

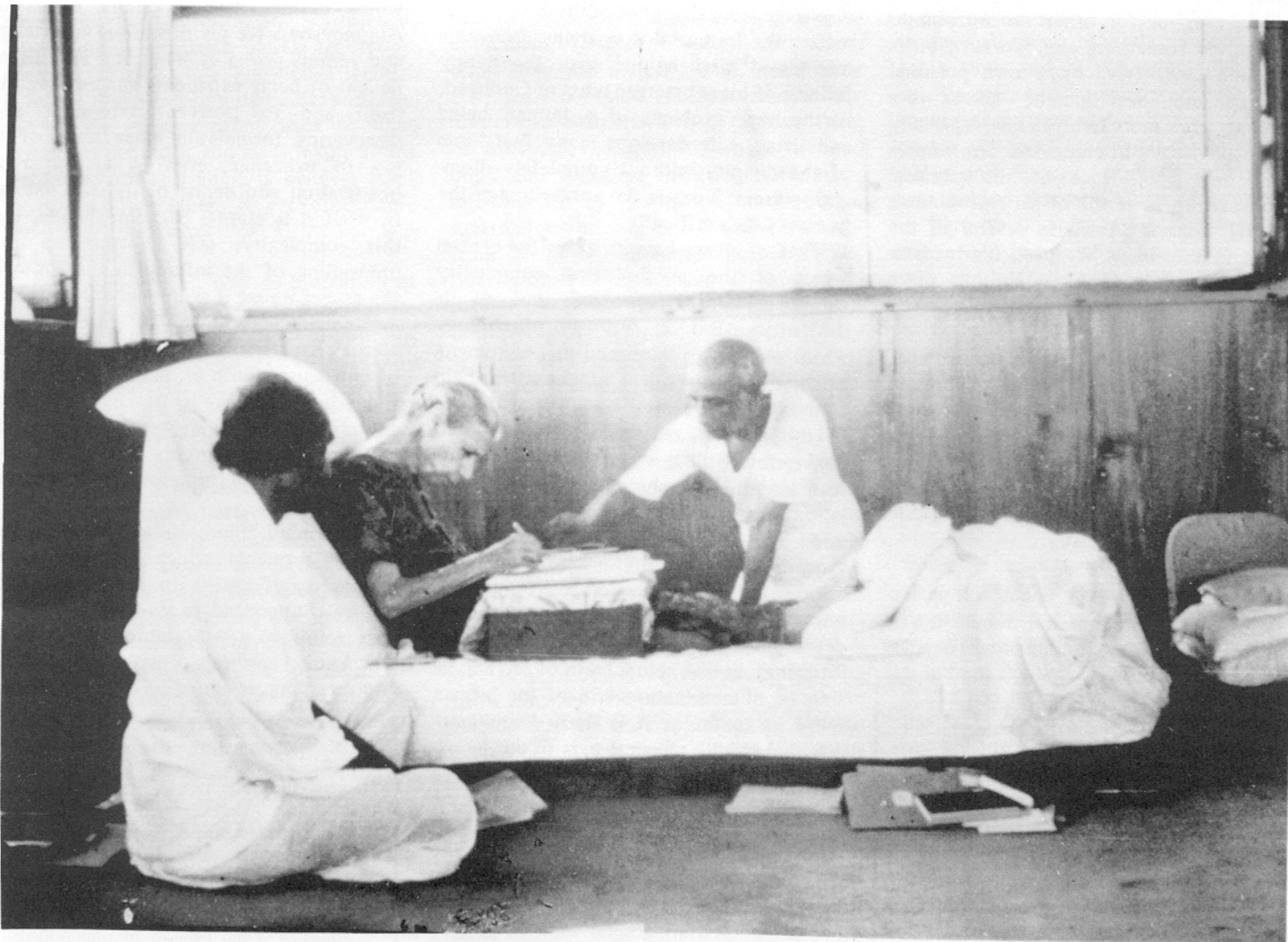


Collaboration

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Nolini, Mother, and Amrita (1959-60). *Photo courtesy Sri Aurobindo Ashram.*

We begin our eighth year of publication with a double issue combining the Fall and Winter issues. Because of an increased workload, as well as increased costs, it may become necessary for *Collaboration* to be issued twice a year instead of four times. We hope our readers will understand and continue their support.

Regarding subscriptions, we are very grateful to all of you who sent more than the minimum subscription rate. It is a great help to us in our work, especially as *Collaboration* is sent without charge to some 200 people in penal institutions who have requested it.

If you move, please notify Matagiri at once of both your old and your new address. Unless you particularly specify it to the post office when you move, third-class mail is not forwarded to you but is returned to us at our cost, which can be as high as \$.75 per returned piece.

In this issue we are continuing our exploration of Sri Aurobindo's conception of transformation, or self-perfection, which we feel will help readers with the reading of *Mother's Agenda*, an extra-

ordinary record of the Mother's search for and experience of physical transformation. The response to *Mother's Agenda* has been unprecedented and we urge readers to make this work known to their friends. Mother and Sri Aurobindo make clear that there is not merely a personal, individual work of yoga to be done, but an outer, impersonal work which, Mother says, will help the seeker move more rapidly along the path. This objective work can take many forms depending on the inspiration and nature of the seeker, and his willingness to set aside his personal interest and desires to help in a more "collective" work, either for Auroville or the Ashram, or for other Sri Aurobindo centers, or something else. To turn one's attention away from one's own personal interest and development allows the Force to work more freely in one, especially in the physical consciousness. The importance and significance of the physical manifestation in terms of Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga is shown in several of the pieces in this issue. We particularly draw our readers' attention to Nolini's piece "The Golden Harvest" and Satprem's talk about "Free Matter."

