetti
On the significance of the relics by Alok Pandey
Auroville and education, compiled by Kailas Jhaveri
Current affairs • AV almanac • Book reviews • Poetry • Apropos**



About the cover

The Sri Aurobindo Relics Shrine at Sri Aurobindo Sadhana Peetham in Lodi, CA. The tree is from a seedling of the Service Tree over Sri Aurobindo's Samadhi (Photo courtesy Sri Aurobindo Sadhana Peetham)

The authors

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The University of Human Unity Team includes Rudy, Rod Hemsell, Vladimir Yatskeno, and Grace Aroha. For more information, see their website: www.universityofhumanunity.org.

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From the office of Collaboration

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The University of Human Unity Team has several photo galleries of activities at the university on their website: www.universityofhumanunity.org.

In this issue we feature two chronicles pertaining to the recent installation of Sri Aurobindo's relics at Sri Aurobindo Sadhana Peetham in Lodi, California, and a longer essay on Auroville and Education, which is a compilation of writings by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother carefully woven together to form a cohesive essay. The first of the articles on the relics, written by Dakshina Vanzetti, describes her reception of the relics in Sri Aurobindo's room and the journey back to the U.S. with several companions carrying the sacred relics. The second article, written by Alok Pandey, is a transcription of the talk Alok gave at the relics installation ceremony in Lodi, which focused on the significance of the relics. In it, we can realize more clearly the importance and power of Sri Aurobindo's relics for the center and for America and the world. Alok is a fine speaker who likes to weave Sri Aurobindo's poetry into his talks, as well as ancient Indian legends, to convey more directly to the soul of the listener, the truths of which he speaks. These two articles are accompanied by numerous photos of the reception and installation of Sri Aurobindo's relics.

The essay on Auroville and Education was put together by Kailas Jhaveri in 1969 as a project-report for a World University for Human Unity requested by UNESCO. Kailas has explained that she was reluctant to write the report because she was given only two weeks to prepare it. But as she was pressed to do it, she tried. She sent a copy of her first attempt to the Mother for approval. However, on reading the draft, the Mother became furious, threw the papers on the ground, and demanded to know who had asked Kailas to prepare such a report. Devastated, unable to sleep or eat for two days, Kailas went to the Samadhi to seek Sri Aurobindo's solace and guidance. And then it came. Calmly and confidently she went back to work, the vision of the project came, and her hands went to just the appropriate passages from Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's writings expressing the vision. The result was this essay, which the Mother again read out in full, and said: "*C'est très, très bien*" (It is very, very good).

Although previously published in *Mother India* in July 1970, we have decided to reprint this essay here for two important reasons. The first is that it elegantly describes the essential ideals and aims of Auroville, and the role of an Auroville university in those ideals. It is useful that we periodically review these ideals in order to keep a broader perspective of the work being done in Auroville. The second reason is that although an Auroville University did not materialize in the period following the essay, in part because of the conflict that ensued between Auroville and the Sri Aurobindo Society, recently a new initiative towards an Auroville University has been developing, and so the ideals expressed here are again especially timely. We have included a brief report about this new initiative in AV Almanac, and readers can find more information on its website: www.universityofhumanunity.org.

We also have a second article in AV Almanac that is especially timely, about urgently needed work on the Pavilion for Tibetan Culture, and the upcoming visit of the Dalai Lama to Auroville in January. We hope that readers may feel moved to contribute to this important project.

We also present two book reviews, one of Kailas's autobiographical memoirs, *I am with you*, and the second on an anthology of poetry written by devotees of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, called *Devotion*. The poems were selected and compiled by two Aurovilians, and published by Chandresh Patel's Integral Enterprise. To give a better sample, five of the poems from this book have been included in our Poetry room.

In addition to these articles, we start our issue with a reflection on AUM 2008 written by Dave Hutchinson, the main organizer for the event, followed by an important note about the Los Angeles center; we conclude with a selection of quotations in Apropos.

Publisher: Collaboration (ISSN 0164-1522) is published by the Sri Aurobindo Association (SAA), a California nonprofit religious corporation, P.O. Box 163237, Sacramento, CA 95816 USA; e-mail: saa@collaboration.org; phone: 209-339-3710, ext. 6.

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Subscriptions: A one-year subscription (three issues) to *Collaboration* is \$20 (\$32 for airmail outside the USA, except India; in India, send Rs. 150 to Larry Seidlitz, 39 Vanniar St., Vaithikuppam, Pondicherry 605012). A patron subscription is \$40 or more. A sponsorship subscription for residents of India is \$4.

Submissions: *Collaboration* welcomes writing, photos, and artwork relevant to the Integral Yoga and spirituality. Submit material by email to: editor@collaboration.org; by fax at 209-339-3715; or by post to *Collaboration*, P.O. Box 163237, Sacramento, CA 95816 USA. *Collaboration* cannot be held responsible for loss or damage of unsolicited material. Letters to the editor may be published unless you indicate otherwise. Letters and articles may be edited for style and space considerations.

About SAA: The Sri Aurobindo Association distributes information about Sri Aurobindo, the Mother, and Auroville and supports various projects related to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Auroville, and Integral Yoga activities in America. Current officers: Theresa Boschert, coordinator; Kalpana Patel, treasurer; Chandresh Patel, secretary.

Contributions: Donations for the work of the SAA, Auroville, and the Sri Aurobindo Ashram may be sent to SAA. Donations are tax exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code.



Current Affairs

Reflections on AUM 2008

by Dave Hutchinson

The time after AUM is exquisite, almost as meaningful as the event itself. . . we return to our daily lives, carrying so much back with us, absorbing, digesting, pondering.

Some of my experiences there are nearly inexpressible: the kirtan by Markus Stobbs' and his group, for example, or the movement session by Melissa Michaels. The kirtan brought me to tears with its depth and sincerity, and touched my heart for personal reasons. I can still see Markus' smiling face as he sang, eyes closed, himself transported to happy fields of bhakti.

Melissa's movement workshop allowed me to open in a way that I would have not thought possible, and it was a joy to explore physical consciousness with a group of Integral Yogis! Having been one of the infamous talking heads in the past, dancing was about as possible to me as sprouting four arms. The point at which we all connected with each other, wordlessly, while dancing, was also a true evolution for AUM itself. It felt like looking into the soul of each person, in a fluid movement among the entire group. Such things have been tried, but in a static fashion; doing it while in the midst of dance was an entirely different experience.

The Joshi family brought so much to AUM, through the beaming eyes of Nisarg and Chinmaya, as well as Dipti and Shirish. Everything they were involved in seemed a gift of the energy, joy, and wide-open awareness of childhood, from Nisarg's spontaneous helpfulness on the unpacking, to the discussion we had gazing at the campfire, to the hilarious square dance, and even the simple activity of cutting out collage materials.

Being one of those who had been at previous AUMs, it was refreshing to see this one through the eyes of newcomers. Blake and Emmy were so much fun to have around, and I heard in several places they imbued events with their youthful shakti. Certainly Blake's hip-hop performance was a first for an AUM conference, and I hope that there will be many like that in years to come! It brings to mind the first paragraph of *The Synthesis of Yoga*, where Sri Aurobindo says that truth and practice "must be constantly renovated by fresh streams of the spirit revivifying the dead or dying vehicle and changing it, if it is to acquire a new life." Blake certainly gave AUM new life this year!

In one sense the AUM is over, but in reality it will reverberate for days, months, or years. Some of us will see each other within a week, whereas others we may not encounter again for a decade. Connections made at an AUM tend to weave through our lives in ways we may not recognize. Personally, I had many sweet and touching moments at AUM, and the faces of everyone continue to rise before my eyes. For me, a recluse by inclination, this is all the more meaningful.



The AUM 2008 group photo, set in the magnificent Rocky Mountains at Estes Park. (Photo by Lynda Lester)

One thing I love about AUM is the opportunity to deepen ties. This year I was able to get to know Nishi and Rich, Theresa, Fanou, Larry Tepper, Jim Auler—and others—much better. I often fall into the common mistake of keeping a static image of a person, and it's helpful to enlarge that, learn more about a person.

It is fascinating that people perceive AUM from a different perspective. At various times I was told "Did you plan to make the psychic being the focus of the AUM?" or "It was great how the Mother was introduced to everyone at this AUM" or "When did the organizing group decide that this AUM would be about Savitri?" Sartaj and I had a discussion the last day about how to organize future conferences, and he had the intriguing idea of organizing a gathering with one third lectures, one third group discussion, and one third spiritual practices. Food for thought!

Encounters with wildlife gave me a strong sense of that "common self," from the herd of furry antlered elk placidly chewing grass in the middle of the YMCA, to a lightning-fast chipmunk picking scraps on the trail around Sprague Lake, to a reclusive beaver building a dam at the creek upstream from Barclay. Some hikers on Wednesday reported seeing a mother caring for a baby elk, who must have been born only minutes before. One group reported reading *Savitri* in the woods, and the nearby animals gathered to listen, waiting quietly for the finish. These are precious moments that confirm our unity with the rest of existence.

Speaking of *Savitri* and nature, the prize for spiritual innovation goes to Bhuvana, who found herself out in the woods with Mira, wanting to read *Savitri*. By report, she pulled out her BlackBerry, connected to savitribysriaurobindo.com, and proceeded to read in the woods! I would expect no less from Bhuvana, who has consistently led our community in technology for many years — although newcomers like Ned and Shashwat are pushing our boundaries, along with Larry Seidlitz with the University of Tomorrow (<http://www.sacar.in>). For those who are interested in using the web to explore your own mental boundaries, especially the complexity of science, culture, and Integral Yoga, you might consider visiting <http://www.sciy.org>, since you now know one



of the founders and principle contributors (Rich Carlson). Who knew that a blues singer can also expostulate on robotics, James Joyce, and rhetorical criticism?

The integration of physical activity into an AUM was one goal this year, and despite my newsletterish pontifications, I wasn't exactly sure how to achieve it. Like many other aspects of a collective, the answer was to allow the group to create its own synthesis. The archery session was a perfect example, where each person seemed to bring their own yoga of concentration, one-pointedness, and harmony into the activity. Here as elsewhere, Thiago and Benjamin gave the AUM a particular skill and attention to the physical that I appreciated.

After a major event, a useful practice is to enumerate "lessons learned." Whether publicly or privately, it is helpful to ask "What went well? What didn't work? What could be improved?" Some of the smallest aspects of the organizing seemed to have the biggest effect, such as the name plaques on the doors, which transformed an otherwise impersonal hallway into a familiar abode of yogis. On the other hand, nobody seemed to notice the "Non-trivial pursuit" board. I wish we had tested our audiovisual technology better, and provided more redundancy, which would have avoided some issues with music and video. Having a public van, in addition to the spontaneous rides offered by those with cars, worked very well, and gave a freedom to both drivers and passengers. The hike on Wednesday was fun for many, but as an organizer, I feel we should have required more definite sign-out sheets, with destinations. As we saw on the last day, mountain weather can indeed be surprising, and safety is a very real concern in the wilds of nature.

You never know what experiments will succeed, but they are all worth attempting. The art collage this year started late, and by Tuesday only a few pictures were on the board. Then we woke up Thursday to find the entire six by six foot sheet covered with a mosaic of images. I was also particularly taken with "Infinity," a group drawing in Camille's workshop that started as a free-form squiggle, and then grew to become a multicolored, mythical entity, embodying both infinity and collective individuality.

Sartaj and I discussed the ever-changing harmony between hierarchy and structure on the one hand, and personal evolution and responsibility on the other. With the almost endless spreadsheets, check-off lists, signs, assignments, schedules, itineraries, forms, and finances that were created for the AUM, I sometimes thought that I had created a straightjacket of structure that would strangle even the most vibrant collective spirit. But as AUM took shape, starting from the first night's orientation, when so many jumped in to explain their individual part in the conference, it became clear to me that the forms were a guideline, like the lighted strip that helps a plane to come to earth in the night, and that each person was moving in and out of these guidelines in their own way, to an individual rhythm.

One of the things we all struggle with is striking a balance between simplicity and complexity, between star gazing and instant messaging. I feel that the setting of this AUM gave us the chance to explore that balance in our own way. One evening Anara

and I sat on the rocks overlooking the creek to the east of Barclay cabin, watching the sparkling stars, the lights of the houses on the mountainside to the north, the occasional flash of lightning in the valley below, and gradually the frantic call of work vanished, leaving us with an expansive sense of grandeur and beauty. Now, back home, as the information-rich, populated, complex life crowds back in, I work to integrate these disparate experiences.

Sri Aurobindo wrote in *The Life Divine* that "The one rule of the gnostic life would be the self-expression of the Spirit, the will of the Divine Being; that will, that self-expression could manifest through extreme simplicity or through extreme complexity and opulence or in their natural balance,—for beauty and plenitude, a hidden sweetness and laughter in things, a sunshine and gladness of life are also powers and expressions of the Spirit." (p. 1104) AUM certainly whispered to me of that "hidden sweetness and laughter in things"—and not only the sunshine, but the snowflake flowers that fell on our last day! Waking to the silent fall of snow was a beautiful if moist way to end the conference!

While Anara and I drove back to Denver, we talked about her experience as a person who is unfamiliar with the jargon, metaphysics, and history of Integral Yoga. She mentioned that the AUM was striking in its atmosphere of welcome, individually and collectively; it was open rather than closed, accepting rather than rejecting, regardless of whether a person had any sense of this yoga. This gives me hope for the future, because it seems to express another quality of the gnostic, that it has a "unifying sense of a common Truth in many forms, a common self in many consciousnesses and bodies." (*The Life Divine*, p.1069)

The next AUM is planned to take place in South Carolina, hosted by the Rama family, the hosts of AUM 2002. That was quite the family gathering, and had many knowledgeable speakers. In addition to the more personal give and take that happened in the Rockies, there is value in hearing the reflective wisdom of those who have been working out yoga in their lives for many years. Next year's AUM will probably feature a similar style.

The form of each year's gathering has been left largely to the local group that creates the conference, with the national organizations such as the Sri Aurobindo Association or AVI-USA offering financial or logistical assistance. If any of you have been inspired by AUM, consider hosting it in the future—or better yet, get your feet wet by creating a smaller, regional "AUMlet"! Such gatherings are a perfect way to try out innovative structures with five or ten people.

Before the AUM many of us were relative strangers, but now we have faces, personalities, and souls to match the names. In my life I have found that the intensity and richness of face-to-face exchange can be supplemented by the more reflective and discursive virtues of writing. We grow by what we give.

Thanks again to everyone for your generous contributions to AUM, in many different forms. It was a multi-faceted gem, shining with the faces of everyone present.



Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced Research launches new programs with Indira Gandhi National Open University

by Larry Seidlitz

This August 15th the Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced Research (SACAR) reached a milestone in its development as it begins its fifth year offering online educational programs on the thought and vision of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. On that auspicious day, in a nationally televised function with chief guest Dr. Karan Singh, SACAR director Ananda Reddy signed a memorandum of understanding with Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), in which SACAR will be offering a variety of programs at different levels as part of IGNOU's School of Interdisciplinary and Transdisciplinary Studies. IGNOU is the largest university in the world in terms of enrollment, serving nearly 1.8 million students in India and 32 other countries through 21 schools of study, a network of 58 regional centers, and about 46 overseas centers. It focuses particularly on distance education, chiefly through correspondence, videotape and telecasting. SACAR is its first online programme, a medium which it plans to use more in the future. This agreement puts Sri Aurobindo's thought and vision on the national and international stage at the university level, something which up until now has remained elusive—indeed one is hard-pressed to find any other university programs carrying courses focused on his perspectives.

Under the agreement, we are launching six new programs:

- six-month introductory certificate program;
- one-year post-graduate (post bachelor's degree) diploma programs in Integral Education and Studies in Indian Culture;
- two-year M.A. program in Sri Aurobindo Studies;
- one-year M.Phil. (a master's level, research-oriented degree, preparatory to Ph.D.) program in Sri Aurobindo Studies;
- two to three year Ph.D. program in Sri Aurobindo Studies.

All the programs are conducted online through our website, www.sacar.in, where you can find more details, though some also have a short personal contact component at our campus in Pondicherry. We also plan to offer the programs through correspondence for learners in India, beginning now with our introductory program. We are presently completing administrative requirements for implementing the programs under the sponsorship of IGNOU. We are now accepting applications, and expect to begin classes in mid-October.

Another noteworthy development is that earlier this year SACAR became an affiliated research center of the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda (where Sri Aurobindo was Profes-

sor and Vice-principal), offering guidance for Ph.D. studies on Sri Aurobindo's thought through its Department of Philosophy. We are looking forward to developing ties with other departments within this university to offer Ph.D. studies in other subjects focused on Sri Aurobindo's thought. SACAR continues to independently offer individual academic courses and its spiritual practice-oriented "Science of Living" program.

Another development has been the completion of the new Scholar's Home, a residential facility for students and scholars, which may also accommodate visitors. The new facility is attached to the SACAR building, and provides accommodations in single and double rooms with attached bath for 22 people, and dormitory space for approximately 20 more. The roof terrace provides a bird's nest view of the sea and the surrounding village. It also has a kitchen and dining room for use by the residents. In the courtyard of the SACAR complex, there is now a spacious amphitheatre and stage for cultural performances. The new facilities will enhance the educational experience of our learners through offering extended on-site mentoring, seminars, and conferences, as well as a base for exploring the resources and atmosphere of the Ashram and Auroville. We invite you to visit our facilities.

We are also happy to announce the publication of Martha Orton's book, *The quest for knowledge and mastery: A comparative study of motivation in the light of Sri Aurobindo*. This book is the culmination of Martha's doctoral research conducted through SACAR. Martha was our first doctoral student, and her in-depth study of Sri Aurobindo's psychological and philosophical thought in relation to contemporary theorists detailed in this 350 page book is a shining example of the possibilities for doctoral research available at our institution. For information on purchasing the book or SACAR's other activities, please contact: office@theuniversityoftomorrow.org.