Readers are invited to submit articles, poetry and reflections for consideration for *Collaboration*. Photographs and art work that will reproduce well in black and white are also invited.

THE YOGA OF SELF PERFECTION

Sri Aurobindo

Essentially then this divine self-perfection is a conversion of the human into a likeness of and a fundamental oneness

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with the divine nature, a rapid shaping of the image of God in man and filling in of its ideal outlines. It is . . . a liberation into the divine resemblance out of the bondage of the human seeming, or . . . a coming to be one in law of being with the supreme, universal and indwelling Divine. To perceive and have a right view of our way to such a transformation we must form some sufficient working idea of the complex thing that this human nature at present is in the confused interminglings of its various principles, so that we may see the precise nature of the conversion each part of it must undergo and the most effective means for the conversion. How to disengage from this knot of thinking mortal matter the Immortal it contains, from this mentalised vital animal man the happy fullness of his submerged hints of Godhead, is the real problem of a human being and living. Life develops many first hints of the divinity without completely disengaging them; Yoga is the unravelling of the knot of Life's difficulty.

First of all we have to know the central secret of the psychological complexity which creates the problem and all its difficulties. But an ordinary psychology which only takes mind and its phenomena at their surface values, will be of no help to us; it will not give us the least guidance in this line of self-exploration and self-conversion. Still less can we find the clue in a scientific psychology with a materialistic basis which assumes that the body and the biological and physiological factors of our nature are not only the starting point but the whole real foundation and regards human mind as only a subtle development from the life and the body. That may be the actual truth of the animal side of human nature and of the human mind in so far as it is limited and conditioned by the physical part of our being. But the whole difference between man and the animal is that the animal mind, as we know it, cannot for one moment away from its origins, cannot break out from the covering, the close chrysalis which the bodily life has spun round the soul, and become something greater than its present self, a more free, magnificent and noble being; but in man mind reveals itself as a greater energy escaping from the restrictions of the vital and physical formula of being. But even this is not all that man is or can be: he has in him the power to evolve and release a still greater ideal energy which in its turn escapes out of the restrictions of the mental formula of his nature and discloses the supramental form, the ideal power of a spiritual being. In Yoga we have to travel beyond the physical nature and the superficial man and to discover the workings of the whole nature

of the real man. In other words, we must arrive at and use a psycho-physical knowledge with a spiritual foundation.

Man is in his real nature—however obscure now this truth may be to our present understanding and self-consciousness, we must for the purposes of Yoga have faith in it, and we shall then find that our faith is justified by an increasing experience and a greater self-knowledge—a spirit using the mind, life and body for an individual and a communal experience and self-manifestation in the universe. This spirit is an infinite existence limiting itself in apparent being for individual experience. It is an infinite consciousness which defines itself in finite forms of consciousness for joy of various knowledge and various power of being. It is an infinite delight of being expanding and contracting itself and its powers, concealing and discovering, formulating many terms of its joy of existence, even to an apparent obscuration and denial of its own nature. In itself it is eternal Sachchidananda, but this complexity, this knotting up and unravelling of the infinite in the finite is the aspect we see it assume in universal and in individual nature. To discover the eternal Sachchidananda, this essential self of our being within us, and live in it is the stable basis, to make its true nature evident and creative of a divine way of living in our instruments, supermind, mind, life and body, the active principle of a spiritual perfection.

Supermind, mind, life and body are the four instruments which the spirit uses for its manifestation in the workings of Nature. Supermind is spiritual consciousness acting as a self-luminous knowledge, will, sense, aesthesis, energy, self-creative and unveiling power of its own delight and

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being. Mind is the action of the same powers, but limited and only very indirectly and partially illumined. Supermind lives in unity though it plays with diversity; mind lives in a separative action of diversity, though it may open to unity. Mind is not only capable of ignorance, but, because it acts always partially and by limitation, it works characteristically as a power of ignorance: it may even and it does forget itself in a complete inconscience, or nescience, awaken from it to the ignorance of a partial knowledge and move from the ignorance towards a complete knowledge—that is its natural action in the human being—but it can never have by itself a complete knowledge. Supermind is incapable of real ignorance; even if it puts full knowledge behind it in the limitation of a particular working, yet all its working refers back to what it has put behind it and all is instinct with self-illumination; even if it involves itself in material nescience, it yet does there accurately the works of a perfect will and knowledge.

Supermind lends itself to the action of the inferior instruments; it is always there indeed at the core as a secret support of their operations. In matter it is an automatic action and effecuation of the hidden idea in things; in life its most seizable form is instinct, an instinctive, subconscious or partly subconscious knowledge and operation; in mind it reveals itself as intuition, a swift, direct and self-effective illumination of intelligence, will, sense and aesthesis. But these are merely irradiations of the supermind which accommodate themselves to the limited functioning of the obscurer instruments; its own characteristic nature is a gnosis superconscious to mind, life and body. Supermind or gnosis is the characteristic, illumined, significant action of spirit in its won native reality.

Life is an energy of spirit subordinated to action of mind and body, which fulfils itself through mentality and physicality and acts as a link between them. It has its own characteristic operation but nowhere works independently of mind and body. All energy of the spirit in action works in the two terms of existence and consciousness, for the self-formation of existence and the play and self-realisation of consciousness, for the delight of existence and the delight of consciousness. In this inferior formulation of being in which we at present live, the spirit's energy of life works between the two terms of mind and matter, supporting and effecting the formulations of substance of matter and working as a material energy, supporting the formulations of consciousness of mind and the workings of mental energy, supporting the interaction of mind

and body and working as a sensory and nervous energy. What we call vitality is for the purposes of our normal human existence power of conscious being emerging in matter, liberating from it and in it mind and the higher powers and supporting their limited action in the physical life—just as what we call mentality is power of conscious being awaking in body to light of its own consciousness and to consciousness of all the rest of being immediately around it and working at first in the limited action set for it by life and body, but at certain points and at a certain height escaping from it to a partial action beyond this circle. But this is not the whole power whether of life or mentality; they have planes of conscious existence of their own kind, other than this material level, where they are freer in their characteristic action. Matter or body itself is a limiting form of substance of spirit in which life and mind and spirit are involved, self-hidden, self-forgetful by absorption in their own externalising action, but bound to emerge from it by a self-compelling evolution. But matter too is capable of refining to subtler forms of substance in which it becomes more apparently a formal density of life, of mind, of spirit. Man himself has, besides this gross material body, an encasing vital sheath, a mental body, a body of bliss and gnosis. But all matter, all body contains within it the secret powers of these higher principles; matter is a formation of life that has no real existence apart from the informing universal spirit which gives it its energy and substance.

This is the nature of spirit and its instruments. But to understand its operations and to get at a knowledge which will give to us a power of leverage in uplifting them out of the established groove in which our life goes spinning, we have to perceive that the Spirit has based all its workings upon two twin aspects of its being, Soul and Nature, Purusha and Prakriti. We have to treat them as different and diverse in power—for in practice of consciousness this difference is valid—although they are only two sides of the same reality, pole and pole of the one conscious being. Purusha or soul is spirit cognisant of the workings of its nature, supporting them by its being, enjoying or rejecting enjoyment of them in its delight of being. Nature is power of the spirit, and she too is working and process of its power formulating name and form of being, developing action of consciousness and knowledge, throwing itself up in will and impulsion, force and energy, fulfilling itself in enjoyment. Nature is Prakriti, Maya, Shakti. If we look at her on her most external side where she seems the opposite of Purusha, she is Prakriti, an inert and

mechanical self-driven operation, inconscient or conscient only by the light of the Purusha, elevated by various degrees, vital, mental, supramental, of his soul-illumination of her workings. If we look at her on her other internal side where she moves nearer to unity with Purusha, she is Maya, will of being and becoming or of cessation from being and becoming with all their results, apparent to the consciousness, of involution, and evolution, existing and non-existing, self-concealment of spirit and self-discovery of spirit. Both are sides of one and the same thing, Shakti, power of being of the spirit which operates, whether superconsciously or consciously or subconsciously in a seeming inconscience—in fact all these motions co-exist at the same time and in the same soul—as the spirit's power of knowledge, power of will, power of process and action . . . By this power the spirit creates all things in itself, hides and discover all itself in the form and behind the veil of its manifestation.

Purusha is able by this power of its nature to take whatever poise it may will and to follow the law and form of being proper to any self-formulation. It is eternal soul and spirit in its own power of self-existence superior to and governing its manifestations; it is universal soul and spirit developed in power of becoming of its existence, infinite in the finite; it is individual soul and spirit absorbed in development of some particular course of its becoming, in appearance mutably finite in the infinite. All these things it can be at once, eternal spirit universalised in cosmos, individualised in its beings; it can too found the consciousness rejecting, governing or responding to the action of Nature in any one of them, put the others behind it or away from it, know itself as pure eternity, self-supporting universality or exclusive individuality. Whatever the formulation of its nature, soul can seem to become that and view itself as that only in the frontal active part of its consciousness; but it is never only what it seems to be; it is too the so much else that it can be; secretly, it is the all of itself that is yet hidden. It is not irrevocably limited by any particular self-formulation in Time, but can break through and beyond it, break it up or develop it, select, reject, new-create, reveal out of itself a greater self-formulation. What it believes itself to be by the whole active will of its consciousness in its instruments, that it is or tends to become . . . : what it believes it can be and has full faith in becoming, that it changes to in nature, evolves or discovers.