Briefs

The East West Cultural Center—The Sri Aurobindo Center of Los Angeles announces that living space is available at the center for accommodating visitors wishing to stay for extended periods. We invite anyone who has the motivation and calling to come and share with us in our collective community life that is dedicated to the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. This includes participation in our karma yoga projects, study programs and satsangs; all in an atmosphere charged by the Relics of Sri Aurobindo.

The center is located on a quiet, tree-lined street in West Los Angeles and also offers a beautiful meditation garden with Indian statuary, a large library of metaphysical books and all the writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

If you have an interest in visiting the center, please contact us at: EWCC@SriAurobindoCenter-la.org. You may also write or call: East West Cultural Center, 12329 Marshall Street, Culver City, CA 90230, USA.



AV almanac

Dalai Lama to inaugurate Pavilion of Tibetan Culture

by The Pavillion team

Serge's Departure

We have to start this article with sad news: our brother and collaborator Serge Brelin has left us on 2 July 2008. For the previous several months, Serge was suffering from an incurable liver cancer. After it was diagnosed, he decided to follow a soft treatment and approached Dr. Dorjee Rabten, who has been attending patients for years in Auroville. During the last year of his life, he developed a close equation with Dr Rabten and a few days before his demise, he told us, "I am so grateful to Dr Rabten and Tibetan medicine which have given me a comfortable year, a practically normal year."

In an interview in February, Serge said: "I am a passionate man." Indeed he was! He was a warrior, not only when he taught Aikido, but also when he fought for Auroville's highest ideals.

The creed of the Olympics comes automatically to mind when one thinks of Serge: "The most important thing in life is not the triumph but the struggle. The essential thing is not to have conquered but to have fought well." Since he joined Auroville in 1981, Serge fought well!

During the last few months, he worked hard for the Pavilion to be completed in time for His Holiness the Dalai Lama's visit. He wrote to all his friends and acquaintances:

As you know, I have a great debt towards Tibet; I strongly felt that I should offer my help to collect the funds to complete the Tibetan Pavilion in Auroville. I believe that this Pavilion is of great importance for Auroville. I also believe that with the current events in Tibet, the participation of all, even in a very modest way, to finish the Pavilion during the present year will have a very deep symbolic significance.

It is important for our own karma!

It is important for the Karma of Auroville!

It is important for Tibet, India and the World.

Speak to your friends and all those who are touched by what Tibet represents.

His efforts allowed us to continue the construction since April and complete a part of the external slanted walls.

We are sure that Serge, wherever he has gone, will be with us on the occasion of His Holiness' visit.



A view of the emerging Pavilion of Tibetan Culture. (Photo courtesy The Pavilion Team)

His Holiness' visit

The Private Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama has now confirmed the date of His Holiness' visit. He will arrive from Chennai on 22 January 2009, stay the night in Auroville and return to Chennai on 23 January.

Apart from the inauguration, His Holiness will visit the Matrimandir, address Aurovilians and friends on the theme of "Universal Responsibility and Human Unity" and will visit one or two places in Auroville.

We are in the process of setting up an organizing committee which will look into all the different aspects of the visit (accommodation, program, inauguration, security, etc.). Those who were present during the 1993 visit still remember how everyone had worked in a united manner to make the visit a success. We endeavor to repeat this.

Construction of the Pavilion

The Building Center of the Center for Scientific Research is working hard to complete the building in time. The major masonry work, the slanted walls making the shell (and the storage) for the building, is progressing well. Several sides are almost finished giving the building a new dimension. It is not common in Auroville that everyone agrees on something, but in this case, it is unanimously felt that those slanting walls are beautiful and give a great force and harmony to the building.

We have been struggling (with Serge) to find the funds to progress. Every month when we have to settle the bills of the Building Center, we hope for a miracle, till today the miracle has happened.

We take this opportunity to express our gratitude to all those who help us. Thank you. We hope that you will be with us on 22 January.



Decoration and painting

Keeping in mind that His Holiness advised us to keep the building ‘simple and close to the environment,’ we have approached the Norbulinka Institute, near Dharamsala, to help us design the interior decoration of the courtyard and the outer shell of the building. Hopefully, a master painter will soon be deputed to work out these important details. Later we are planning to ask some Tibetan institutions for help us by sending the necessary manpower to execute the paintings and designs.

Exhibition to be inaugurated by His Holiness

We have requested the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives in Dharamsala to lend us some Art pieces for a special exhibition to be inaugurated on 22 January by His Holiness. They have agreed in principle. A private Tibetan friend has offered to send 10 old thankas for the occasion. On this front, everything is progressing smoothly.

What has to be completed?

- The front courtyard
- The inner decoration and painting
- The final polishing of all the floors
- About half of the slanted walls around the Pavilion.

BUDGET ESTIMATE

	Rs	Euro	US \$
Slanted walls masonry/primer	600,000	10,526	15,385
Painting/Decoration	200,000	3,509	5,128
Entrance Flooring	50,000	877	1,282
Furniture Tables/Chairs/etc..	60,000	1,053	1,538
Misc. Landscaping	50,000	877	1,282
Dalai Lama’s visit: Organization/Security/Other Expenses	200,000	3,509	5,128
	1,160,000	20,351	29,744

Since 1 April 2008, we have received Rs. 3,52,000 (US \$9,025) from Auroville and Rs. 2,20,000 (US \$5,640) from foreign friends.

Our main worry is the financing for the completion of the building. We appeal to all our friends to help us for this last effort.

We have a special account in the Auroville Maintenance Fund for the completion of the building and organization of His Holiness’ visit: A/c No 0477 ‘HH the Dalai Lama’s Visit.’

Foreign checks should be made in favor of Auroville Fund and sent with a covering letter to Pavilion of Tibetan Culture, Auroville 605101 TN India.

For further information: Tel: 91-413-2622401/2622136; Email: tibpav@rediffmail.com; http://www.auroville.org/thecity/tibet_pavilion/index.htm

The University of Human Unity

by The University of Human Unity team

Since its inception in 1968, Auroville has proved to be a “place of unending education” (Charter of Auroville), and as early as 1969 The Mother addressed her intention to UNESCO to create a “*Université de l’Unité Humaine*”, a University of Human Unity, as a means to realise the spiritual and material goals of Auroville. “The permanent university will be the key to the reason for Auroville’s existence (*la clef de la raison d’être d’Auroville*). It has to be a leap forward, to hasten the advent of the future—a world of harmony and beauty and union.”

A variety of fields of research have developed since its beginning, and Auroville has become widely recognized as a place of learning that “seeks to ensure international understanding, peace, innovative education, a learning society and an all round material and spiritual development of harmonious individual and collective growth, . . . such aims contribute to the advancement of the objectives of UNESCO” (the 4th UNESCO Resolution, Paris, 1983).

The University of Human Unity is being conceived of as an innovative alternative genre of university, expressive of the explorations of a new consciousness in the emerging universe-city that is Auroville, the city of universal values and knowledge, free from many of the conventional restraints that characterize higher educational institutions in the world today. At present there are a number of centers in Auroville which are looking for a wider cooperation among themselves and the world, in the field of research and integral studies. It is the purpose of this document to declare the intention of these units, institutes, and individuals and all those who wish to work together towards an elaboration of the vision of a University of Human Unity, and to openly invite all units and individuals in Auroville who are actively engaged in research and higher learning, as well as kindred organizations around the world, to join together in this adventure.

The University of Human Unity will be a platform for exploration and discovery in all areas of human knowledge and activity where students themselves may conceive and pursue programs of study in a supportive and contemplative atmosphere, with the participation and cooperation of other students and facilitators in their respective fields of interest. We are looking for new approaches to knowledge and new ways of being, self-educational methods and learning modalities which may lead us to a new perception and expression, a deeper understanding, and a truer force of consciousness that is trying to manifest in Auroville and in the world.

A greater whole-being, whole-knowledge, whole-power is needed to weld all into a greater unity of whole-life . . . A life of unity, mutuality and harmony born of a deeper and wider truth of our being is the only truth of life that can successfully replace the imperfect mental constructions of the past (Sri Aurobindo).



Chronicles

A journey of the relics

by Dakshina Vanzetti

Aum Jaya Ma Jaya Sri Aravinda

In February 2008, I had come on my regular and very precious visit to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram that I inwardly look forward to every year or two. This time, being 2008, there was the triple event of Mother's Birthday Darshan on the 21st, Auroville's 40th birthday on the 28th, and the Golden Day on February 29th, which filled the atmosphere with great Force and Delight. To this however was added a fourth great blessing and manifestation of the Grace which would impact the fate of the Sri Aurobindo Sadhana Peetham on the other side of the world in Lodi, California, USA, and myself personally as the designated representative: The divine relics of Sri Aurobindo would be given to Lodi Ashram on April 3rd at 5:30 p.m.

As the auspicious day approached I felt more and more the familiar sweet sadness of the impending leave-taking of Pondicherry and simultaneously an increasing shower of blessings which started to come from all sides—hundreds of blessing packets, cards and bookmarks in Mother's handwriting, books donated by senior ashramites, flower gifts potent with just the exact spiritual significance needed at the moment, and a myriad good wishes offered from friends and well-wishers. And even a special blessing from the majestic Service Tree in beautiful full bloom in the Samadhi courtyard was received in the form of a gentle caress of a falling blossom landing on my head.

A few weeks earlier Regina and I had gone to ask the managing trustee of the Ashram, Manoj Das Gupta, what would be the procedure and how should the relics be cared for in between the time we receive them and when they were to be permanently installed in the Lodi Ashram two weeks later on April 19th. Manoj-da, with a twinkle in his eye, said first of all that he did not believe in the "high priests" of the Ashram having to lay down the specific injunctions to be followed and that it would be up to the concerned center to inwardly find out what would be appropriate for their unique situation, though he did say that if possible for someone to always be present with the relics during the interim period of their arrival and the installation, that would be best. We were directed to go to Kumudben in Sri Aurobindo's room to give the list of persons who would be present at the time when the relics would be received; at that time she strongly advised that we should not let anyone crowd in to touch the relics on their journey down from Sri Aurobindo's room through the Samadhi courtyard to the car.

The bright morning of April 3rd finally dawned and the day started with a quiet meditation at the Samadhi and was soon filled with small last minute meetings and packing arrangements for the 3 of us that would accompany the relics to the U.S.: Regina who is the Ashramite in charge of Mother's House and our long-time sister of the Lodi Ashram, Sujata Mohanty who is looking after the Icchapur Integral School project in Orissa, and myself. Chandresh Patel would accompany us on the Sumo taxi ride and also Satish, a devotee and guest staying at Mother's House and traveling to the airport for an independent flight.

We arrived at the Ashram about a half hour early and meditated for some while at the Samadhi and finally in the meditation hall which was to be the meeting place for all the people scheduled to come to Sri Aurobindo's room at the appointed hour: Manoj-da, Richard, Kailasben, Alok-bhai, Regina, Prasant, Linda (Rajeshwari), Chandresh, Prabuddh, Sujatadi, Marie Luise, John Robert, Larry, two last minute additions: Vinod and Julia, as well as Albert-da who came in the stead of Manoj Das Gupta, and finally Dr. Dilip-da. We were called up the stairs to sit for a concentration before the chiming of the clock announced the "Hour of God" and we were led single file into Sri Aurobindo's room. On a small table in the center of the master's chamber lay the relics in a small Rosewood outer box (about a 9 cm. cube) inlaid with Sri Aurobindo's symbol; the box was in a small alabaster dish resting upon an assortment of beautiful candles, (Kumudben explained after the meditation that, as the flowers would not be allowed into the U.S. per customs restrictions, she had instead chosen candles which could be lit at the time of the installation) all arranged on a stainless steel tray lined with brilliant gold/orange velvet, along with a single brilliant red-orange flower of Divine Love. As the designated representative for the Lodi Ashram, I sat before the relics tray and we all, some sitting, some standing as space permitted, joined the concentrated meditation. What others felt I cannot say, but for me it was a moment of rededication and prayer to be open to receive this tremendous Grace being bestowed upon Sri Aurobindo Sadhana Peetham and to be responsive to its Action. At the end of the meditation, Kumudben placed a white rose of "Integral Love for the Divine" upon the tray with a special blessing packet which she said was for me, and indicated a tray of roses for each of the others to take on their way out.

Then the procession began, like a golden radiant stream wending its way from Sri Aurobindo's chamber, pausing for a moment at specially charged designations as if it were a kind of darshan for the relics. First, just outside Sri Aurobindo's room we stopped a moment before the large photo of Mother and Sri Aurobindo on the divan in the small darshan alcove, then before descending the stairs, a pause before Mother's chair and footstool. It was as though in a divine leave-taking, at each special spot, a divine interchange of spiritual forces was taking place between the relics and these places of a particularly charged Presence of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Having earlier been apprehensive of just where I was to go, it was a relief to find that each step of



Dakshina emerges from Sri Aurobindo's upstairs room with his sacred relics. (Photo courtesy Sri Aurobindo Ashram)

the journey from Sri Aurobindo's room was led by Raj Kumar who ushered the way forward. Next we stopped before Mother's couch in the meditation hall and then before the painting at the opposite end. Heading out into the courtyard there was a line of devotees waiting to get a glimpse of the sacred relics on their journey. Despite the repeated admonishment by Raj Kumarji not to touch the relics, many hands kept reaching out in waves as people could not help themselves it seems from the inner prompting to receive Sri Aurobindo's blessing. I kept shifting the tray out of reach, murmuring "please do not touch, please do not touch" like a mantra. Onwards we circled around the Samadhi to stop beneath the Service Tree where it was indicated to place the tray with the relics on the Samadhi. For a luminous, charged moment's meditation I sat and was grateful for this opportunity to pranam before the relics and the Samadhi, then resumed the journey round the Samadhi passing by the joy-filled faces of the silent throng, so many friends and well-wishers among them. At regular intervals it would be indicated to stop for the photographer who was recording this occasion for the Ashram record. Until this point my being felt charged with the serious import and magnitude of this moment and my face must have been reflecting this, but as I passed by the beaming face of Shipra-di, I felt myself break into a joyful smile of pure gratitude. Onward to the reception sitting room we passed, stopping before the photo of Sri Aurobindo on the back wall and then turning to face on the opposite the Mother's beautiful photo radiant with compassionate grace for a final moment before exiting out the Ashram main gate. The waiting vehicle was parked just before the gate and many people crowded around and spilled out from the courtyard as we boarded inside. As we waited for all of us travelers to make their way through to be seated, we were surrounded by such a loving send-off of a myriad of hands lifted in namaskar, knowing smiles, shining eyes and jubilant waves. The car took one final circle round the Ashram leaving behind the beaming crowd and started for the airport.

The atmosphere in the car plunged into silence and for some time we sat immersed in that tremendous Grace of the moment. To me it felt like a kind of wonderful dream, surely a dream of the Divine. As we traveled onwards we chanted "Om Namo Bhagavate", sang a few remembered bhajans to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, recited lines from *Savitri*, from Sri Aurobindo's poems, from texts learned by heart like passages from Sri Aurobindo's small book, *The Mother*. We took turns with the special privilege of carrying the relics tray, and in this way the time passed and we came to the airport. There we parted ways with Chandresh who was to be dropped for the night in Chennai and would fly out to the U.S. only the next day. And soon after in the airport Satish went on his way towards his separate flight.

We three remaining attendants were several hours early and took turns holding the relics while the other two went to eat and freshen up. It was decided that the large tray would be unwieldy during the travel and so the tray and the candles were stowed in the suitcases and the small rosewood box and their sacred contents were settled on the small alabaster plate and wrapped in the orange velvet cloth to be hand-carried through the next part of the journey.

The relics are housed in a series of boxes: gold, silver, sandalwood, teak, and rosewood—which signify the various planes of consciousness from the innermost supramental, to the outermost physical. At their final destination, they would be encased in a white marble shrine reminiscent of the Samadhi, fixed atop with a golden combined symbol of Mother and Sri Aurobindo carved into a piece of white marble gifted from the Matrimandir. The boxes are sealed and should not be opened, and this was the concern that we travelers shared as we would need to face the various baggage inspection points. Fortunately, Manoj Das Gupta had given us a letter explaining the sacred contents of the precious bundle that we carried.

Our first test came at the Chennai airport gate upstairs where one passes into the secure boarding area. With Mother's name on our silent lips we placed the relics, still wrapped in its orange velvet cover, on the belt to be scanned and the security guard asked to know what was inside. We explained, handing him the letter from the Ashram, and breathed a sigh of relief and gratitude as he waived us through.

The first flight was from Chennai to France and having passed this first hurdle and then a delay in the flight's departure, we settled into our seats and took turns holding the relics every hour or two through the long, 13 hour flight. Regina recognized an Italian devotee on the plane and he was delighted to know that he was sharing a flight with Sri Aurobindo's relics and came by to have the Darshan.

Finally we landed in Paris, but the flight was over an hour late and we had very little time to make our connection. Different personnel gave different instructions on where and how we should proceed to the next gate. Sujata-di carried the Relics, Regina and I shouldered the hand-luggage, and we wound-up following the signs to our distant gate for the connecting flight. We



raced along, up several ramps, through long, endless corridors, saris flying, to the distant gate knowing not whether we'd already missed our flight.