This power of the soul over its nature is of the utmost importance in the Yoga of self-perfection; if it did not exist, we could never get by conscious endeavour

and aspiration out of the fixed groove of our present imperfect human being; if any greater perfection were intended, we should have to wait for Nature to effect it in her own slow or swift process of evolution. In the lower forms of being the soul accepts this complete subjection to Nature, but as it rises higher in the scale, it awakes to a sense of something in itself which can command Nature; but it is only when it arrives at self-knowledge that this free will and control becomes a complete reality. The change effects itself through process of nature, not therefore by any capricious magic, but an ordered development and intelligible process. When complete mastery is gained, then the process by its self-effective rapidity may seem a miracle to the intelligence, but it still proceeds by law of the truth of Spirit—when the Divine within us by close union of our will and being with him takes up the Yoga and acts as the omnipotent master of the nature. For the Divine is our highest Self and the self of all Nature, the eternal and universal Purusha.

Purusha may establish himself in any plane of being, take any principle of being as the immediate head of his power and live in the working of its proper mode of conscious action. The soul may dwell in the principle of infinite unity of self-existence and be aware of all consciousness, energy, delight, knowledge, will, activity as conscious form of this essential truth . . . It may dwell in the principle of infinite conscious energy . . . and be aware of it unrolling out of self-existence the works of knowledge, will and dynamic soul-action for the enjoyment of an infinite delight of the being. It may dwell in the principle of infinite self-existent delight and be aware of the divine Ananda creating out of its self-existence by its energy whatever harmony of being. In these three poises the consciousness of unity dominates; the soul lives in its awareness of eternity, universality, unity, and whatever diversity there is, is not separative, but only a multitudinous aspect of oneness. It may dwell too in the principle of supermind, in a luminous self-determining knowledge, will and action which develops some coordination of perfect delight of conscious being. In the higher gnosis unity is the basis, but it takes its joy in diversity; in lower fact of supermind diversity is the basis, but it refers back always to a conscious unity and it takes joy in unity. These ranges of consciousness are beyond our present level; they are superconscious to our normal mentality. That belongs to a lower hemisphere of being.

This lower being begins where a veil falls between soul and nature, between spirit in supermind and spirit in mind,

life and body. Where this veil has not fallen, these instrumental powers are not what they are in us, but an enlightened part of the unified action of supermind and spirit. Mind gets to an independent idea of its own action when it forgets to refer back to the light from which it derives and becomes absorbed in the possibilities of its own separative process and enjoyment. The soul when it dwells in the principle of mind, not yet subject to but user of life and body, knows itself as a mental being working out its mental life and forces and images, bodies of the subtle mental substance, according to its individual knowledge, will and dynamis modified by its relation to other similar beings and powers in the universal mind. When it dwells in the principle of life, it knows itself as a being of the universal life working out action and consciousness by its desires under similar modifying conditions proper to a universal life-soul whose action is through many individual life-beings. When it dwells in the principle of matter, it knows itself as a consciousness of matter acting under a similar law of energy of material being. In proportion as it leans towards the side of knowledge, it is aware of itself more or less clearly as a soul of mind, a soul of life, a soul of body viewing and acting in or acted upon by its nature; but where it leans towards the side of ignorance, it knows itself as an ego identified with nature of mind, of life or of body, a creating of Nature. But the native tendency of material being leads towards an absorption of the soul's energy in the act of formation and material movement and a consequent self-obligation of the conscious being. The material universe begins from an apparent inconscience.

The universal Purusha dwells in all these planes in a certain simultaneity and builds upon each of these principles a world or series of worlds with its beings who live in the nature of that principle. Man, the microcosm, has all these planes in his own being, ranged from his subconscious to his superconscious existence. By a developing power of Yoga he can become aware of these concealed worlds hidden from his physical, materialised mind and senses which know only the material world, and materialised mind and senses which know only the material world, and then he becomes aware that his material existence is not a thing apart and self-existent, as the material universe in which he lives is also not a thing apart and self-existent, but is in constant relation to the higher planes and acted on by their powers and beings. He can open up and increase the action of these higher planes in himself and enjoy some sort of partici-

pation in the life of the other worlds—which, for the rest, are or can be his dwelling-place, that is to say, the station of his awareness . . . , after death or between death and rebirth in a material body. But his most important capacity is that of developing the powers of the higher principles in himself, a greater power of life, a purer light of mind, the illumination of supermind, the infinite being, consciousness and delight of spirit. By an ascending movement he can develop his human imperfection towards that greater perfection.

But whatever his aim, however exalted his aspiration, he has to begin from the law of his present imperfection, to take full account of it and see how it can be converted to the law of a possible perfection. This present law of his being starts from the inconscience of the material universe, an involution of the soul in form and subjection to material nature; and, though in this matter, life and mind have developed their own energies, yet they are limited and bound up in the action of the lower material, which is to the ignorance of his practical surface consciousness his original principle. Mind in him, though he is an embodied mental being, has to bear the control of the body and the physical life and can only by some more or less considerable effort of energy and concentration consciously control life and body. It is only by increasing that control that he can move towards perfection—and it is only by developing soul-power that he can reach it. Naturepower in him has to become more and more completely a conscious act of soul, a conscious expression of all the will and knowledge of the spirit. Prakriti has to reveal itself as Shakti of the Purusha. *The Synthesis of Yoga* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1971), pp. 597-605.)

INTEGRAL TRANSFORMATION

The Mother

[This talk is based on Mother's essays "Transformation" and "What a Child Should Always Remember."]

"We want an integral transformation, the transformation of the body and all its activities. But there is an absolutely indispensable first step that must be accomplished before anything else can be undertaken: the transformation of the consciousness. . . . However, this is only a beginning; for the outer consciousness, the various planes and parts of the outer active being are transformed only slowly and gradually as a result of the inner transformation." Mother: Why do I make a distinction

the transformation of the integral transformation and the transformation of consciousness which I mentioned earlier? What is the connection between consciousness and the other parts of the being? What are these other parts?

This transformation of consciousness is something that comes to all who have practised a yogic discipline and become aware of the divine Presence or the Truth of their being. I don't say that "many" people have realised this, but at least quite a few. What is the difference between this experience and the integral transformation?

Disciple: In the integral transformation both the outer nature and the inner consciousness are transformed. The character, the habits, etc. are completely changed, as well as the thoughts and the mental outlook on things.

Mother: Yes, but there is something which remains unchanged unless you take care and persist in your effort. What is it? The body consciousness. What is the body consciousness? The vital consciousness, of course—the physical consciousness as a whole. But then, in this physical consciousness as a whole there is the physical mind—a mind that is occupied with all the ordinary things and responds to everything around you. There is also the vital consciousness, which is the awareness of sensations, impulses, enthusiasms and desires. Finally, there is the physical consciousness itself, the material consciousness, the body consciousness, and that is the one which has so far never been entirely transformed. The global, overall consciousness of the body has been transformed, that is, one can throw off the bondage of thought, of habits that one no longer considers inevitable. That can change, it has been changed. But what remains to be changed is the consciousness of the cells.

There is a consciousness in the cells: it is what we call the "body consciousness" and it is wholly bound up with the body. This consciousness has much difficulty in changing, because it is under the influence of the collective suggestion which is absolutely opposed to the transformation. So one has to struggle with this collective suggestion, not only with the collective suggestion of the present, but with the collective suggestion which belongs to the earth-consciousness as a whole, the terrestrial human consciousness which goes back to the earliest formation of man. That has to be overcome before the cells can be spontaneously aware to the Truth, of the Eternity of matter.

Of course, until now, those who have achieved this conscious transformation, who are aware of the eternal and infinite life withing themselves, in the depths of their being, must, in order to preserve

this consciousness, constantly refer back to their inner experience, return to their inner contemplation, live in a sort of more or less constant meditation. And when they come out of meditation, their outer nature is pretty much what it was before, and their way of thinking and reacting is not very different—unless they give up action altogether. But in that case the inner realisation, this inner transformation of the consciousness is helpful only for the person who has achieved it, but it doesn't change the condition of matter or earthly life in the least.

For this transformation to succeed, all human beings—even all living beings as well as their material environment—must be transformed. Otherwise things will remain as they are: an individual experience cannot change terrestrial life. This is the essential difference between the old idea of transformation—that is, the becoming conscious with the psychic being and the inner life—and transformation as we conceive it, and speak of it. Not only an individual or group of individuals or even all individuals, but life, the overall consciousness of this more or less developed material life, have to be transformed. Without such a transformation we shall have the same misery, the same calamities and the same atrocities in the world. A few individuals will escape from it by their psychic development, but the general mass will remain in the same state of misery.

Disciple: If only the inner consciousness is changed, won't some impurities still remain in the outer being?

Mother: Yes, of course. That is the essential difference between our yoga and the old yogic disciplines which dealt only with the inner consciousness. The old beliefs used to say—and some people interpret the Bhagavad Gita in this way—that there is no fire without smoke, no life without ignorance in life. That is the common experience, but it is not our idea, is it?

We know by experience that if we go down into the subconscious, lower than the physical consciousness, into the subconscious and even lower still into the inconscient, we can find in ourselves the origin of atavism, of what comes from our early education and the environment in which we lived. And this gives a kind of special characteristic to the individual, to his outer nature, and it is generally believed that we are born like that and we will stay like that. But by going down into the subconscious, into the inconscient, one can trace the origin of this formation and undo what has been done, change the movements and reactions of the ordinary nature by a conscious and deliberate

action and thus really transform one's character. This is not a common achievement, but it has been done. So one may assert not only that it can be done, but that it has been done. It is the first step towards the integral transformation, but after that, there remains the transformation of the cells which I mentioned earlier.

There is an article by Sri Aurobindo in one of the *Bulletins* which describes the various stages through which the entire physical being can be changed. [The article was subsequently published separately as *The Supramental Manifestation upon Earth*.] And this is what so far has never been done.

Disciple: Does the inconscient in oneself belong to the individual being or to the earth?

Mother: The inconscient is not individualised and when you go down into the inconscient in yourself, it is the inconscient of matter. One can't say that each individual has his own inconscient, for that would already be a beginning of individualisation, and when you go down into the inconscient, it is perhaps not the universal but at least the terrestrial inconscient.

The light, the consciousness that comes down into this inconscient in order to transform it must necessarily be a consciousness that is close enough to be able to touch it. It is not possible to conceive of a light—the supramental light, for example—that would have the power to individualise the inconscient. But, through a conscious, individualised being, this light can be brought down into the inconscient and gradually make it conscious.