Finally, catching our breath, we arrived and came to the next hurdle and baggage screening point. All the hand luggage had to be scanned including the relics. The inspector asked us what was in the orange bundle and we handed him the explanatory letter from the Ashram, while Regina explained that we were coming from the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry. Despite the letter, he said we would have to take the Relics over to the examination desk for inspection, so I took the relics from Sujata-di and waited at the desk as this new examiner was still busy with another couple of passengers. At this point the three of us were all calling inwardly to the Mother. Then suddenly as if he got a second thought or prompted by an unseen Force, the first inspector asked Regina some specific questions about Pondicherry and as she was able to answer them correctly, he broke out into a smile, mentioning that he himself was from PONDY and gave the signal to the other inspector to let us pass through, and we rushed onwards to board the plane for a second long flight. Fortunately the flight was over an hour delayed so we had not missed it.

On the flight we took turns as before to carry the relics an hour or two at a time, each of us in an indrawn state repeating Mother's name as we held the precious bundle, taking care it should remain upright. I felt such a tenderness, almost as though it was a baby Sri Aurobindo we were caring for.

April 4th had dawned somewhere over the Atlantic. It was on this day in 1910 that Sri Aurobindo arrived in Pondicherry. Now nearly 100 years later he would be arriving in the Lodi Ashram. Descending into San Francisco airport with its notorious U.S. security scrutiny, we had decided to keep the relics in Regina's bag in order to avoid drawing unnecessary attention through the immigration process. In this way we passed through, picked up our luggage and without any further inspections came out into the arrival lobby.

Here, in sharp contrast to the jubilant throngs of our Pondicherry send-off, our arrival was met by the silent welcome of one lone ashramite, Angelo. Sujata-di's daughter had also come to meet the relics but somehow we could not find her and had to leave without seeing her. After the stories of the reception of the relics in Orissa and other places in India where they are received with an official State welcome by the governor and thousands of people lining the streets to catch a glimpse and receive the darsan of Sri Aurobindo, the contrast of this silent, unwitnessed, almost secret, arrival here in the U.S. was deeply striking. To me it was symbolic—the luminous drop of Divine Consciousness, like a meteor flying over from another realm, landing in this dense and unconscious ocean of materialism. Here it will do its secret work, silently, continuously, radiating the supramental consciousness into the atmosphere, into the lives of those who are open to the Divine Influence, into this far off corner of the world that is yet so ignorant of its Divine origin and purpose; radiating here too where it is so very needed, “Truth and Light and Life Divine.”

On the significance of the relics

by Alok Pandey

A talk given on the occasion of the installation of Sri Aurobindo's relics at Sri Aurobindo Sadhana Peetham in Lodi, CA, on 19 April 2008

In one of the power-packed verses of the Katha Upanishad, when Nachiketas, the young aspirant, asks Yama, the Lord of Death, “O Yama, Lord of the triple worlds, would you tell me something about the great Being, of whom you have been speaking, of whom you have been hinting?” And Yama has this to say, “O, young and eager aspirant, you ask me of Him, in front of whom the sun has no lustre, the moon and the stars shine there not, nor our electrical hordes, He of whom sages and heroes are the food, and I, Death, myself am a spice in his banquet.”

I find myself in a similar situation to speak of Sri Aurobindo today. One is so overwhelmed with all the love and the joy and the peace . . . and words fall flat. Even silence appears something less, because we stand in the mighty presence of a Truth too vast for the human mind to comprehend, a love which our human heart cannot behold, our speech cannot utter. In one of her very significant messages, Mother says, “Who can understand Sri Aurobindo? He is as vast as the universe, and his teaching is infinite. The only way to come a little close to him is to love him, and to give oneself unreservedly to his work.” It is the only way to come a little close, the only way to know a little of him, by a kind of identity, of a little portion of his being—to love him; he is as vast as the universe.

These are no mere words and sentiments and phrases. These are facts of his everyday inner life. Is it not he who wrote:

I have wrapped the wide world in my wider Self
And time and space my spirit's seeing are . . .
All Nature is the nursling of my care,
I am its struggle and the eternal rest. (Cosmic Consciousness, *Collected Poems*, p. 134)

And he goes on to describe a similar experience of this kind in another poem. The best way to read his autobiography is through his poems and through *Savitri*. In another poem, he speaks about,

The burning galaxies are in me outlined;
The universe is my stupendous whole.
My life is the life of village and continent,
I am earth's agony and her throbs of bliss;
I share all creatures' sorrow and content
And feel the passage of every stab and kiss. (The Cosmic Spirit, *Collected Poems*, p. 151)



A close-up view the Sri Aurobindo Relics Shrine in Lodi, California. (Photo courtesy Sri Aurobindo Sadhana Peetham)

Who could write about or speak about one who could see the Divine—as we saw in the beautiful film today—in the bars of his jail cell, in the judge, in the advocate, in the blanket, in the bowl in which he ate his food and also used for everything else. Someone who in the depths of darkness could tear all these veils and reveal within its heart the divine Presence. Did he not express this so powerfully and beautifully:

It is He in the sun who is ageless and deathless,
And into the midnight His shadow is thrown;
When darkness was blind and engulfed within darkness,
He was seated within it immense and alone. (Who, *Collected Poems*, p. 41)

The mystery of Sri Aurobindo's birth is the mystery of God's birth in time. As he said in *Savitri*:

His was a spirit that stooped from larger spheres
Into our province of ephemeral sight,
A colonist from immortality.
A pointing beam on earth's uncertain roads,
His birth held up a symbol and a sign;
His human self like a translucent cloak
Covered the All-Wise who leads the unseeing world.
(*Savitri*, p. 22)

It's a symbol of the divine Presence in matter. It's a sign that this divine Presence will one day reveal itself despite all the blindness, all the obscurity, all the resistance, all the ill will, and all that stands up against the divine Presence on this earth. This is the sign of his Presence.

Why should the Divine be born on earth? What is the moment of his birth? If we cast a look back just a hundred years, we

shall see something very interesting. Physical science, material science had proved that there is no God, or if there is one, he is nothing but a few molecules of hydrogen atoms. Biology had proved to us convincingly—it is still taught perhaps in some of the schools, as a relic of the past—that man is a social animal. And psychology—with an apology to psychologists—had proved that God is nothing, what man calls his God is nothing but a mask over his animality. It is nothing but a sublimation of all that is base and low. God is nothing but an animal wearing a beautiful mask in man. This is a hundred years back.

And we turn full circle, and now material science speaks of a theory of everything, it speaks of God in the electron. And biological science begins to see in man more than just a social animal. And psychology is beginning to tell us that man is not just a masked animal, not just a chained animal, but also a maimed and frustrate god. There is a god inside imprisoned in the human heart. This is what psychologists are beginning to tell us.

How did the tide of time get turned in this dark period of the previous century? That is due to the All-wise Guide who leads this unseeing world. But it is not just mere guidance, nor merely to change the tide of time. All that can be done by God, by the divine Presence, through his instruments. There are many Vibhritis, there are many saints and sages, there are yogis who could do that for man. Why should God descend in matter himself, into its obscurity? Why should he choose to limit himself, he the Illimitable? Why should he choose to wear finite shape and form like us, he the Infinite? We have those beautiful lines explaining what he doing in this matter's night:

He who would bring the heavens here
Must descend himself into clay
And the burden of earthly nature bear
And tread the dolorous way.

Coercing my godhead I have come down
Here on the sordid earth,
Ignorant, labouring, human grown
Twixt the gates of death and birth.

I have been digging deep and long
Mid a horror of filth and mire
A bed for the golden river's song,
A home for the deathless fire.

I have laboured and suffered in Matter's night
To bring the fire to man; (A God's Labour, *Collected Poems*, p. 99)

And what does man return?

But the hate of hell and the human spite
Are my meed since the earth began. (*Collected Poems*, p. 99)



This is an old story being repeated, but in another way, from another vantage point, to take it one step further. Sri Aurobindo belongs to the line of those great descents who, in India, we term as the Avatar. And there is a three-fold work that he comes to do, which we find expressed very beautifully in Sri Aurobindo's work. One, he rescues all the truth of the past. This is referred to as rescuing the Vedas. He rescues all the essence, all the truth of what has been done in the past, all that is of value yet to man, all that may yet liberate mankind, all that can still lead us towards the glories of the future. He rescues that.

Second, he shows us the way of the present. How to look upon the present crisis and chaos, how to find a way out of it. How to deal with our everyday life, our relationships, our education, our children, science, art, all that at the present moment is so very valuable to man. How to use it as a material for something more beautiful yet to come.

But most of all, he comes to open a way to the future. This is the three-fold work of the Avatar: to rescue the best of the past, to give us a law, a dharma, a way of being for the present, and above all, to open a door through matter into the future. It is this three-fold work in which we find Sri Aurobindo engaged. But the one in which he was most preoccupied, and for the greatest part of his life, was this part:

I have labored and suffered in Matter's night
To bring the fire to man . . . (A God's Labour, *Collected Poems*, p. 99)

Time and again, Mother would see the supramental light descending into his body. We have these experiences documented in the beautiful poem, *The Golden Light*. In another place, Sri Aurobindo would tell us, referring to the yoga of Ashwapati, how the body's cells would begin to open to that greater light.

Each nerve became a burning thread of joy:
Tissue and flesh partook beatitude. (*Savitri*, p. 334)

This was the everyday life of Sri Aurobindo. When Sri Aurobindo left his body, a well-known disciple, with a penchant for truth perhaps, and as is the custom, wanted to give a message. As we all know, for 111 hours, Sri Aurobindo's body was kept in state, thousands of people passed by, and the body was aglow with the supramental light. A golden light enveloped him, and it remained without decay for almost 100 hours. And even after that, the odor of death was not there at all. But the first signs had begun to appear, the light had begun to withdraw. And the disciple wrote: "The mortal remains of Sri Aurobindo will be interred into the Samadhi." As was the training, as is the way of sadhana, he took the note to the Mother to see if there was anything that she would like to correct. The Mother took her pen and struck off the words "mortal remains," and added in the margins, "There is nothing mortal about Sri Aurobindo. Each cell of his body is lit with the immortal fire."



Alok Pandey presenting his talk following the relics installation.
(Photo courtesy Sri Aurobindo Sadhana Peetham)

It's very interesting. We see it when we go to Pondicherry. The significance of matter: Matter does not lie. It is said in the Vedas that there are two poles at which one finds the total truth. One in the superconscious base where the truth is self-manifest. The other at the other pole in matter, where the truth is concealed. In all the mid-worlds, there is half truth, half falsehood. But, the body's sense and the soul do not lie. One goes near the Samadhi, and one is hit, hit by something more concrete than matter, more powerful than the greatest power.

Sri Aurobindo, in one of his evening talks, when he talks of the supermind, he says that it has a density stronger than the diamond, and yet it is absolutely plastic. What human mind can understand this? Something that is so strong, something that is so plastic, something that is aware of itself? All these are words and phrases. But we can approach him with love. This is how his very body was surcharged with this light, with this truth, with this force, which continues to radiate from the Samadhi, and from places where his relics have gone.

It is from this capacity of matter to hold the vibrations imprinted upon it that there arose the institution of relics. It was based upon sound occult principles which were later forgotten and the thing turned into a belief and a ritual. The institution of relics is not new. It is there in the tradition. There are two sides to it. Of course the modern mind is very skeptical of all these institutions, of all these forms, ceremonies, and rituals. And quite naturally, because we are breaking free from a past whose words have become encrusted into dead formulas, where ritual has taken the place of the spiritual, and forms have occupied prominence over the spirit. The human mind *must* break free from all that. Yet, even when we break free, we must preserve the spirit and the essence, as Sri Aurobindo would tell us. Behind the tradition of the relics is the occult truth that matter does not lie.

In one of his writings, Sri Aurobindo tells us that if a yogi picks up a sword, just by feeling it, he can say what it was used



for, even hundreds of years back! It carries the imprint, right into the very physical. And this is an ordinary sword used by ordinary mortals. There is nothing special about it. And a yogi could discern, just by touching it. The Mother could feel an object and say where it came from. Someone gave her a bead, and asked, Mother, could you tell us something about it? She said, this does not belong to the world of matter, this is a dematerialized object. Touching the bead in her hand, she could say where it has come from. So it is a limit of our sight, a limit of our mind, but the limit of our sight is not the limit of light and truth.

So there is an occult truth behind the tradition of relics, but there is a still deeper truth, a subtler truth. We see it expressed very beautifully in the ancient story of Sati. The legend goes that she was the consort of the great god Siva. Now it so happens that a great *yajna* is to be performed and Sati is called by her father, who happens to be one of the formateurs, Daksha Prajapati, one of those beings who presides over the formation of a particular age and runs the cycles. And he calls his daughter, Sati, but denies passport and visa to Siva. So Sati goes there, and Siva says, "Look, we are one being. This is not correct. If you are given entry, then Siva also must accompany." They are symbol of Nature and her Lord. So Nature without the Lord is allowed entry into Daksha's kingdom. But Sati goes nevertheless, and tries to convince him, "Look, you must call Siva." And an argument ensues. And Sati jumps into the fire and sacrifices her body. Sure enough, by that great sacrifice, Siva the Eternal forces his entry. He gate-crashes through the worlds. There is a thunder and a roar. And he picks up Sati's body, and moves around the world carrying in himself the agony and the sorrow of the world, the world that denies the Divine, the world that has rejected the Eternal. And as he goes, and as his agony fills the earth, Vishnu the great Preserver sees the creation would come to a halt if this continues. So as the legend goes, part by part, he dismembers Sati's body, and it falls at



Presenting flower offerings for the relics shrine. (Photo courtesy Sri Aurobindo Sadhana Peetham)

different places. Now as it happens, these places become the power-spots, the *Shakti-sthala*, the seats of Shakti. Why are they called the seats of Shakti? Because these spots where Sati's body fell have become seats, where within earth, the agony of Sati, the sacrifice of Sati, the aspiration of Sati to bring the Eternal, is embedded. And to go to these places is to receive a touch of that agony, a touch of that aspiration, a touch of that light, of that call to the Eternal. That is why they are called seats of Shakti.

These relics too are not just some parts of Sri Aurobindo's body. They are surely not meant just to perpetuate a tradition, to keep alive through a tradition some form of the past, or some remembrance of Sri Aurobindo. The Mother who broke free from all traditions, who gave this beautiful prayer to the children of the school—"Make of us the hero-warriors we aspire to become; May we fight successfully the great battle of the future that seeks to be born against the past that seeks to endure. May we be ready for the new things that are waiting to manifest"—She would not send the relics just to perpetuate an old tradition. She started the institution of relics, if we may use the word institution. Not only did She send the relics, she took great, great care. It was as if Sri Aurobindo himself was going.

So She did not start the journey of the relics just to keep alive a tradition. In fact, there were places where relics were sent for which she would say that Sri Aurobindo must receive a State honor. And even now in Orissa and in some places in India, when relics come, there is a State honor which is given. I've been involved on a few occasions when the relics were coming from Pondicherry, and I can recount one of them, when the relics were being taken to Khandwa, to an obscure village in Madhya Pradesh. I was there with just four other members, in the air conditioned compartment in the train. None of us could afford a plane ticket, and we were carrying the relics. We had to stop at a place called Itarsi and from there they were to be carried to this other place on a jeep. Now we were very beautifully seated inside and in a nice atmosphere, just the five of us. There were some people



Placing the relics in the sand-filled marble shrine. (Photo courtesy Sri Aurobindo Sadhana Peetham)



around who naturally out of curiosity were looking on and would go away, and some would ask “what is it?” The train stopped, and I was carrying the relics. And before I could step out there was a commotion. So I stepped back. I didn’t know if there was a riot going on. I didn’t know whether I should step out with the relics or not. And there were people with garlands and everything. The local administrative head had come. He had come to know about the relics. There was a proper reception with the State administration coming to receive because Sri Aurobindo is coming. And tears came out of our eyes. They are not relics. We knew it, but we realized then what it means.

It is not just portions of his body, it is a portion of the Divine embodiment. It is the physical atmosphere of Sri Aurobindo coming to us. To those of us who have been privileged to feel that physical atmosphere in the vicinity of the Ashram, and how it envelopes all creatures there. It is his physical atmosphere, something of himself which comes here. That is the spirit that we must receive it with, as Dakshina said, with joy and gratitude. With all the humility that we can command, with all the sincerity at our disposal, with all the gratitude that we can summon. It is Sri Aurobindo who comes to us. And it is Sri Aurobindo who has now chosen to reside in this, again, if I may say, small and obscure place of Lodi. He has a penchant for working in the small and obscure. And every night when you go to sleep in Lodi or San Francisco, or in any of the nearby places, remember that Sri Aurobindo is there just about 100 miles away, physically present. Even when we go to back to our places in New York and other places from where people have come, we can remember that he has come to this country to stay with us, to stay in our midst. What does it mean to us?

How would we respond if Sri Aurobindo comes? Would we plan? Think? Calculate? Conceive? Philosophize? Read *The Life Divine*? Brush up our shoes? Wear the best dress? Or just rush like the *Gopis* of old? Krishna calls, and all that they know is the flute. They don’t know what they’re wearing. They don’t know what hour it is. They don’t know whether it is good or bad. They don’t know what society will say: “Oh, another sect is forming, another religion or cult.” All these words fall flat when the heart senses, and the soul sees and the body feels and knows. It is a grace to come in touch and contact with the embodied Divine.

And who knows, when time will look back through the lens of history, maybe years later, maybe decades later, maybe centuries later, when people would have eyes to see, and a heart to feel, they



Devotees receive the blessings of Sri Aurobindo's physical Presence. (Photo courtesy Sri Aurobindo Sadhana Peetham)

would look back and say, the great revolutions that began in this country and spread to the earth, momentous events that happened, they started with this small little seed and a sapling that was sown by some ‘nobodies’ in a little place called Lodi. Who knows? History is not written by historians. Historians only see it through a lens. It is so strange that everything is washed away. And yet, truth remains.