First of all, it is the subconscious that has to become conscious, and indeed the main difficulty of the integral transformation is that things are constantly rising up from the subconscious. You think you have got a certain movement under control—anger, for example. You try very hard to control your anger and succeed to some extent, then suddenly it rises up again for some reason unknown to you, as if you hadn't done anything at all, and you have to start all over again. If it were the transformed part of the being going back to its old ways, it would be most depressing, but it is not like that. It is the material part, the material life which is sustained, supported, so to say, by a subconscious life. And this subconscious is beginning to get individualised around some people; it has certain affinities with a kind of subconscious somewhat like our own, and that is where the things you have repressed or thrown out of your nature go to—and one fine day they rise up again. But if you are able to bring the light into the subconscious and make

it conscious, this will no longer happen.
Disciple: One often has the experience of struggling more or less successfully with a defect or a wrong movement, but just when one gives up expecting a total victory, the thing is removed as if from outside. Why is that?

Mother: There are two main reasons for this. In such a case, you may suddenly become receptive, and in this state of receptivity you receive the help that is needed to remove the defect and the help becomes effective. The other reason is that, while trying with patience and perseverance, you have—perhaps unknowingly—hit upon the origin of the difficulty in the subconscious. And once that is done, it is easy to transform whatever you wanted to transform in yourself. But this transformation may seem to you to come “from outside,” because you were not aware of what was going on. It does not come from outside, it is outside your active consciousness, and you are aware only of the “result” of your action. It may be one of these two things or both combined. [Mother’s Collected Works, vol. 15, *Words of the Mother* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1980), pp. 314-18.]

PSYCHOLOGICAL PERFECTION

The Mother

[Mother shows the white champak flower, which she has named “Psychological Perfection.”]

Mother: Who remembers this? [Counting the petals.] One, two, three, four, five psychological perfections. What are the five psychological perfections?

For they can be changed. And in fact, to tell you my secrets, every time I give it to someone, they are not always the same psychological perfections [which I have in mind]. That depends on people’s needs. Even to the same person I may give at different times different psychological perfections; so it’s not fixed. But the first time this flower was named “Psychological Perfection” (I remember very well it was at a gathering up there where Prosperity [a place where Mother used to distribute disciple’s needs every month] now is, where I go on the first of the month; there was a gathering and we had decided the five psychological perfections), at that time they were noted down, but as for me it is something very fluid—I told you it depends on the circumstances and needs—I don’t remember what was chosen the first time.

So, if someone knows it, he can tell us, we’ll compare. . . .

Disciple: Aspiration, devotion, sincerity and faith.

Mother: That makes only four so far.

Disciple: And surrender.

Mother: Surrender? Someone told me something else. . . .

Disciple: Faith, sincerity, aspiration, devotion, surrender.

Mother: But that’s what he just said. [turning to another disciple] You—a little while ago, you told me “faithfulness.”

Disciple: I said that, but it’s not faithfulness, instead of faithfulness it’s faith.

Mother: But why should there not be faithfulness? I didn’t put it down, because I didn’t try to recall anything, I simply wrote down what seemed to me the most important and most general. But it may be put in various ways.

In any case, what is always there, in all combinations and to whomever I give it, the first among them all is sincerity. For if there is no sincerity one cannot advance even by half a step. So that is the first, and it is always there.

But it is possible to translate it by another word, if you prefer if, which would be “transparency.” I shall explain this word:

Someone is in front of me and I am looking at him; I look into his eyes. And if this person is sincere or “transparent,” through his eyes I go down and I see his soul—clearly. But—this is precisely the experience when I look at somebody and see a little cloud, then I continue, I see a screen, and then sometimes it is a wall, and afterwards it is something quite black; and all this must be crossed [through], and holes bored in order to go through; and even then I am not sure if at the last minute I may not find myself before a door of bronze so thick that I shall never get through and see his soul; so, of such a person I can immediately say that he is not sincere. But I can also say, figuratively, that he is not transparent. That is the first thing.

There is a second, which is obviously as indispensable if you want to go forward; it is to have faith. Or another word, which seems more limited but is for me more important, because (it is a question of experience) if your faith is not made of a complete trust in the Divine, well, you may very easily remain under the impression that you have faith and yet be losing all trust in the divine Power or divine Goodness, or the Trust the Divine has in you. These are the three stumbling blocks:

Those who have what they call an unshakable faith in the Divine, and say, “It is the Divine who is doing everything, who can do everything; all that happens in me, in others, everywhere, is the work of the Divine and the Divine alone,” if they follow this with some kind of logic, after some time they will blame the Divine

for all the most terrible wrongs which take place in the world and make of Him a real demon, cruel and frightful—if they have no trust.

Or again, they do have faith, but tell themselves, “Well, I have faith in the Divine, but this world, I see quite well what it’s like! First of all I suffer so much, don’t I? I am very unhappy, far more unhappy than all my neighbors”—for one is always far more unhappy than all one’s neighbors—“I am very unhappy and, truly, life is cruel to me. But then the Divine is divine, He is All-Goodness, All-Generosity, All-Harmony, so how is it that I am so unhappy? He must be powerless; otherwise being so good how could He let me suffer so much?

That is the second stumbling block.

And the third: there are people who have what may be called a warped and excessive modesty or humility and who tell themselves, “Surely the Divine has thrown me out, I am good for nothing, He can do nothing with me, the only thing for me is to give up the game, for He finds me unworthy of Him!”

So, unless one adds to faith a total and complete trust in the Divine Grace, there will be difficulties. So both are necessary. . . .

Now, we have put “devotion” in this series. Yes, devotion is all very well, but unless it is accompanied by many other things it too may make many mistakes. It may meet with great difficulties.

You have devotion, and you keep your ego. And then your ego makes you do all sorts of things out of devotion, things which are terribly egoistic. That is to say, you think only of yourself, not of others, nor of the world, nor of the work, nor of what ought to be done—you think only of your devotion. And you become tremendously egoistic. And so, when you find out that the Divine, for some reason, does not answer to your devotion with the enthusiasm you expected of Him, you despair and fall back into the same three difficulties I was just speaking about: either the Divine is cruel—we have read that, there are many such stories, of enthusiastic devotees who abuse the Divine because He is no longer as gentle and near to them as before, He has withdrawn, “Why hast Thou deserted me? Thou hast abandoned me, O monster!” They don’t dare to say this, but think it, or else they say, “Oh! I must have made such a serious mistake that I am thrown out,” and they fall into despair.

But there is another movement which should constantly accompany devotion. . . . That kind of sense of gratitude that the Divine exists; that feeling of a marvelling thankfulness which truly fills you with

a sublime joy at the fact that the Divine exists, that there is something in the universe which is the Divine, that it is not just the monstrosity we see, that there is the Divine, the Divine exists. And each time that the least thing puts you either directly or indirectly in contact with this sublime Reality of divine existence, the heart is filled with so intense, so marvellous a joy, such a gratitude as of all things has the most delightful taste.

There is nothing which gives you a joy equal to that of gratitude. One hears a bird sing, sees a lovely flower, looks at a little child, observes an act of generosity, reads a beautiful sentence, looks at the setting sun, no matter what, suddenly this come upon you, this kind of emotion—indeed so deep, so intense—that the world manifests the Divine, that there is something behind the world which is the Divine.

So I find that devotion without gratitude is quite incomplete, gratitude must come with devotion.

I remember that once we spoke of courage as one of the perfections; I remember having written it down once in a list. But this courage means having a taste for the supreme adventure. And this taste for supreme adventure is aspiration—an aspiration which takes hold of you completely and flings you, without calculation and without reserve and without a possibility of withdrawal, into the great adventure of the divine discovery, the great adventure of the divine meeting, the yet greater adventure of the divine Realisation; you throw yourself into the adventure without looking back and without asking for a single minute, “What’s going to happen?” For if you ask what is going to happen, you never start, you always remain stuck there, rooted to the spot, afraid to lose something, to lose your balance.

That’s why I speak of courage—but really it is aspiration. They go together. A real aspiration is something full of courage.

And now, surrender. In English the word is “surrender,” there is no French word which gives exactly that sense. But Sri Aurobindo has said—I think we have read this—that surrender is the first and absolute condition for doing the yoga. So, if we follow what he has said, this is not just one of the necessary qualities: it is the first attitude indispensable for beginning the yoga. If one has not decided to make a total surrender, one cannot begin.

But for this surrender to be total, all these qualities are necessary. And I add one more—for so far we have only four—I add endurance. For, if you are

not able to face difficulties without getting discouraged and without giving up, because it is too difficult, and if you are incapable. . . well, of receiving blows and continuing, of “pocketing” them, as they say—when you receive blows as a result of your defects, of putting them in your pocket and continuing to go forward without flagging—you don’t go very far; at the first turning where you lose sight of your little habitual life, you fall into despair and give up the game.

The most . . . how shall I put it? The most material form of this is perseverance. Unless you are resolved to begin the same thing over again a thousand times if need be . . . You know, people come to me in despair, “But I thought it was done and now I must begin again!” And if they are told, “But that’s nothing, you will probably have to begin again a hundred times, two hundred times, a thousand times; you take one step forward and think you are secure, but there will always be something to bring back the same difficulty a little farther on. You think you have solved the problem, you must solve it yet once again; it will turn up again looking just a little different, but it will be the same problem,” and if you are not determined that “Even if it comes back a million times, I shall do it a million times, but I shall go through with it,” well, you won’t be able to do the yoga. This is absolutely indispensable.

People have a beautiful experience and say, “Ah, now this is it!” And then it settles down, diminishes, gets veiled, and suddenly something quite unexpected, absolutely commonplace and apparently completely uninteresting comes before you and blocks your way. And then you say, “Ah! What’s the good of having made this progress if it’s going to start all over again? Why should I do it? I made an effort, I succeeded, achieved something, and now it’s as if I had done nothing! It’s indeed hopeless.” For you have no endurance.

If one has endurance, one says, “It’s all right. Good, I shall begin again as often as necessary; a thousand times, ten thousand times, a hundred thousand times if necessary, I shall begin again—but I shall go to the end and nothing will have the power to stop me on the way.”

This is most necessary. Most necessary.