We just read beautiful lines of *Savitri*. It’s amazing, we don’t know which year *Savitri* was born. Many centuries, millenniums perhaps, a million years will have come and gone,

and *Savitri* will still be alive. That is the kind of tapasya that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have done for earth. And what we receive today is a little *prasad* of his *tapasya*. Are we ready to greet him with open arms? To welcome him? And how do we meet him? We have just read what Mother has said, the only way is to love him, and to give ourselves unreservedly to his love. In this gesture of self-giving, to just melt into his arms. That is how we can greet him, that is how we can welcome him.

That agony of the earth, that aspiration of the earth, which Sri Aurobindo embodied, and the response of the Supreme, the Grace of the Supreme, the Light and Truth of the supramental consciousness, which also Sri Aurobindo embodied, that would be communicated, as a contagion, into the very physical stuff of our beings, in the language that we alone understand: the language of matter. And through contagion, it would spread to this city, and through a deeper contagion, to this country, and through each other to the entire earth.

Let me pause. It is an overwhelming day. Let me pause with these lines from *Savitri*, which invite us to this great adventure.

O Force-compelled, Fate-driven earth-born race,
O petty adventurers in an infinite world
And prisoners of a dwarf humanity,
How long will you tread the circling tracks of mind
Around your little self and petty things?
But not for a changeless littleness were you meant,
Not for vain repetition were you built;
Out of the Immortal’s substance you were made;
Your actions can be swift revealing steps,
Your life a changeful mould for growing gods.
A Seer, a strong Creator, is within,
The immaculate Grandeur broods upon your days,
Almighty powers are shut in Nature’s cells. (p. 370)



Essay

Auroville and education

Compiled by Kailas Jhaveri

Reprinted from *Mother India*, July 1970

*This essay describes the central aims of Auroville—and the role of an Auroville university in them. It was written in the context of UNESCO’s sponsorship of Auroville, which Kailas facilitated. Its entire contents were read out to the Mother and approved by her. It consists of material compiled from Sri Aurobindo’s books *The Life Divine*, *The Human Cycle*, *The Ideal of Human Unity*, *War and Self-Determination* and *The Foundations of Indian Culture*, as well as excerpts from the Mother’s writings, including messages to the students and the teachers of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, and other works apropos of education and Auroville, such as the *Auroville Charter*. The various excerpts from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother either stand in a body on their own or are interwoven, and some introductory or connective sentences have been added here and there by the compiler to make the whole a running text appropriate to the theme. As in the original article, quotation marks and references have been omitted. Spelling has been changed to American English.*

Compiler’s Introduction

Basically, we may say, “Auroville is Education;” for the educational future of the world is bound up with this growing City of Dawn where a new consciousness is to be variously educed. But, for convenience’s sake, we have three sections in the material compiled here. A paper on Auroville and its *raison d’etre* precedes that on Auroville University, and one on education and research in Auroville succeeds it.



Kailas in 1970. (Photo courtesy Kailas Jhaveri)

The first paper shows how Auroville with its ideology and the background of cultural pavilions of all nations of the world offers the right and unique conditions for a free search after the Truth and hence serves as a necessary basis for the fulfilment of the aims and objectives of the kind of university envisaged in the second paper.

This paper on Auroville University indicates its lines of researches, the vision behind them and the program; its ideals and aspirations; its aims and objectives; its own unique contribution and its necessity for humanity. It is an attempt to sketch in brief the crisis of our age, the basic issue, the proposed solutions, the reason of their failures to end war and revolutions and to bring about peace, order and unity by systems of international law and control of armaments, education, ideal of brotherhood, religion, etc.; the true solution of all problems and the unique role of Auroville University, which to state very briefly—adapting some words of Sri Aurobindo’s and the Mother’s—is as follows:

A perfected world cannot be created or composed by men who are themselves imperfect. The conditions under which men live are the results of their state of consciousness. (“Wars are made in the

minds of men and it is therefore in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed.” We go a step further and call for a change of consciousness which alone, we believe, can transform not only the mind, but all the other members of one’s being, including the body itself.) To seek to change conditions without changing the consciousness is a vain chimera. For man is not a machine and cannot be changed by any machinery of laws, social, political, economic, religious, or moral. However, a change of consciousness can only be brought about by a conscious evolutionary process and an attempt at self-finding, self-perfection and self-transformation.

To be or to transcend and become something or to bring something high and noble into our being is the whole labour of the Force of Nature. Knowledge, thought, action, whether social, political, religious, ethical, economic or utilitarian cannot be the essence or object of life. They are activities of the powers of being or the powers of becoming, the dynamis of the Spirit and its means of discovering what it seeks to be. To be and to be fully is Nature’s intention and the necessity in Man. To become complete in being, in consciousness of being, in force of being, in delight being and to live in its integrated completeness is the perfect living. To be fully is to be universally, to be one with all . . .

All this implies that the function of the university in Auroville will not stop with providing conditions and facilities for the development of all the powers of one’s being through the study of arts, humanities and sciences and their researches, which are a necessary part of the disciplines of university education. Through them all and above all, the true function of this university will be to bring forth from the inner potentialities of its students a new creation, the creation of a divine race.

The distinguishing feature of Auroville University will therefore be not only the researches into all that was and even all that exists and their synthesis—synthesis of all knowledge; synthesis of all aspects of the Truth; synthesis of all ideologies; synthesis of all realizations of the



Past, Present and Future; synthesis of all cultures; synthesis of all nations, paving a way for the realization of human unity in diversity, peace, development and progress in all parts of the world; a bridge between Matter and Spirit or Science and Spirituality; a bridge between man's external realizations and his highest aspirations, etc. The unique contribution of Auroville University will be a new creation with a new culture that will be integral and universal, thus changing the whole life of the earth-consciousness and bringing about a new world order.

The aim of Auroville University will be always to move forward ceaselessly towards greater and greater perfection by an endless education, constant progress and a youth that never ages.

We are confident that Auroville will provide the right and necessary conditions to make a full and free enquiry into the glorious future of the human race by a rich and vast synthesis of all our gains on the material and spiritual planes which will fulfill the highest and most noble aspirations of humanity everywhere.

I. Auroville: Its raison d'être

At present mankind is undergoing an evolutionary crisis in which is concealed a choice of its destiny; for a stage has been reached in which the human mind has achieved in certain directions an enormous development while in others it stands arrested and bewildered and can no longer find its way. A structure of the external life has been raised up by man's ever-active mind and life-will, a structure of an unmanageable hugeness and complexity, for the service of his mental, vital, physical claims and urges, a complex political, social, administrative, economic, cultural machinery, an organized collective means for his intellectual, sensational, aesthetic and material satisfaction. Man has created a system of civilization which has become too big for his limited mental capacity and understanding and his still more limited spiritual and moral capacity to utilize and manage, a too dangerous servant of his blundering ego and its appetites. For no

greater seeing mind, no intuitive soul of knowledge has yet come to his surface of consciousness which could make this basic fullness of life a condition for the free growth of something that exceeded it. This new fullness of the means of life might be, by its power for a release from the incessant unsatisfied stress of his economic and physical needs, an opportunity for the full pursuit of other and greater aims surpassing the material existence, for the discovery of a higher truth and good and beauty, for the discovery of a greater and diviner spirit which would intervene and use life for a higher perfection of the being, but it is being used instead for the multiplication of new wants and an aggressive expansion of the collective ego.

Science has put at his disposal many potencies of the universal Force and has made the life of humanity materially one; but what uses this universal Force is a little human individual or communal ego with nothing universal in its light of knowledge or its movements, no inner sense or power which would create in this physical drawing together of the human world a true life unity, a mental unity or a spiritual oneness. All that is there is a chaos of clashing mental ideas, urges of individual and collective physical want and need, vital claims and desires, impulses of an ignorant life-push, hungers and calls for life satisfaction of individuals, classes, nations, a rich fungus of political and social and economic nostrums and notions, a hustling medley of slogans and panaceas for which men are ready to oppress and be oppressed, to kill and be killed, to impose them somehow or other by the immense and too formidable means placed at his disposal, in the belief that this is his way out to something ideal. The evolution of human mind and life must necessarily lead towards an increasing universality; but on a basis of ego and segmenting and dividing mind this opening to the universal can only create a vast pullulation of unaccorded ideas and impulses, a surge of enormous powers and desires, a chaotic mass of unassimilated and intermixed mental, vital and physical material of a larger existence which, because it is not taken up by a creative

harmonizing light of the spirit, must welter in a universalised confusion and discord out of which it is impossible to build a greater harmonic life. Man has harmonized life in the past by organized ideation and limitation; he has created societies based on fixed ideas or fixed customs, a fixed cultural system or an organic life-system, each with its own order; the throwing of all these into the melting-pot of a more and more intermingling life and a pouring in of ever new ideas and motives and facts and possibilities call for a new, a greater consciousness to meet and master the increasing potentialities of existence and harmonize them.

Reason and Science can only help by standardizing, by fixing everything into an artificially arranged and mechanized unity of material life. A greater whole-being, whole-knowledge, whole-power is needed to weld all into a greater unity of whole-life. A life of unity, mutuality and harmony born of a deeper and wider truth of our being is the only truth of life that can successfully replace the imperfect mental constructions of the past which were a combination of association and regulated conflict, an accommodation of egos and interests grouped or dovetailed into each other to form a society, a consolidation by common general life-motives, a unification by need and the pressure of struggle with outside forces. It is such a change and such a reshaping of life for which humanity is blindly beginning to seek, now more and more with a sense that its very existence depends upon finding the way. The evolution of mind working upon life has developed an organization of the activity of mind and use of Matter which can no longer be supported by human capacity without an inner change. An accommodation of the egocentric human individuality separative even in association, to a system of living which demands unity, perfect mutuality, harmony, is imperative. But because the burden which is being laid on mankind is too great for the present littleness of the human personality and its petty mind and small life-instincts, because it cannot operate the needed change, because it is using this new apparatus and organization to



serve the old infraspirtual and infrarational life-self of humanity, the destiny of the race seems to be heading dangerously, as if impatiently and in spite of itself, under the drive of the vital ego seized by colossal forces which are on the same scale as the huge mechanical organization of life and scientific knowledge which it has evolved, a scale too large for its reason and will to handle, into a prolonged confusion and perilous crisis and darkness of violent shifting incertitude. Even if this turns out to be a passing phase or appearance and a tolerable structural accommodation is found which will enable mankind to proceed less catastrophically on its uncertain journey, this can only be a respite. For the problem is fundamental and in putting it evolutionary Nature in man is confronting herself with a critical choice which must one day be solved in the true sense if the race is to arrive or even to survive. The evolutionary nisus is pushing towards a devel-

opment of the cosmic Force in terrestrial life which needs a larger mental and vital being to support it, a wider mind, a greater wider more conscious unanimitised Life-Soul, Anima, and that again needs an unveiling of the supporting Soul and spiritual Self within to maintain it.

A rational and scientific formula of the vitalistic and materialistic human being and his life, a search for a perfected economic society and the democratic cultus of the average man are all that the modern mind presents us in this crisis as a light for its solution. Whatever the truth supporting these ideas, this is clearly not enough to meet the need of a humanity which is missioned to evolve beyond itself or, at any rate, if it is to live, must evolve far beyond anything that it at present is. A life-instinct in the race and in the average man himself has felt the inadequacy and has been driving towards a reversal of values or a discovery of new val-

ues and a transfer of life to a new foundation. This has taken the form of an attempt to find a simple and ready-made basis of unity, mutuality, harmony for the common life, to enforce it by a suppression of the competitive clash of egos and so to arrive at a life of identity for the community in place of a life of difference. But to realize these desirable ends the means adopted have been the forcible and successful materialization of a few restricted ideas or slogans enthroned to the exclusion of all other thought, the suppression of the mind of the individual, a mechanized compression of the elements of life, a mechanized unity and drive of the life-force, a coercion of man by the State, the substitution of the communal for the individual ego. The com-

It is only the full emergence of the soul, the full descent of the native light and power of the Spirit and the consequent replacement or transformation and uplifting of our insufficient mental and vital nature by a spiritual and supramental supernature that can effect this evolutionary miracle.

munal ego is idealized as the soul of the nation, the race, the community; but this is a colossal and may turn out to be a fatal error. A forced and imposed unanimity of mind, life, action raised to their highest tension under the drive of something which is thought to be greater, the collective soul, the collective life, is the formula found. But this obscure collective being is not the soul or self of the community; it is a life-force that rises from the subconscious and, if denied the light of guidance by the reason, can be driven only by dark massive forces which are powerful but dangerous for the race because they are alien to the conscious evolution of which man is the trustee and bearer. It is not in this direction that evolutionary Nature has pointed mankind; this is a reversion towards something that she had left behind her.

Another solution that is attempted reposes still on the materialistic reason and a unified organization of the economic life of

the race; but the method that is being employed is the same, a forced impression and imposed unanimity of mind and life and a mechanical organization of the communal existence. A unanimity of this kind can only be maintained by a compression of all freedom of thought and life, and that must bring about either the efficient stability of a termite civilization or a drying up of the springs of life and a swift or slow decadence. It is through the growth of consciousness that the collective soul and its life can become aware of itself and develop; the free play of mind and life is essential for the growth of consciousness; for mind and life are the soul's only instrumentation until a higher instrumentation develops; they must not be inhibited in their ac-

tion or rendered rigid, unplastic and unprogressive. The difficulties or disorders engendered by the growth of the individual mind and life cannot be healthily removed by the suppression of

the individual; the true cure can only be achieved by his progression to a greater consciousness in which he is fulfilled and perfected.

An alternative solution is the development of an enlightened reason and will of the normal man consenting to a new socialized life in which he will subordinate his ego for the sake of the right arrangement of the life of the community. If we inquire how this radical change is to be brought about, two agencies seem to be suggested, the agency of a greater and better mental knowledge, right ideas, right information, right training of the social and civic individual and the agency of a new social machinery which will solve everything by the magic of the social machine cutting humanity into a better pattern. But it has not been found in experience, whatever might have once been hoped, that education and intellectual training by itself can change man; it only provides the



human individual and collective ego with better information and a more efficient machinery for its self-affirmation, but leaves it the same unchanged human ego. Nor can human mind and life be cut into perfection,—even into what is thought to be perfection, a constructed substitute,—by any kind of social machinery; matter can be so cut, thought can be so cut, but in our human existence matter and thought are only instruments for the soul and the life-force. Machinery cannot form the soul and life-force into standardized shapes; it can at best coerce them, make soul and mind inert and stationary and regulate the life's outward action; but if this is to be effectively done, coercion and compression of the mind and life are indispensable and that again spells either unprogressive stability or decadence. The reasoning mind with its logical practicality has no other way of getting the better of Nature's ambiguous and complex movements than a regulation and mechanization of mind and life. If that is done, the soul of humanity will either have to recover its freedom and growth by a revolt and a destruction of the machine into whose grip it has been cast or escape by a withdrawal into itself and rejection of life. Man's true way out is to discover his soul and its self-force and instrumentation and replace by it both the mechanization of mind and the ignorance and disorder of life-nature. But there would be little room and freedom for such a movement of self-discovery and self-effectuation in a closely regulated and mechanized social existence.

There is the possibility that in the swing back from a mechanistic idea of life and society the human mind may seek refuge in a return to the religious idea and a society governed or sanctioned by religion. But organized religion, though it can provide a means of inner uplift for the individual and preserve in it or behind it a way for his opening to spiritual experience, has not changed human life and society; it could not do so because, in governing society, it had to compromise with the lower parts of life and could not insist on the inner change of the whole being; it could insist only on a credal adherence, a formal acceptance of its ethical standards and a

conformity to institution, ceremony and ritual. Religion as conceived can give a religio-ethical colour or surface tinge,—sometimes, if it maintains a strong kernel of inner experience, it can generalize to some extent an incomplete spiritual tendency, but it does not transform the race, it cannot create a new principle of the human existence. A total spiritual direction given to the whole life and the whole nature can alone lift humanity beyond itself. Another possible conception akin to the religious solution is the guidance of society by men of spiritual attainment, the brotherhood or unity of all in the faith or in the discipline, the spiritualization of life and society by the taking up of the old machinery of life into such a unification or inventing a new machinery. This too has been attempted before without success; it was the original founding idea of more than one religion: but the human ego and vital nature were too strong for a religious idea working on the mind and by the mind to overcome its resistance. It is only the full emergence of the soul, the full descent of the native light and power of the Spirit and the consequent replacement or transformation and uplifting of our insufficient mental and vital nature by a spiritual and supramental supernature that can effect this evolutionary miracle.

At first sight this insistence on a radical change of nature might seem to put off all the hope of humanity to a distant evolutionary future; for the transcendence of our normal human nature, a transcendence of our mental, vital and physical being, has the appearance of an endeavor too high and difficult and at present, for man as he is, impossible. Even if it were so, it would still remain the sole possibility for the transmutation of life; for to hope for a true change of human life without a change of human nature is an irrational and unspiritual proposition; it is to ask for something unnatural and unreal, an impossible miracle. But what is demanded by this change is not something altogether distant, alien to our existence and radically impossible; for what has to be developed is there in our being and not something outside it: what evolutionary Nature presses for, is

an awakening to the knowledge of self, the discovery of self, the manifestation of the self and spirit within us and the release of its self-knowledge, its self-power, its native, self-instrumentation. It is, besides, a step for which the whole of evolution has been a preparation and which is brought closer at each crisis of human destiny when the mental and vital evolution of the being touches a point where intellect and vital force reach some acme of tension and there is a need either for them to collapse, to sink back into a torpor of defeat or a repose of unprogressive quiescence or to rend their way through the veil against which they are straining. What is necessary is that there should be a turn in humanity felt by some or many toward the vision of this change, a feeling of its imperative need, the sense of its possibility, the will to make it possible in themselves and to find the way. That trend is not absent and it must increase with the tension of the crisis in human world-destiny; the need of an escape or a solution, the feeling that there is no other solution than the spiritual cannot but grow and become more imperative under the urgency of critical circumstance. To that call in the being there must always be some answer in the Divine Reality and in Nature.

The conditions under which men live upon earth are the result of their state of consciousness. To seek to change conditions without changing the consciousness is a vain chimera. All who have had the perception of what could be and should be done to improve the situation, in the different domains of human life, economical, political, social, financial, educational or sanitary are precisely the individuals who have developed their consciousness more or less to an exceptional degree and put themselves in contact with higher planes of consciousness. But their ideas remained on the whole theoretical; or, if an attempt was ever made to realize them practically, it always failed lamentably in the long or short run: for no human organization can change radically unless human consciousness itself changes. Prophets of a new humanity have followed one another, religions, spiritual or social, have been



created, their beginnings were at times full of promise: but, as humanity was not transformed at heart, the old errors arising from human nature itself have reappeared gradually and after a time it was found that one was left almost at the same spot from where one had started with so much hope and enthusiasm. In this effort, however, to improve human conditions there have always been two tendencies, which although apparently contrary to each other should rather be complementary and together work out the progress. One seeks a collective reorganization, something that would lead towards an effective unity of mankind: the other declares that all progress is made first by the individual and insists that it is the individual who should be given conditions in which he can progress freely. Both are equally true and necessary, and our effort should be directed along both the lines. Collective progress and individual progress are interdependent. Before the

individual can take a leap forward, it is necessary that something of an antecedent progress be achieved in the collective life. A way has therefore to be found whereby the twofold progress can go on simultaneously.

It is in answer to this pressing need that the township of Auroville is proposed as a centre of universal education and culture, so that the élite of humanity may be ready who would be able to work for the progressive unification of the race and who at the same time would be prepared to embody the new force descending upon earth to transform it.

The unity of the human race can be achieved neither through uniformity nor through domination and subjection. A synthetic organization of all nations, each one occupying its own place in accor-

dance with its own genius and the role it has to play in the whole, can alone effect a comprehensive and progressive unification which may have some chance of enduring. And if the synthesis is to be a living thing, the grouping should be done around a central idea as high and wide as possible, and in which all tendencies, even the most contradictory, would find their respective places. That idea is to give man the conditions of life necessary for preparing him to manifest the new force that will create the race of tomorrow.

All urge of rivalry, all struggle for precedence and domination should disappear giving place to a will for harmonious organization, for clear-sighted and effective collaboration.

To make this possible, children from

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their very early age must be accustomed not merely to the idea but to its practice. The cultures of the different regions of the earth will be represented here in such a way as to be accessible to all, not merely intellectually, in ideas, theories, principles, and languages, but also vitally in habits and customs, in art under all forms—painting, sculpture, music, architecture, decoration—and physically too through natural scenery, dress, games, sports, industries and food. A kind of world-exhibition has to be organized in which all the countries will be represented in a concrete and living manner; the ideal is that every nation with a very definite culture would have a pavilion representing that culture, built on a model that most displays the habits of the country: it will exhibit the nation's most representative products, natural as well as

manufactured, products also that best express its intellectual and artistic genius and its spiritual tendencies. Each nation would thus find a practical and concrete interest in cultural synthesis and collaborate in the work by taking over the charge of the pavilion that represents it. A lodging house also could be attached, large or small according to need, where students of the same nationality would be accommodated; they will thus enjoy the very culture of their own motherland, and at the same time receive at the center the education which will introduce them as well to other cultures existing upon earth. Thus the international education will not be simply theoretical, on the school bench, but practical in all details of existence.

A general idea of the organization is only given here: the application in details will be gradually carried out as the Township develops.

The first aim then will be to help individuals to become conscious of the fundamental genius of the nations to which they belong and at the same time to put them in contact with the modes of living of other nations so that they may know and respect equally the true spirit of all the countries upon earth. For all world organization to be real and to be able to live, must be based upon mutual respect and understanding between nation and nation as well as between individual and individual. It is only in the collective order and organization, in a collaboration based upon mutual goodwill that lies the possibility of man being lifted out of the painful chaos where he is now. It is with this aim and in this spirit that all human problems will be studied in Auroville.



II. Auroville International University

*I become what I see in myself.
All that thought suggests to me, I can do.
All that thought reveals in me, I can become.*

A university by its very origin and nature is a universal institution, its boundaries conterminous with the boundaries of the universe.

But there are no boundaries to man's insatiable thirst for Knowledge, his inexhaustible and ceaseless search after the Truth, his deep seeking for Beauty and Love, his secret aspiration to expand and become one with the universe, to touch, to feel, to experience and to enjoy the Infinite, to meet, to clasp and to possess the Eternal.

Progress

Towards the synthesis of science and spirituality

Progress is the very heart of the significance of human life, for it means our evolution into a greater and richer being, and this our present age, by insisting on it, by forcing us to recognize it as our aim and our necessity, by making impossible hereafter the attempt to subsist in the dullness or gross beatitude of a stationary self-content, has done a precious service to the earth-life.

An unbiased view will regard this age of civilization as an evolutionary stage, an imperfect but important turn of the human advance, where great gains have been made which are of the utmost value to ultimate perfection, even if they have been made at a great price. There is not only a greater generalization of knowledge and the more thorough use of the intellectual power and activity in multiple fields; there is not only the advance of science and its application to the conquests of our environment, an immense apparatus of means, vast utilizations, endless minute conveniences, an irresistible, machinery, a tireless exploitation of forces; there is, too, a certain development of powerful, if not

high-pitched ideals and there is an attempt, however external and therefore imperfect, to bring them to bear upon the working of human society as a whole. Once restored to its true movement, the inner life of man will find that it has gained in materials, in power of plasticity, in a new kind of depth and wideness, a salutary habit of many-sided thoroughness and a sincere endeavor to shape the outer collective life into an adequate image of our highest ideals.

We, of the coming day, stand at the head of a new age of development which must lead to a new and a large synthesis of all truths everywhere. To entrench ourselves within the bounds of any one ideology or system of thought, to adhere to any one theistic religion or social and political creed would be to limit ourselves and to attempt to create our life out of the being, knowledge and nature of others, instead of building it out of our own being and potentialities. A mass of new material is flowing to us from all sides. The luminous secrets of the past, long lost to the consciousness of mankind, too, are breaking out again from behind the veil. We have not only to assimilate the influences of the great theistic religions of the world and recover their true meaning, their stuff of permanent truth constantly reshaped and developed in the inner thought and spiritual experience of developing humanity so that they may be of a living importance to mankind, but also we must take full account of the potent revelations of modern knowledge and seeking and equip ourselves with the advantages of science and technology.

Towards the synthesis of Past, Present and Future

The Past is our foundation, the Present our material, and the Future our summit. We should be the children of our glorious Past, possessors of the Present, and creators of the Future. We do not belong to the past dawns, but to the noons of the Future. In Auroville University, it will be our attempt to evaluate the totality of the Past in relation to the potentialities of the Future. All this points to a new, very

rich and vast synthesis. A fresh and widely embracing harmonization of our gains is therefore both an intellectual and a spiritual necessity of the Future. Taking advantages of all discoveries from within and without, Auroville aspires to boldly spring towards future realizations, thus building a bridge between outer external realizations and the highest inner aspirations.

Towards the synthesis of all cultures

The aim of Auroville will be to promote research in order to enrich all cultures, and raise the level of spiritual and material life in all parts of the world and create a climate of understanding and appreciation of the values of all cultures and civilizations. But Auroville anticipates a new creation with a new culture that will be synthetic and universal and will therefore, include in its study and research at its University all the latest and future possible achievements and experiments of Science and Technology with an equal importance and emphasis on the revelations of spiritual research. And thus combining the two—Science and Spirituality—it will hew a new path for the Future of Peace, Knowledge, Unity and Progress. East and West will meet from two opposite sides and merge into each other and found in the life of a unified humanity a common world culture and a common world order, obeying the law of the Truth.

Towards change and reconstruction

It is one of those vast critical moments in the life of the race when all is pressing towards change and reconstitution. The ideals of the Future, especially the ideals of freedom, equality, commonalty, unity, are demanding to be brought from their limited field in the spiritual life or the idealism of the few and to be given some beginning of a true soul of action and bodily shape in the life of the race. But banded against any such fulfilment there are powerful obstacles, and the greatest of them come not from outside but from within. For



they are the old continued impulses and obstinate recalcitrance of mankind's past nature, the almost total subjection of his normal mind to egoistic, vital and material interests and ambitions which make not for union but for strife and discord, the plausibilities of the practical reason which looks at the possibilities of the day and the morrow and shuts its eyes to the consequences of the day after, the habits of pretense and fiction which impel men and nations to pursue and forward their own interests under the camouflage of a specious idealism, a habit made up only partly of the diplomatic hypocrisy of politicians, but much more of a general half-voluntary self-deception and finally, the inrush of blinder unsatisfied forces and crude imperfect idealisms to take advantage of the unrest and dissatisfaction prevalent in such times and lay hold for a while on the life of mankind.

Peace

War and violent revolution can be eliminated, if we will, though not without immense difficulty, but on the condition that we get rid of the inner causes of war and injustice of which violent revolutions are the natural reactions. The limitations of armies and armaments, is an illusory remedy. Even if there could be found an effective international means of control, it would cease to operate as soon as the clash of war actually came. The European conflict has shown that in the course of war, a country can be turned into a huge factory of arms and a nation convert its whole peaceful manhood into an army. The development of international law into an effective force which will restrain the egoism of individuals is another solution which still attracts and seems the most practicable to most when they seek to deal with the difficulties of the future. But not even the construction of a stronger international law with a more effective sanction behind it will be an indubitable or a perfect remedy. The real truth, the real cause of the failure is that internationalism is yet, except with some exceptional men, merely an idea; it is not yet a thing near to our vital feelings or otherwise a part of our psychology.

What the modern spirit has sought for is the economic social ultimate,—an ideal material organization of civilization and comfort, the use of reason and science and education for the generalization of a utilitarian rationality which will make the individual a perfected social being in a perfected economic society . . . It is hoped that by a radical change brought about through the agency of a greater and better mental knowledge, right ideas, right information, right training of the social and civic individual, he will subordinate his ego for the sake of the right arrangement of the life of the community. But it has not been found in experience, whatever might have once been hoped, that education and intellectual training by itself can change man; it only provides that human individual and collective ego with better information and a more efficient machinery, but leaves it the same unchanged human ego. For the way that humanity deals with an ideal is to be satisfied with it as an aspiration which is for the most part left only as an aspiration, accepted only as a partial influence. The ideal is not allowed to mould the whole life, but only more or less to color it . . .

The idealist, the thinker, the philosopher, the poet and artist, even the moralist, all those who live much in ideas, when they come to grapple at close quarters with practical life seem to find themselves something at a loss and are constantly defeated in their endeavor to govern life by their ideas. But even the man who is capable of governing his life by ideas, who recognizes, that is to say, that it ought to express clearly conceived truths and principles of his being or of all beings and tries to find out or to know from others what these are, is not often capable of, the highest, the free and disinterested use of his rational mind. As others are subjected to the tyranny of their interests, prejudices, instincts or passions, so he is subjected to the tyranny of ideas. Indeed, he turns his ideas into interests, obscures them with his prejudices and passions, and is unable to think freely about them, unable to distinguish their limits or the relation to them of other, different and opposite ideas and the equal right of these also to existence.

Ideals and idealists are necessary; ideals are the savour and sap of life, idealists the most powerful diviners and assistants of its purposes. But reduce your idea to a system and it at once begins to fail . . . the ideas themselves are partial and insufficient; not only have they a very partial triumph, but if their success were complete, it would still disappoint, because they are not the whole truth of life and therefore cannot securely govern and perfect life. Life escapes from the formulas and systems which our reason labors to impose on it; it proclaims itself too complex, too full of infinite potentialities to be tyrannized over by the arbitrary intellect of man.

So long as war does not become psychologically impossible, it will remain or, if banished for a while, return. War itself, it is hoped, will end war; the expense, the horror, the butchery, the disturbance of tranquil life, the whole confused sanguinary madness of the thing has reached or will reach such colossal proportions that the human race will fling the monstrosity behind it in weariness and disgust. But weariness and disgust, horror and pity, even the opening of the eyes to reason by the practical facts of the waste of human life and energy and the harm and extravagance are not permanent factors; they last only while the lesson is fresh. Afterwards, there is forgetfulness; human nature recuperates itself and recovers the instincts that were temporarily dominated. A long peace, even a certain organization of peace, may conceivably result, but so long as the heart of man remains what it is, the peace will come to an end; the organization will break down under the stress of human passions.

We of today have not the excuse of ignorance since we have before us perfectly clear ideals and conditions. Freedom and unity, the self-determination of men and nations in the framework of a life drawn together by cooperation, comradeship, brotherhood if it may be, the acceptance of a close interrelation of the common aims and interests of the race, an increasing oneness of human life in which we cannot deny any longer to others what we claim for ourselves,—are things of which we have formed a definite concep-



Unity

tion. The acknowledgement of them is there in the human mind, but not as yet any settled will to practice.

The question now put by evolving Nature to mankind is whether its existing international system, if system it can be called, a sort of provisional order maintained with constant evolutionary or revolutionary changes cannot be replaced by a willed and thought out fixed arrangement, a true system, eventually a real unity—serving all the common interests of the earth's peoples.

The hopes, the ideals, the aspirations that are abroad in mankind are themselves so many severe and pregnant questions put to us, not merely to our intelligence but to the spirit of our being and action . . . and the gain they will bring to humanity depends on the spirit which governs us during the time of their execution. For these ideals stand and they represent the greater aims of the spirit in men which through all denials, obstacles and imperfections of his present incomplete nature knows always the perfection towards which it moves and the greatness of which it is capable. Circumstances and force and external necessity and past nature may still be too strong for us, but if the light of the ideal is kept burning in its flame of knowledge and its flame of power, it will seize even on these things and create out of their evil its greater inevitable good. At present it may seem only an idea and a word unable to become a living reality, but it is the Idea and the Word expressing what was concealed in the Spirit which preside over the creation. The time will come when they will be able to seize on the Force that works and turn it into the instrument of a greater and fairer creation. The nearness or the distance of the time depends on the fidelity of the mind and will of man to the best that he sees and the insistence of his self-knowledge, unobsessed by subjection to the circumstances he suffers and the machinery he uses, to live out its truth within himself so that his environment may accept it and his outward life be shaped in its image.

Internationalism

The idea of humanity as a single race of beings with a common life and a common general interest is among the most characteristic and significant products of modern thought.

It is founded on a view of things which looks at man in his manhood only and casts away all those physical and social accidents of birth, rank, class, color, creed, nationality, which have been erected into so many walls and screens behind which man has hidden himself from his fellowmen . . .

The height and nobility of the idea is not to be questioned and certainly a mankind which set its life upon this basis would make a better, purer, more peaceful and enlightened race than anything we can hope to have at present. But as the human being is now made, the pure idea, though always a great power, is also afflicted by a general weakness. For man at present lives more in the outward than in the inward, is governed principally by his vital existence, sensations, feelings and customary mentality rather than by his higher thought-mind, and feels himself in this to be really alive, really to exist and be, while the world of ideas is to him something remote and abstract and, however powerful and interesting in its way, not a living thing; the pure idea seems, until it is embodied in life, something not quite real; in that abstractness and remoteness lies its weakness . . . Life accepts it as a partial habit, but not completely, not quite sincerely.

In the crises of life it is the primary vital necessity which tells, while the other and remoter element betrays itself to be a mere idea not yet ready for accomplishment; it can only become powerful when it also becomes either a vital or a psychological necessity . . . A living sense of human oneness in thought, feeling and life must always remain the injunction of the Spirit within us to human life upon earth. The saving power needed is a new psychological factor which will at once make a united life necessary to humanity and force it to

respect the principle of freedom.

Possibilities of unification and their shortcomings: Ego—the chief obstacle

If we consider the possibilities of a unification of the human race on political, administrative and economic lines, we see that a certain sort of unity or first step towards it appears not only to be possible but to be more or less urgently demanded by an underlying spirit and sense of need in the race. This spirit has been created largely by increased mutual knowledge and close communication, partly by the development of wider and freer intellectual ideals and emotional sympathies in the progressive mind of the race . . . The real strength of this new tendency is in its intellectual, idealistic and emotional parts. Its economic causes are partly permanent and therefore elements of strength and secure fulfilment, partly artificial and temporary and therefore elements of insecurity and weakness. The political incentives are the baser part in the amalgam; their presence may even vitiate the whole result and lead in the end to a necessary dissolution and reversal of whatever unity may be initially accomplished. A common, intellectual, and cultural activity and progress may do much, but need not by themselves be sufficient to bring into being the fully powerful psychological factor that would be required.

Individual and group harmonies of a comparative and qualified completeness are created, a social cohesion is accomplished; but in the mass the relations formed are constantly marred by imperfect sympathy, imperfect understanding, gross misunderstandings, strife, discord, unhappiness. It cannot be otherwise so long as there is no true union of consciousness founded upon a nature of self-knowledge, inner mutual knowledge, inner realization of unity, concord of our inner forces of being and inner forces of life. In our social building we labour to establish some approach to unity, mutuality, harmony, because without these things there can be no perfect social living, but what we build



is a constructed unity, an association of interests and egos enforced by law and custom and imposing an artificial, constructed order in which the interests of some prevail over the interests of others and only a half-accepted, half-enforced, half-natural, half-artificial accommodation keeps the social whole in being. Between community and community there is still worse accommodation with a constant recurrence of the strife of collective ego with collective ego. This is the best that we can do and all our persistent readjustments of the social order can bring us nothing better than an imperfect structure of life.

Brotherhood

Brotherhood is the real key to the triple gospel of the ideal of humanity—liberty, equality, fraternity. The union of liberty and equality can only be achieved by the power of human brotherhood and it cannot be founded on anything else. But brotherhood exists only in the soul and by the soul; it can exist by nothing else. For this brotherhood is not a matter either of physical kinship or of vital association or of intellectual agreement. Only when man has developed not merely a fellow-feeling with all men, but a dominant sense of unity and commonality, only when he is aware of them not merely as brothers—that is a fragile bond—but as parts of himself, only when he has learned to live, not in his separate personal and communal ego-sense but in a large universal consciousness, can the phenomenon of war, with whatever weapons, pass out of his life without the possibility of return. Meanwhile that he should struggle even by illusions towards that end is an excellent sign; for it shows that the truth behind the illusion is pressing towards the hour when it may become manifest as reality.

Everything depends, first, upon the truth of our vision, secondly, upon the sincerity with which we apply it, last and



Rod Hemsell leading a discussion on developments at the University of Human Unity (Photo courtesy University of Human Unity Team)

especially, on the inwardness of our realization. Vain will be the mechanical construction of unity, if unity is not in the heart of the race and if it be made only a means for safeguarding and organizing our interests.

Change of consciousness—the solution

No change of ideas or of the intellectual outlook upon life, no belief in God or Avatar or Prophet, no victorious science or liberating philosophy, no social scheme or system, no sort of machinery internal or external, can really bring about the great desire implanted in the race, true though that desire is in itself and the index of the goal to which we are being led. Because man is himself not a machine nor a device, but a being and a most complex one at that, therefore he cannot be saved by machinery; only by an entire change which shall affect all the members of his being, can he be liberated from his discords and imperfections. Until man in his heart is ready, a profound change of the world conditions cannot come; or it can only be brought about by force, physical force or else force of circumstances and that leaves all the real work to be done. A frame may have then been made, but the soul will have still to grow into that mechanical body.

Inner perfection

The one safety for man lies in learning

to live from within outward, not depending on institutions and machinery to perfect him, but out of his growing inner perfection availing to shape a more perfect form and frame of life; for by this inwardness we shall best be able both to see the truth of the high things which we now only speak with our lips and form into outward intellectual constructions, and to apply their truth sincerely to all our outward living. It is through the growth of consciousness that the collective

soul and its life can become aware of itself and develop; the free play of mind and life is essential for the growth of consciousness; for mind and life are the soul's only instrumentation until a higher instrumentation develops; they must not be inhibited in their action or rendered rigid, unplastic and unprogressive. The difficulties or disorders engendered by the growth of the individual mind and life cannot be healthily removed by the suppression of the individual; the true cure can only be achieved by his progression to a greater consciousness in which he is fulfilled and perfected.

Man's true freedom and perfection will come when the Spirit within bursts through the forms of mind and life and winging above to its own gnostic fiery heights of ether turns upon them from that light and flame to seize them and transform into its own image.

Difference between the methods of religion and spirituality

Human society itself never seized on the discovery of the soul as a means for the discovery of the law of its own being or on a knowledge of the soul's true nature and need and its fulfilment as the right way of terrestrial perfection. So far as it saw in religion a means of human salvation and perfection, it laid hands upon it at once to mechanize it, to catch the human soul and bind it on the wheels of socio-religious machinery, to impose on it in the place of spiritual freedom an imperious yoke and an



iron prison. It saddled upon the religious life of man a Church, a priesthood and a mass of ceremonies and set over it a pack of watchdogs under the name of creeds and dogmas. The supreme truths are neither the rigid conclusions of logical reasoning nor the affirmations of credal statements, but fruits of the soul's inner experience.

So far as we really succeed in living for others, it is done by an inner spiritual force of love and sympathy; but the power and field of effectuality of this force in us are small, the psychic movement that prompts it is incomplete, its action often ignorant because there is contact of mind and heart but our being does not embrace the being of others as ourselves. An external unity with others must always be an outward joining and association of external lives with a minor inner result; the mind and the heart attach their movements to this common life and the beings whom we meet there but the common external life remains the foundation,—the inward constructed unity, or so much of it as can persist in spite of mutual ignorance and discordant egoism, conflict of mind, conflict of heart, conflict of vital temperaments, conflict of interests, is a partial and insecure superstructure.

The spiritual consciousness, the spiritual life reverses this principle of building; it bases its action in the collective life upon an inner experience and inclusion of others in our own being, an inner sense and reality of oneness. Spirituality respects the freedom of the human soul, because it is itself fulfilled by freedom; and the deepest meaning of freedom is the power to expand and grow towards perfection by the law of one's nature.

Freedom and mutuality

Man does not actually live an isolated being, nor can he glow by an isolated freedom. He grows by his relations with others and his freedom must exercise itself in a progressive self-harmonizing with the freedom of his fellow beings. The law of our self-determination has to wed itself to the self-determination of others and to find the way to enact a real union through this

mutuality. But its basis can only be found within and not through any mechanical adjustment. It lies in the discovery within by the being in the course of his self-expansion and self-fulfilment that these things at every turn depend on the self-expansion and self-fulfilment of those around us, because we are secretly one being with them and one life. Each being has his own truth of independent self-realization and his truth of self-realization in the life of others and should feel, desire, help, participate more and more, as he grows in largeness and power, in the harmonious and natural growth of all the individual selves and all the collective selves of the one universal being.

That which we are has expressed itself through the individual, but also through the universality, and though each has to fulfill itself in its own way, neither can succeed independently of the other. The society has no right to crush or efface the individual for its own better development or self-satisfaction; the individual, so long at least as he chooses to live in the world, has no right to disregard for the sake of his own solitary satisfaction and development his fellow beings and to live at war with them or seek a selfishly isolated good . . .

For the only things that we can really call our rights are those conditions which are necessary to our free and sound development, and that again is our right because it is necessary to the development of the world and the fulfilment of the destiny of mankind.

The law for the individual is to perfect his individuality by free development from within, but to respect and to aid and be aided by the same free development in others. His law is to harmonize his life with the life of the social aggregate and to pour himself out as a force for growth and perfection on humanity. The law for humanity is to pursue its upward evolution towards the finding and expression of its highest aspirations and perfection taking full advantage of the free development and the gains of all individuals and nations and groupings of men, to work towards the day when mankind may be really and not only ideally one family.

The social evolution of the human race is necessarily a development of the relations between three constant factors: individuals, communities of various sorts and mankind. Each seeks its own fulfilment and satisfaction but each is compelled to develop them not independently but in relation to the others. The perfect society will be that which most entirely favors the perfection of the individual; the perfection of the individual will be incomplete if it does not help towards the perfect state of the social aggregate to which he belongs and eventually to that of the largest possible human aggregate, the whole of a united humanity.

The object of all society should be, therefore, and must become, as man grows conscious of his real being, nature and destiny and not as now only of a part of it, first to provide the conditions of life and growth by which individual Man,—not isolated men or a class or a privileged race, but all individual men according to their capacity,—and the race through the growth of its individuals may travel towards this perfection. For civilization can never be perfect or safe so long as, confining the cultured mentality to a small minority, it nourishes in its bosom a tremendous mass of ignorance, a multitude, a proletariat.

Towards world union

Humanity is one, but different peoples are variant soul-forms of the common humanity. When we find the oneness, the principle of variation is not destroyed but finds rather its justification; it is not by abolishing ourselves, our own special temperament and power, that we can get at the living oneness, but by following it out and raising it to its highest possibilities of freedom and action. The nations should therefore become conscious not only of their own but of each other's genius and soul, and learn to respect, to help and to profit, not only economically and intellectually but subjectively and spiritually by each other. For the final end is a common world-culture in which each national culture should be, not merged into or fused with some other culture differing from it in prin-



principle or temperament, but evolved to its full power and could then profit to that end by all the others as well as give its gains and influences to them, all serving by their separateness and their interaction the common aim and idea of human perfection.

The peoples of humanity must be allowed to group themselves according to their free-will and their natural affinities; no constraint or force could be allowed to compel an unwilling nation or distinct grouping of peoples to enter into another system or join itself or remain joined to it for the convenience, aggrandizement or political necessity of another people or even for the general convenience in disregard of its own wishes. Unity would be the largest principle of life, but freedom would be its foundation-stone.

Man's communities are formed not so much by the instinctive herding together of a number of individuals of the same genus or species as by local association, community of interests, and community of ideas; and these limits tend always to be overcome in the widening of human thoughts and sympathies brought about by the closer intermingling of the races, nations, interests, ideas, cultures. Still, if overcome in their separatism, they are not abolished in their fact, because they repose on an essential principle of Nature,—diversity in unity. And so, a free world union must in its very nature be a complex unity based on diversity and diversity must be based on self-determination.

A spiritual oneness which would create a psychological oneness not dependent upon any intellectual or outward uniformity and compel a oneness of life not bound up with its mechanical means of unification, but ready always to enrich its secure unity by a free inner variation and a freely varied outer self-expression, this would be the basis for a higher type of human existence.

Could such a realization develop rapidly in mankind, we might then solve the problem of unification in a deeper and truer way from the inner truth to the outer forms. Until then, the attempt to bring it about by mechanical means must proceed. But the higher hope of humanity lies in the grow-

ing number of men who will realize this truth and seek to develop it in themselves, so that when the mind of man is ready to escape from its mechanical bent,—perhaps when it finds that its mechanical solutions are all temporary and disappointing,—the truth of the Spirit may step in and lead humanity to the path of its highest possible happiness and perfection.

The indwelling deity who presides over the destiny of the race has raised in men's mind and heart the idea, the hope of a new order which will replace the old unsatisfactory order, and substitute for it conditions of the world's life which will in the end have a reasonable chance of establishing permanent peace and well-being. This would for the first time turn into an assured fact the ideal of human unity which, cherished by a few, seemed for so long a noble chimera; then might be created a firm ground of peace and harmony and even a free room for the realization of the highest human dreams, for the perfectibility of the race, a perfect society, a higher upward evolution of the human soul and human nature. It is for the men of our day and, at the most, of tomorrow to give the answer.

The central aim: New creation

A race of gnostic beings—a race of gods

A perfected human world cannot be created by men or composed of men who are themselves imperfect. Even if all our actions are scrupulously regulated by education or law or social or political machinery, what will be achieved is a regulated pattern of minds, a fabricated pattern of lives, a cultivated pattern of conduct; but a conformity of this kind cannot change, cannot re-create the man within, it cannot carve or cut out a perfect soul or a perfect thinking man or a perfect or growing living being. For soul and mind and life are powers of being and can grow but cannot be cut out or made; an outer process or formation can assist or can express soul and mind and life but cannot create or develop it. One can indeed help the being to grow,

not by an attempt at manufacture, but by throwing on it stimulating influences or by lending to it one's forces of soul or mind or life; but even so the growth must still come from within it, determining from there what shall be made of these influences and forces, and not from outside. This is the first truth that our creative zeal and aspiration have to learn, otherwise all our human endeavor is foredoomed to turn in a futile circle and can end only in a success that is a specious failure.

Self-transcendence and self-fulfilment

To be or become something, to bring something into being is the whole labour of the force of Nature; to know, feel, do are subordinate energies that have a value because they help the being in its partial self-realization to express what it is and help it too in its urge to express the still more not yet realized that it has to be. But knowledge, thought, action,—whether religious, ethical, political, social, economic, utilitarian or hedonistic, whether a mental, vital or physical form or construction of existence,—cannot be the essence or object of life; they are only activities of the powers of being or the powers of its becoming, dynamic symbols of itself, creations of the embodied spirit, its means of discovering or formulating what it seeks to be. The tendency of man's physical mind is to see otherwise and to turn the true method of things upside down, because it takes as essential or fundamental the surface forces or appearances of Nature; it accepts her creation by a visible or exterior process as the essence of her action and does not see that it is only a secondary appearance and covers a greater secret process.

To become ourselves is the one thing to be done; but the true ourselves is that which is within us, and to exceed our outer self of body, life and mind is the condition for this highest being, which is our true and divine being, to become self-revealed and active.

To be and to be fully is Nature's aim in us; but to be fully is to be wholly conscious of one's being: unconsciousness,



half consciousness or deficient consciousness is a state of being not in possession of itself; it is existence, but not fullness of being. To be aware wholly and integrally of oneself and of all the truth of one's being is the necessary condition of true possession of existence. This self-awareness is what is meant by spiritual knowledge: the essence of spiritual knowledge is an intrinsic self-existent consciousness; all its action of knowledge, indeed all its action of any kind, must be that consciousness formulating itself. All other knowledge is consciousness oblivious of itself and striving to return to its own awareness of itself and its contents; it is self-ignorance laboring to transform itself back into self-knowledge.

But also, since consciousness carries in itself the force of existence, to be fully is to have the intrinsic and integral force of one's being; it is to come into possession of all one's force of self and of all its use. To be merely, without possessing the force of one's being or with a half-force or deficient force of it, is a mutilated or diminished existence; it is to exist, but it is not fullness of being . . . Power of self is the sign of the divinity of self.

Lastly, to be fully is to have the full delight of being. Being without delight of being, without an entire delight of itself and all things is something neutral or diminished; it is existence, but it is not fullness of being. This delight too must be intrinsic, self-existent, automatic; it cannot be dependent on things outside itself: whatever it delights in, it makes part of itself, has the joy of it as part of its universality. All undelight, all pain and suffering are a sign of imperfection, of incompleteness; they arise from a division of being, an incompleteness of consciousness of being, an incompleteness of the force of being. To become complete in being, in consciousness of being, in force of being, in delight of being and to live in this inte-

grated completeness is the divine living.

But again, to be fully is to be universally. To be in the limitations of a small restricted ego is to exist, but it is an imperfect existence: in its very nature it is to live in an incomplete consciousness, an incomplete force and delight of existence. It is to be less than oneself and it brings an inevitable subjection to ignorance, weakness and suffering: or even if by some divine composition of the nature it could exclude these things, it would be to live in a limited scope of existence, a limited consciousness and power and joy of existence. All



*An interactive workshop at the University of Human Unity in the Unity Pavilion
(Photo courtesy of University of Human Unity Team)*

being is one and to be fully is to be all that is. To be in the being of all and to include all in one's being, to be conscious of the consciousness of all, to be integrated in force with the universal force, to carry all action and experience in oneself and feel it as one's own action and experience, to feel all selves as one's own self, to feel all delight of being as one's own delight of being is a necessary condition of the integral divine living.

But thus to be universally in the fullness and freedom of one's universality, one must be also transcendentally. The spiritual fullness of the being is eternity; if one has not the consciousness of timeless eternal being, if one is dependent on body or embodied mind or embodied life, or dependent on this world or that world or on this condition of being or that condition of being, that is not the reality of self, not the fullness of our spiritual existence . . . But

one must transcend not only the individual formula but the formula of the universe, for only so can either the individual or the universal existence find its own true being and a perfect harmonization . . . Otherwise the individual may remain subject to the cosmic movement and its reactions and limitations and miss his entire spiritual freedom. He must enter into the supreme divine Reality, feel his oneness with it, live in it, be its self-creation: all his mind, life, physicality must be converted into terms of its Supernature; all his thought, feelings, actions must be determined by it and be it, its self-formation. All this can become complete in him only when he has evolved out of the Ignorance into the Knowledge and through the Knowledge into the supreme delight of existence; but some essentiality of these things and their sufficient instrumentation can come with the first spiritual change and culminate in the life of the gnostic supernature.

Adventure of consciousness and living

Education in Auroville will not be a mere acquisition of knowledge, of inert ideas and information, nor only the knowledge of the why and wherefore of the facts surrounding and pertinent to life, but an art of utilization of knowledge, a living experience and an art of becoming. And so, at Auroville University, life will be studied, experienced and experimented upon too, in its multifarious activities and its possibilities of infinite relationships. Auroville will be the place of an unending education, of constant progress and a youth that never ages.

To know, possess and be the divine being in an animal and egoistic consciousness, to convert our twilight or obscure physical mentality into the plenary supramental illumination, to build peace and a self-existent bliss where there is only a



stress of transitory satisfactions besieged by physical pain and emotional suffering, to establish an infinite freedom in a world which presents itself as a group of mechanical necessities, to discover and realize the immortal life in a body subjected to death and constant mutation,—this is offered to us as the manifestation of God in Matter and the goal of Nature in her terrestrial evolution. To the ordinary material intellect which takes its present organization of consciousness for the limit of its possibilities, the direct contradiction of the unrealized ideals with the realized fact is a final argument against their validity. But if we take a more deliberate view of the world's workings, that direct opposition appears rather as part of Nature's profoundest method and the seal of her completest sanction.

For all problems of existence are essentially problems of harmony. They arise from the perception of an unsolved discord and the instinct of an undiscovered agreement or unity. To rest content with an unsolved discord is possible for the practical and more animal part of man, but impossible for his fully awakened mind, and usually, even his practical parts only escape from the general necessity either by shutting out the problem or by accepting a rough, utilitarian and unillumined compromise. For essentially, all Nature seeks a harmony, life and matter in their own sphere as much as mind in the arrangement of its perceptions. The greater the apparent disorder of the materials offered or the apparent disparateness, even to irreconcilable opposition of the elements that have to be utilized, the stronger is the spur, and it drives towards a more subtle and puissant order than can normally be the result of a less difficult endeavor.

Science itself begins to dream of the physical conquest of death, expresses an insatiable thirst for knowledge, and is working out something like a terrestrial omnipotence for humanity. Space and Time are contracting to the vanishing-point in its works, and it strives in a hundred ways to make man the master of circumstance and so lighten the fetters of causality. The idea of limit, of the impossi-

ble begins to grow a little shadowy and it appears instead that whatever man constantly wills, he must in the end be able to do; for the consciousness in the race eventually finds the means.

Education is life in pursuit of the Truth in all its manifold aspects and a constant research for the harmonization of these aspects, however disparate, opposite, contradictory or contrary. And life is an endless adventure of consciousness unto the Unknown, probing into its mysteries to constantly renew and enrich itself.

The Unknown is not the Unknowable; it need not remain the unknown for us, unless we choose ignorance or persist in our first limitations. For to all things that are not unknowable, all things in the universe, there correspond in that universe faculties which can take cognizance of them, and in man, the microcosm, these faculties are always existent and at a certain stage capable of development. We may choose not to develop them; where they are partially developed, we may discourage and impose on them a kind of atrophy. But, fundamentally, all possible knowledge is knowledge within the power of humanity.

Evolution: Supramental consciousness and new faculties

There is an ascending evolution in Nature which goes from the stone to the plant, from the plant to the animal, from the animal to man. Evolution continues and Man will be surpassed. For man is a transitional being living in a mental consciousness, but having the possibility of acquiring a new consciousness, the Truth-consciousness, and capable of living a life perfectly harmonious, good and beautiful, happy and fully conscious.

One of the most important researches in Auroville will be regarding the principle and the process of evolution, which will be scientifically studied and will be used to expedite the next step of the evolution of the human race, to bring forth the latent faculties of Man and a change of consciousness. For the future of humanity depends upon this change of consciousness. In this connection, the psychologi-

cal discipline of the Yoga as developed and perfected by Sri Aurobindo will be studied as one of the primary and essential methods for a conscious evolution and a change of human consciousness, transcending the present limited and divisive, egocentric mental consciousness of man. The new consciousness, which Sri Aurobindo terms the supramental consciousness or the Truth-consciousness, is consciousness creatrix of the world, a state of Knowledge and Will at once, with a clear vision of the totality and Power to effectuate its vision. It is the unifying consciousness because it views all things in a multiple unity.

To see things steadily and see them as a whole is not possible to the mind, but it is the very nature of the transcendent supermind. The mind sees only a given time and space and views many possibilities pell-mell as all more or less realizable in that time and space; the supermind sees the whole extension of Time and Space and can embrace all the mind's possibilities and very many more not visible to the mind, but without any error, groping or confusion; for it perceives each potentiality in its proper force, essential necessity, right relation to the others and the time, place and circumstance, both of its gradual and its ultimate realization. There is a spontaneous harmony and unity of all knowledge and truths in this consciousness, because it is the Truth-consciousness with an inherent and self-existent Knowledge and Power to realize its vision.

Since the primary aim of Auroville is to establish the supreme harmony everywhere,—within the individual, in his relation with his fellow-beings, and his surroundings, the community, the nation and the world, between all aspects of the Truth, between Man, Nature and God, between the two poles of existence, Spirit and Matter, —and to bring about a new creation and a new world order with a new culture, changing the whole life of the earth-consciousness, this study and the possibility of the conscious advent of the new consciousness its application to all problems of life, and its manifestation in all the activities and the manifold relation-



ships of life, will be the most crucial research and the salient contribution of Auroville University.

III. Education and research in Auroville

The education of a child in Auroville will begin with the education of his mother. For the nature of the child depends very much upon the mother, her aspiration and will and upon the material surroundings in which she lives. In order to be able to educate the child, the first thing to do is to educate oneself, to be master of oneself, and to be oneself what one wants the child to be. One must always be very patient, and never be arbitrary, despotic or ill-tempered. The part of education that the mother has to go through is to see that her thoughts are always beautiful and pure, her feelings always noble and fine, her material surroundings as harmonious as possible.

In his formative years, the child in Auroville will grow through all sorts of work in play and play in work in an environment of love, understanding, freedom and flexibility, and through all that may interest him he will be guided i) to observe, to concentrate, to question and to experience; ii) to master a few languages which he can speak, read and understand with ease, including classical and international languages; iii) to develop the capacity to learn and to use the documentation. What is most important at this stage is for the child to develop the power of concentration and identification, self-confidence and readiness to learn more and more, the qualities of endurance, self-poise and persistence against difficulties and obstacles, truthfulness and courage, goodwill, generosity and nobility, sensitivity, right attitude and response to the light of the Truth.

He will not be stuffed therefore with academic courses and factual knowledge which he can always acquire later according to his aspiration and needs. As he grows, he will find for himself—or with the assistance of an adult who will be more of a friend than a teacher—what are his natural aptitudes and interests and what are the possibilities of widening the vistas of his

knowledge and consciousness. He will develop the ability to reflect, to seek and discover for himself the truths by which he will live, and he will be helped to grow in him a tireless capacity for experimentation and innovation. He will also be aided by spiritually awakened persons who may, more by their example and living than by instructions, awaken him to the existence of the Divine Reality within him, his soul, to whom he can refer for true guidance in dealing with the problems of life. For ultimately, it is the soul which is the true teacher and Guide.

All efforts will therefore be directed to help the individual to become conscious of this true Guide within so that he may learn to follow as he grows an inner discipline proper to the aspirations of his soul, and not the discipline of others imposed on him by the conventions of the ordinary institutes and the society. The only indispensable quality required of a student as well as of a teacher—and of all Aurovilians—is the constant aspiration and the will to learn and to progress endlessly without fatigue towards a greater and greater perfection with a spontaneous joy in the effort for progress, not for obtaining a result, but for the love of the effort. This joy is realized and the energy for such an endless effort is obtained only when the soul is made the leader of the march. For the soul is ever in contact with the inexhaustible energy and the splendors of the Superconscient from which it derives its origin. All that one needs to do is to sincerely aspire and to open oneself to its influence in faith and with sincerity and confidence.

The center of all education, of all teaching and training, of all learning, is Man, Man in all his glory, in his divinity. It must be the aim of education to make him the master of his destiny and the lord of his universe. All that is vital to the glorious Future of Man, he will learn in Auroville so that he may become Man the god, from Man the animal and Man the thinker.

Each human being has in him something divine, something his own and unique, a chance of perfection and strength in however small a sphere. But it

is only when man rises at the summit of his ascent into a spiritual being that he can realize his divine manhood and manifest the Divine in all its glory of Love, Knowledge, Power and Perfection—the highest that he can dream of—whatever be his field of action. So, the fundamental aim of education in Auroville will be to put the individual in contact with his soul and then help him to find, in the light of his soul, his own indispensable place in the orchestra of the whole. Auroville hopes to provide the right conditions and environment as well as the full facilities to help the individual to bring out all that is best in him and to make it perfect for a noble use so that he may fulfill his unique role and his mission on earth.

The primary discipline necessary for this is for the individual to observe and become conscious of himself, conscious of all the instruments of his being—physical, vital, mental, psychic and spiritual—and their workings, to develop, transform and organize them around the divine center of his being. It is through the psychic presence that the individual comes into contact with the truth of his being. In most cases, this presence acts, so to say, from behind the veil, unrecognized and unknown. However, it is only when it comes forward and takes the lead that the individual goes through life with an assurance and a certitude all his own and becomes the master of his destiny. This is the psychological discipline of the integral Yoga, which is absolutely indispensable if one wants to know and express the highest truth of one's being, and if one aspires that all one's actions, thoughts and feelings, even the very sensations and impulses may manifest the supreme beauty and splendors which one so often receives in one's awakened thoughts and visions when one opens oneself to the light of the Superconscient.

The education in Auroville will be therefore integral, aiming at the development, transformation and perfection of all the parts of one's being so as to build an all-round personality which is beautiful, harmonious, sensitive, supple, luminous and powerful in all its movements of mind,



life and body, and selfless, heroic and noble in its actions. For this an individual may be required to go through the study of all arts, aesthetics, humanities and sciences which each can choose according to his capacities and needs of self-perfection, self-expression and self-fulfilment.

It is evident that there will be no fixed courses or curricula, nor tests, degrees and diplomas which have value only if one wants to earn money or a

good name and position according to the standards and values set by the conventions of the ordinary world. In Auroville which aspires to build a new world of the Future, individual value and sincerity of the person would have a greater importance than the worldly cleverness or material wealth and social position. Since Auroville aspires to be the place of eternal youth, of an endless education and a constant progress, degrees and diplomas, giving a false sense of satisfaction of having completed one's education will have no value and will be naturally out of place. Education in Auroville will be for the joy of knowledge and for the joy of becoming, for the joy of self-perfection and self-transcendence, for the joy of self-fulfilment and world-fulfilment.

The chief aim of education in Auroville will be to help each man to seek for and to manifest the Divine in every way of his being, and to so find it and live in it that however—even in all kinds of ways—he lives and acts, he shall live and act in the Divine, in the Spirit, in the eternal Reality of his being, manifesting its truth and its law; and to discover the truth behind the veil of forces in the universe, to disengage the divine Reality behind everything and to work for its full manifestation.

Some of the programs and projects of research and education in Auroville will be: to know the secrets of Nature and of life; to know oneself and to be the master



The University of Human Unity Development Team in September 2007 (Photo courtesy University of Human Unity Team)

of oneself, of life, of Nature; to seek after the Truth and perfection; to surmount within oneself all weaknesses, in capacities and the falsehoods of Ignorance; to conquer the causes of sufferings, illnesses, war and miseries; to vindicate the rights and the dignity of Man by helping him to transcend his half-lit humanity and fumbling mental-ethical consciousness and its conflicting laws; to eradicate Ignorance and the divisions of the egocentric consciousness by a change of Consciousness which is the inevitable further step in human evolution; to enrich the existing faculties and bring forth new ones; to triumph over one's limitations, narrowness, rigidity of views and prejudices by constantly widening one's horizon of comprehension in the light of the Truth-Consciousness; to harmonize all the parts of one's being, integrate the personality and to be the whole Man of the Future, embodying the new consciousness, which transcends the limited and divisive consciousness of the present Man; to perfect and transform all the instruments of one's being into powers of the spirit so as to manifest the divine Reality within; to perfect and synthesize knowledge in each field and to integrate all fields of knowledge; to perfect each culture and to unify all cultures; to discover the particular genius and the role of each nation in the comity of all nations and to integrate the human race; to develop and use the resources, ex-

periments and benefits of science and technology for the amelioration of mankind; to march unto the Unknown by constantly searching and making new discoveries on the spiritual and material planes so as to find new ways of enriching life; and thus to progress always towards ever more perfection and a more noble and truer life, the higher and vaster life of the Future, the life of Truth, Knowledge and Power, of Love, Unity and Bliss, making

the whole life of the earth beautiful, divine.

All of Auroville in its entirety and in its details of all activities and organization will engage itself in this educational process and will be a laboratory for this experiment, where no problem of life and its manifold relationships on all levels of action will escape the scrutiny and the study of its citizens. Auroville, being dedicated to the whole of humanity, will naturally seek all ways and means for the fulfilment of its highest aspirations, and will be a training institute for the whole of humanity, a fully equipped, intellectually alive and spiritually inspiring home for all men, women and children, who will learn together to live in oneness and who will live together to learn all the time, at each moment of their life. Education in Auroville being a conscious experiment of living and an adventure of consciousness, the scope of its research being as wide as the universe, its aim being an advent of a new race of gnostic beings, it will naturally embrace the Infinite in its infinite aspects and move towards a progressive universal harmony. The cultural pavilions of all nations of the world will not only provide a right setting for this purpose, but also afford the unique opportunity and the facilities for its manifold researches for a living embodiment of an actual human unity.



Book Reviews

***I am with you, Parts II and III,* by Kailas Jhaveri**

Reviewed by Larry Seidlitz

Kailas' new book, *I am with you, Parts II and III*, chronicles her life experiences after coming to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram on 14 August 1964. Part II focuses on her interactions with the Mother and Kailas' activities in the early years of her stay, Part III deals with her experiences after the Mother left her body in 1973. A previously published book comprising Part I dealt with her life before coming to the Ashram.

Kailas is known and loved by many devotees of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in the U.S. and Europe due to her travels, many of which are documented in this 635 page volume. The book contains a wealth of interesting and inspiring material of various content, drawn together under her overarching theme of the Mother's constant presence and guidance in her life. It is mainly autobiographical, but it includes correspondence with the Mother, various messages and inspiring quotes from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, historical accounts of important events in the development of Auroville, Kailas' essays on important topics, Kailas' inner experiences, perceptions, and views of the spiritual life, travelogues, photographic plates showing artwork of various kinds presented to the Mother, as well as facsimiles of Mother's messages. Through this book one encounters a deep, elevated, and sophisticated soul totally surrendered to the Divine Mother, and such encounters always have an inspiring effect upon oneself.

One of the things that I found especially interesting was Kailas' work for Auroville. I had vaguely known that she had worked at the United Nations in New York before coming to Pondicherry. But I did not realize that Kailas was such a vital instrument in UNESCO's sponsorship of Auroville. Here she recounts her close relationship with Dr. Adiseshiah, whom she called Sat, who was the Deputy Director-General of UNESCO. He was a very capable and idealistic man who was open to the ideals of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and the role of Auroville in their manifestation, which he learned through Kailas. We see how the relationship between UNESCO and Auroville progressively developed over the years through their collaborative activities. We find expressed in this volume the deep significance of Auroville which was communicated to the international organization through Kailas and Sat. One element of Kailas' work in this regard was her paper on Education in Auroville that was presented to UNESCO, in which she compiled writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother pertaining to the ideals of education in Auroville in the context of the aspiration for human unity [reprinted in whole in this issue]. This paper,

which Kailas describes as coming to her as an inspiration following a fervent appeal to Sri Aurobindo at the Samadhi, was greatly appreciated by the Director of the Department of Education at UNESCO. This work of the Auroville University, as well as the more general promotion of Auroville in the international arena, did not find a complete fulfillment, partly because of the conflict that eventually ensued between Auroville and the Sri Aurobindo Society. The early enthusiasm and idealism of Auroville was sullied in the bitter conflict, which was perhaps necessary to work out some negative propensities in human nature. Partly due to this unfortunate setback, Dr. Adiseshiah lost interest in pursuing the work of promoting Auroville, and became engaged in other noble endeavors.

Though some of the correspondence between Kailas and Sat, we find in their special relationship and collaboration the love of two souls united and sanctified in that greater love and aspiration for the Divine. While Kailas was more conscious of the spiritual and psychic dimensions of their relation, Sat too on his part recognized that there was a deeper significance to their relation and was entirely respectful and receptive to Kailas' devotion to the Mother and spiritual practice. Kailas keeps the Mother informed of developments in their relationship and collaborative efforts related to Auroville and UNESCO, and sought the Mother's guidance and approval when meeting with him. On her part, the Mother recognized the unique character of their relationship and the truth and importance of their collaborative work for Auroville and the world. She actively encouraged and supported their relation and guided their efforts. Through this correspondence, Kailas exquisitely expresses the higher possibilities of human love.

Yet more deep than this human love, Kailas' expressions of her love and total surrender to the Divine Mother, will be inspiring to all devotees. Kailas is extremely articulate in expressing the nuances of her feelings and views, and this ability is very evident in her devotion to the Mother. A single example will demonstrate this:

“Mother Divine: . . . pranams. I give myself to You in complete abandon with tears of a sincere prayer: Take away all my preferences, my preoccupations, my ideas of good and bad—all that comes in the way of Your work. Let me stand before You like a blank page so that You may inscribe Your Will freely and clearly and I be what You want me to be. Let me die to myself and be reborn in You so that I see You everywhere and serve You with love and joy.

“O Mother Sweet, make me Thine completely and without any reserve, absolutely and altogether Thine and let me merge in Thee in that indissoluble union of Love so that Thou alone livest in me. I am here for Thee alone. Let me have no other will than Thine. Pray, tell me what exactly is Thy Will and how best I can collaborate with it. Let me have this one joy—to live in Thee, be Thee and for Thee. With humility and loving surrender at Thy feet. Thy child.”



And along with Kailas' many expressions of deep love and devotion to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, we have priceless expressions of the Mother's love and wisdom for her child Kailas. For example, in the reply to Kailas' fervent appeal above, the Mother replied, "Kailas, Do not worry. Keep quiet and calm—It is the only way to know the Truth and to do the proper thing. With love and blessings." Regarding human love, the Mother explains, "There is a stage for human beings when they need to love the Divine through a human being because they are not ready for a direct relation with the Divine. But when the body consciousness progresses and it becomes possible for the cells to enter in constant relation with the Divine without needing the visible presence of another person, the love for another person becomes superfluous and may stop." There are many such significant comments by the Mother as well as passages from Sri Aurobindo's writings on different subjects conveyed in the book.

Another aspect of the book is Kailas' essays and writings on various topics. Some of these were prepared for the Madras Institute of Development Studies, an institute founded by Sat after his retirement from UNESCO in 1970. Kailas attended the monthly seminars until 1976, commenting on papers and preparing others herself. Some selections of her comments and papers are included in the volume. They touch on many issues, especially on various aspects of education, but also on other topics such as development in India, eradication of poverty, population control, and social change and development. Regarding education, there are insightful essays on the teaching of science, education of women, and the student-teacher relationship. In other parts of the book, one can find essays and commentaries on such subjects as Gandhi, Christ and Christianity, the role of women in spiritual India, on the India-Pakistan war of 1965, on beauty of mind, and on integral progress. Based on her insights into Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's vision, Kailas creatively applies their living wisdom to analyze and unravel a variety of complex social problems and issues.

The latter part of the book contains travelogues of a variety of trips taken by Kailas and her friend Richard to different parts of India and to various countries such as the U.S., France, Germany, Spain, Italy, and other countries. These give a feel for the various countries' natural landscapes, cities, and societies, living descriptions of some of their primary attractions, and an introduction to some of the Sri Aurobindo centers and devotees who assisted them. Throughout their travels, Kailas repeatedly shows how the Mother was constantly with them, guiding, providing, and protecting. She also reveals interesting insights into the various cultures, and especially their special genius and contributions in the divine harmony.

There are still many other jewels in this delightful book. One is able to get a good feel for Sri Aurobindo's philosophy and yoga, of his poetry, of his views of and contributions to Indian culture, of his perspectives on social and political development and events. But this more substantive, "heavy" material is knitted into a rich fabric of lighter subjects and personal events. One such

lighter subject is flowers. One of the important means of Kailas' communication with the Mother was through the giving and receiving of flowers together with their spiritual significances. Their mutual love for flowers was also an important element of Kailas' friendship with Richard. Thus one finds this subject periodically recurring in the narrative in various ways, and the book itself is richly decorated with a variety of beautiful color photos of flowers, including the red and white lotuses on the front cover. Throughout the book, on whatever topic she touches, Kailas shares with us her deep perspectives on the issues she confronts, and one feels oneself in the company of a loving and wise friend.

Devotion: An anthology of spiritual poems, selected by Lloyd Hofman and Vignan Agni

Reviewed by Larry Seidlitz

Devotion: An anthology of spiritual poems contains a fine selection of over 250 devotional poems by 110 devotees of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. The poems were selected by Lloyd Hofman and Vignan Agni of Auroville, and the book was published by Chandresh Patel's Integral Enterprise, also centered in Auroville. It is a nicely bound hard cover book using high quality paper, the poems generally appearing one per page, that is, nicely spaced apart with plenty of white paper surrounding them, facilitating their contemplation. The poems were selected primarily from Ashram and Auroville books and journals; *Collaboration* was also included.

The book begins with two selections from Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*, and follows with the devotee's poems, organized by author, starting from the earliest poets and proceeding chronologically to the most recent. The earliest poets often wrote under Sri Aurobindo's personal guidance, and a number of them are followed with Sri Aurobindo's comments. A few of the poems by Nirodbaren are shown in both their original form as written by the author, and again in revised form as revised by Sri Aurobindo, together with the written exchange about the poem between the two. The book includes selections from the most well-known poet-disciples of Sri Aurobindo, such as A.J. Chadwick, Nolini Kanta Gupta, Nirodbaren, Dilip Kumar Roy, Nishikanto, K.D. Sethna, and Pujalal. But there are also included many other authors well-known in America, among them Norman Dowsett, Rod Hemsell, Peter Heehs, Richard Eggenberger (Narad), Shyamsunder Jhunjhunwalla, Seyril Schochen, Shradhdhavan, Gordon Korstange, Shyam Kumari, R.Y. Deshpande, Joseph Kent, Mary (Angel) Finn, Chandresh Patel, Shradhdhalu Ranade, Larry Seidlitz, and Michael Miovic.

As explained in an Appendix to the work, a compilation of key passages from Sri Aurobindo's prose writings on poetry,



poetry in its essence is an expression of truth and beauty of the soul of the poet appealing to soul of the listener. As Sri Aurobindo puts it: “A soul expressing the eternal spirit of Truth and Beauty through some of the infinite variations of beauty, with the word for its instrument, that is, after all, what the poet is; and it is to a similar soul in us seeking the same spirit and responding to it that he makes his appeal.” We can see from this the importance of poetry from the spiritual standpoint—it is a medium through which the soul can directly express itself, and through this expression, can awaken and speak to the soul in others. As Sri Aurobindo also says in this passage, there are always two elements in poetry, the eternal true substance, and the limitations and accidents brought in by time; and it is the first alone that really matters. Thus, in evaluating the poems in this anthology, it should be borne in mind that it was considerations such as these that were foremost in the author’s and in the editors’ minds, and should form the basis of the reader’s own response to the poetry. We should seek for the soul in the poetry, the eternal spirit of truth and beauty, and seek the response of our own soul, the inner ecstasy and delight, the inner awakening and enlightenment.

Two brief examples convey more directly this sense of the eternal soul in the poet speaking to the soul in the listener. A.J. Chadwick, in a poem called “Mid-voyage,” speaks in the first stanza of the journey of the soul moving from earthly things towards the spiritual: “One by one the earth-lights fail / And the shores sink down behind: / The prow leaps on with a freshening gale / Over the course assigned.” (p. 30) The message is direct, and the stanza seems to carry something of this eternal truth of the message in its sound and word values. Similarly, listen to how these opening lines from Nirodbaren’s poem, “Single smile,” convey the eternally repeatable experience of the immediate and powerfully transforming delight of the Divine: “A single smile from thee awakes in us / A bliss unknown to worlds of human thought; / Losing life’s shadow-inconsistencies / Our hearts are to a luminous harmony wrought.” (p. 55)

One interesting thing about this collection of poems is that they convey the unique character of Sri Aurobindo’s Integral Yoga, as distinguished from other spiritual paths. You will find here, for example, consistent with its embrace of the Divine within the world, though also its recognition of its need for transformation, a deep appreciation of life and nature. As Pritwi Singh Nahar says in the first line of “The Play,” “In all these forms Thou laughest, Golden Child!” (p. 144) Similarly, Renukadas Deshpande in “Lotus of Truth-Vision,” declares the divine presence in the body of the sadhak-poet: “Above my shoulders a vast and luminous sky, / Behind my heart a depth of ocean bliss; / In my limbs a calm plentitude of sun-force, / My body is a flame and a rapture of God.” (p. 195)

Shyam Kumari, sensing the divine in the things of nature in “The Tribute,” wishes to offer them one by one to her Divine beloved: “I would like to gather / The charm and marvel / Of all the flaming flowers, / The enchantment of golden morns, / The peace of pearly eves / To offer at Thy Feet.” (p. 218)

We also find in this volume an abundance of pure devotion, self-giving, humility, love, self-sacrifice, ardent aspiration—and these, when expressed as an outflow of the experiences themselves, inspire and awaken these states in the listener. Listen to the simple sincerity of Pujalal Dalvadi’s “A Prayer”: “Mother! Raise me from this mire / Of ungainly earth-desire; / Bathe me in Thy holy fountains, / Place me on Thy star-peaked mountains.” (p. 174) Or hear the opening lines of Mirajyoti’s “Aspiration”: “May I enter the fullness / Of Thy silence— / For Thou knowest / And I know not.” (p. 188) Listen to the music of Michelle’s “Sweet Mother”: “May I sit by your feet and rest in you / May all separation cease / May the floods in my heart release themselves / In your paradise of peace.” (p. 187)

But not all in this book is so simple and direct—there is also mystical, profound, and intellectually stimulating poetry. There are samples of Nirodbaren’s mystical poems, like this stanza from “Ascent”: “Alone in a white deathless peace / I am merged, like a felicitous moon / Lost in the flaming ecstasies / Of its self-wrapt and luminous swoon.” (p. 47) There are samples of Nolini Kanta Gupta’s poetry expressing truths and experiences of the higher levels of mind, such as this from poem XXIII: “There is no darkness, we only close our eyes / and shut out the Light; / There is no pain, it is only our shinking / from an intense and unwelcome Delight; / There is no death, it is only our dread of the Life Eternal / that comes back upon us and smites us.” (p. 35) Or listen to these inspired lines from K.D. Sethna’s “Nec Plus Ultra,” which Sri Aurobindo commended so highly: “Is the keen voice of tune-ful ecstasy / To be denied its winged omnipotence, / Its ancient kinship to immensity / And dazzling suns? / When mystic grandeurs urge him from behind, / When all creation is a rapturous wind / Driving him towards an ever-limitless goal, / Can such pale moments crown the poet’s soul?” (p. 90)

Consistent with the Auroville origin of the book, there are expressions of the Auroville experience, both of its trials and dark-nesses and of its promises and ecstasies. In this aspect, I was particularly struck with these lines from Shraddhavan’s “Deep Places”: “I’m in no mood for mountains— / Too near down pressing sky, / Too barren, bright, unmysteried they lie! / So, climbing to a bald white peak / I stopped—knee deep in grass and flowers.” (p. 192) Similarly, I was struck by these lines from her poem “Utter Blackness”: “In utter blackness / Shrill-voiced bats / Flap leathern wings; / A sharp-toothed wind / Tortures rickety trees.” (p. 194) Or listen to the haunting lines from Abha Prakash’s “Musings”: “Can something be made of your silence? / This threadbare blanket / hardly veils your thoughts. / They trip over the dark skeins; / run in the blanks like silver / blinded by night. / Silence may be a walled well / where screams echo / into a gathering storm.” (p. 282)

Devotion will be a wonderful addition to any devotee’s library, one that can be picked up any time to nourish one’s soul, to drink in the ambience of Sri Aurobindo’s and the Mother’s light, love, and life as experienced by their many poet-disciples. Who knows, it might even inspire the poet in you!



The poetry room

Breath of God¹

O'er India when the day is done
And twilight shadows creep,
There falls a stillness infinite,
Solemn-sweet and deep.

The river's flow is soothed and hushed,
The distant city-cries
Are quieted with a soft caress,
Till all their discord dies.

The temple-bells are muted soft,
Their tones are vesper-notes
That fall bewitching on the ear
And o're the waters float.

The flickering lamps, like fairy-gold,
Shine forth to greet the night,
And far-away a lonely voice
Hymns a pure delight.

A lingering sweetness fills the air
From mount to desert broad,
And India lies enraptured by
The holy breath of God

—Godfrey

If only there were peace²

I've always loved the patter
of a rain in spring and fall;
it really doesn't matter
the month—I love them all.
I love to see the sprinkling
of colors in the spring,
and red and yellow wrinkling
of leaves that autumns bring.
I stand in awe and wonder
of an open starry sky
and love to hear the thunder
of a storm that's coming nigh—
and feel as one who's spellbound
when I come back to the sea
after wand'ring ages inland,
and I see it suddenly.

No there is no end of wonders;
I could rave without surcease;
but then I'd have to stop and add:
“If only there were peace!”

I could celebrate the cities,
the villages and towns,
and sing in simple ditties
of all that here abounds,
of the hillsides that are sprinkled
with a thousand yellow lights
where so often I have mingled
to pass my mortal nights.
I could tell of love's enchantments
and all they've meant to me
and the faces I have worshipped
as God's own poetry,
and you'll know I've only hinted
at the wonders of this earth,
the sadness and the splendor,
the rubbish and the worth!
all yes, I'd sing its praises
though “short is summer's lease”—
but then I'd have to stop and add:
“If only there were peace!”

—David Lukashok

Deep in the Core³

Deep in the core of my heart
Is the ache of an ancient parting
That keeps me tied to some Unknown,
The one who smiled and played
His music in my being,
In a moment's flash now lost in time—
Spreading the vivid vastitudes of a luminous silence,
Revealing the deep harmonies
Eroding our borders,
Expanding our horizons.

The throb wandering in the mist,
The voice of the forlorn in the heart of things
Searching for its true home,
Calls to the azure my seeking solitude.

Into this silence of sorrow, O Nameless,
Pour the peace of your light,
Dispel the disguise from your loving touch in all I see
That I may drink deep a draught of your deathless delight.

—Damodar Reddy



Auroville⁴

Have you seen the giants walking
Across the wide red land?
Seen them moving large and grand
Against the sky?
I have seen them coming,
Tiny seedlings in their hands,
Hands and feet as red
As the dirt they work each day,
Carrying the future on their backs and in their dreams—
Seen them growing tall and strong
As they hammer out their way
In a land of yielding beauty
Making progress from delay,
Seen them growing wise and deep
As they dig the hardened clay,
Worry water from the dry red earth,
Bend their backs,
Sweat out their sorrows,
Wrest from yesterday
Tomorrows,
Coming of a new world's birth.
Have you seen the giants working
In the quiet secret places,
In the kitchens, in the gardens,
The world's forgotten spaces?
I have seen them rise, emerging
Out of ignorance and pain.
Faith sustained, they work and labor
To create a new domain.
A thousand tiny troubles
Tell the story of their struggle
As they strive to bring alive
A long forsaken dream;
In their hearts an angel singing,
Being's beauty widely winging
As they grow to know the truth
Of creation's will to be
A living harmony.
Have you seen their victory?
Have you seen the giants working
High atop construction beams?
Suffering the toils of their hardest dreams?
I have seen them growing, changing,
Working, working out the problems
Of a vast and varied nature
Through necessity and failure
With enduring dedication,
Consecrated to completion,
Seen them struggle with the grasping
Of the passing ways of time;

Hoping deep enough to open,
Feeling love enough to trust,
Finding courage to create
A living wonder with their labor,
From the nameless, from the formless
You can see a promise rising
In the clearer, higher spaces
At the center of the city;
Breathless peace, transcendent beauty,
While the glorious expansion
Of the limitless in man
Opens wide the striving hearts,
To manifest the miracle of destiny's decree.

—Loretta Shartsis

The eyes reply⁵

Bright Eyes! O can't You smile through each
And every line?
How shall I know the tame and tawdry
From the fine
Unless Your seeing sanctions mine?

How know the poem is true until
Your Touch is found—
Most infinitely delicate quest
For the Whole and Round?

“Follow”, I seem to hear You say,
“Till all is crowned,
The witchery of word and Wonder-sound.”

—Eleanor Montgomery

References

- ¹*Devotion*, p. 100, originally published in *Mother India*, August, 1960.
- ²*Devotion*, p. 304-305, originally published in *Sri Aurobindo's Action*, 2005.
- ³*Devotion*, p. 257, originally published in *A Bouquet for my Master*, 1994.
- ⁴*Devotion*, p. 156-157, originally published in *Mother India*, February, 1975.
- ⁵*Devotion*, p. 86, originally published in *Mother India*, March, 1952.



Apropos

All who aspire for the divine perfection know that the blows which the Lord deals us in His infinite love and grace are the surest and quickest way to make us progress. —The Mother

Not to judge anyone but oneself until one can see things from a calm mind and a calm vital is an excellent rule. —Sri Aurobindo

The highest good is like water. Water gives life to the ten thousand things and does not strive. It flows in places men reject and so is like the Tao. —Tao Te Ching

People only see what they are prepared to see. —Ralph Waldo Emerson

Every person, all the events of your life, are there because you have drawn them there. What you choose to do with them is up to you. —Richard Bach

Wisdom is not a question of learning facts with the mind; it can only be acquired through perfection of living. —N. Sri Ram

True understanding is possible only when we are fully conscious of our thought, not as an operative observer on this thought, but completely and without the intervention of a choice. —Jiddu Krishnamurti

The cave you fear to enter holds the treasure you seek. —Joseph Campbell

A donkey with a load of holy books is still a donkey. —Sufi saying

If the Mind dwells upon the spiritual things, then it follows that it becomes what it has dwelt upon, what it has lived upon, what it has made itself a portion of. But if the Mind dwells upon self-indulgences, self-aggrandizement, self-exaltation, selfishness in any of its forms, in any of its variations, then it has set itself at variance to that First Cause. —Edgar Cayce

Our business is to stand strongly for principles, but never to attack persons, about whose lives we can know but little.

—George Arundale

When you are offended at any man's fault, turn to yourself and study your own failings. Then you will forget your anger.

—Epictetus

"I know nothing except the fact of my ignorance." —Socrates

Man improves himself as he follows his path; if he stands still, waiting to improve before he makes a decision, he'll never move. —Paulo Coelho

If the creator had a purpose in equipping us with a neck, he surely meant us to stick it out. —Arthur Koestler

You must learn to be still in the midst of activity and to be vibrantly alive in repose. —Indira Gandhi

He is the wise man who has by perfect living gained the instinct of rightness by which he guides himself, whether in thought or action, who has found that center of balance which is always over his point of contact with circumstances. He is the man whom Nature pours the riches of all her instincts. —N. Sri Ram

You give but little when you give of your possessions. It is when you give of yourself that you truly give. —Kahlil Gibran

Soul development should take precedence over all things. —Edgar Cayce

Not out of right practice comes right thinking, but out of right thinking comes right practice. It matters enormously what you think. If you think falsely, you will act mistakenly; if you think basely, your conduct will suit your thinking. —Annie Besant

People may forget what you said, people may forget what you did, but people never forget how you made them feel. —Anonymous

Never forget that life can only be nobly inspired and rightly lived if you take it bravely and gallantly, as a splendid adventure in which you are setting out into an unknown country, to meet many a joy, to find many a comrade, to win and lose many a battle.

—Annie Besant

There is no such thing as a problem without a gift for you in its hands. You seek problems because you need their gifts.

—Richard Bach

Great things are possible only to strong souls and it's from the trivial events of daily life that strength is won. —L.W. Rogers

If words come out of the heart, they will enter the heart, but if they come from the tongue, they will not pass beyond the ears. —Al-Suhrawardi

Understand that the right to choose your own path is a sacred privilege. Use it. Dwell in possibility. —Oprah Winfrey

The love of one's country is a splendid thing. But why should love stop at the border? —Pablo Casals

The crisis of yesterday is the joke of tomorrow. —H. G. Wells.

No man can reveal to you ought, but that which already lies half asleep in the dawning of your knowledge. —Kahlil Gibran

What man really seeks is not perfection which is in the future, but fulfillment which is ever in the present. —N. Sri Ram

You must learn to be still in the midst of activity and to be vibrantly alive in repose. —Indira Gandhi

Each soul in entering the material experience does so for those purposes of advancement towards that awareness of being fully conscious of the oneness with the Creative Forces. —Edgar Cayce

Turn your face to the sun and the shadows fall behind you. —Maori proverb