So here’s my proposal: we put surrender first, at the top of the list, that is, we accept what Sri Aurobindo has said—that to do the integral yoga, one must first resolve to surrender entirely to the Divine, there is no other way, this is the way. But after that one must have the five psychological virtues, five psychological perfections, and we say that these perfections are:

Sincerity or Transparency
Faith or Trust (Trust in the Divine naturally)
Devotion or Gratitude
Courage or Aspiration
Endurance or Perseverance

One form of endurance is faithfulness, faithfulness to one’s resolution—being faithful. One has taken a resolution, one is faithful to one’s resolution. This is endurance.

There you are. If one persists, there comes a time when one is victorious. Victory is to the most persistent. [Mother’s Collected Works, vol. 10 Questions and Answers 1959 (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1977), pp. 36-42.]

NOTES ON THE WAY

The Mother

18 May 1966

You have heard about those drugs [LSD]? Have you seen any pictures? I have. People are thrust without the least defense into the lowest vital, and according to their nature they find it either frightful or marvellous. For example, the cloth covering a cushion or a chair suddenly takes on a wondrous beauty. This lasts for about two or three hours. Naturally, they are completely out of their senses the whole time. And the pity of it is that people call these “spiritual experiences,” and there is nobody to tell them that this has nothing to do with spiritual experience.

Some time ago I received a letter from someone who told me he had taken those drugs, and he said he had had terrible visions, that the walls of his room were alive with thousands of evil and desperate faces which persecuted him till nightfall. There you are!

And so this gave me yet another proof. . . I saw pictures in Life [magazine]—there were some photographs—it was though you had entered a madhouse. For these are images registered in the subconscious—images of thoughts, images of sensations, images of feelings, registered in the subconscious—which become objective. Thus they give the exact picture of what is within.

For instance, if you have the feeling or thought that someone is wicked or ridiculous or does not like you, in short, ideas of this kind—generally all this comes up in dream, but here you are not asleep and you have the dream!—They come to play the game you have thought of; what you have thought of them comes back upon you in their form. So this is an indication: for those who see happy, amiable,

beautiful images, this means that within, everything is going on quite well (vitality), but for those who see terrifying or evil things, or things of that sort, it means that the vital is not pretty.

Disciple: Yes, but isn't there an objective vital where these visions have no relation with our own subconscious?

Mother: Yes, there is, but it hasn't the same character.

Disciple: Not the same character?

Mother: One cannot know it unless one goes into vital fully conscious—conscious of his own vital and conscious in the vital world as one is conscious in the physical world. One goes there consciously. It is not a dream, it hasn't the nature of a dream; it is like an activity, an experience, and it is quite different.

Disciple: But there do exist also these vital worlds where one is persecuted, terrible worlds, worlds of torture and persecution, isn't it so?

Mother: Ninety percent subjective.

Ninety percent subjective. For more than a year, regularly, every night at the same hour and in the same way, I used to enter the vital to do some special work there. This was not due to my own will: I was destined to do it. It was something I had to do. Now, for instance, this entry into the vital has been often described: there is a passage where beings are posted to keep you from entering (much has been said about these things in books of occultism). Well, I know by an experience, not casual, but repeated and understood, that this opposition or this malevolence is ninety percent psychological, in the sense that if you do not anticipate it or fear it, or that there isn't something in you that fears the unknown nor has all these movements of apprehension and so forth, then it is like a shadow across a picture or the projection of an image: it has not concrete reality.

I have had, it is true, one or two real vital battles in going to the rescue of someone who has gone astray. And twice I have received bows, and the next morning when I woke up there was the mark [Mother touches her right eye]. Well, in these two cases, I know it was something in me—not any fear, I have never been afraid there, but because I anticipated it. The idea that “this could very well happen” and the fact that I was expecting it, made the blow come. I knew it for certain. And if I had been in what may be called my “normal state,” of inner certitude, this could not have touched me, it could not. And I had had this apprehension because an occultist whom I knew had lost an eye in a vital fight and she had told me about it; and so [Mother laughs], that gave me the idea

that this was possible, because it had happened to her! But when I am in my own state—I cannot even say that, it is not “personal,” it is a way of being—when one is in the true state, when one is a conscious being and has the true way of being, this cannot touch one.

It is like the experience of meeting an enemy and wanting to strike him, and then the blows do not go home and all that you do has no effect—it is always subjective. I have had every proof, every proof.

Disciple: But then, what is objective?

Mother: There are worlds, there are beings, there are powers, they have their own existence; but what I mean is that their relation with the human consciousness for the form they take.

It is as with the gods, my child, it is the same thing. All these beings of the Overmind, all these gods, the relation with them, the form of these relations, depend upon the human consciousness. You may be . . . It has been said, “Men are cattle for the gods,” but if men accept to be cattle. There is in the essence of human nature a sovereignty over all things which is spontaneous and natural, when it is not falsified by a certain number of ideas and so-called knowledge.

One could say that man is the all-powerful master of all the states of being of his nature, but that he has forgotten to be this.

In this state of forgetfulness, everything becomes concrete, yes, in the sense that one may have a mark left on the eye; it may translate itself like this, but it is because . . . because one has allowed it to happen.

It is the same thing with the gods. They can govern your life and torment you a lot (they can help you a lot also), but their power, in relation to you, to the human being, is the power you give them.

This is something I learnt gradually over several years. But now I am sure of it.

Naturally, in the evolutionary curve, it was necessary for man to forget his omnipotence, because it had simply puffed him up with pride and vanity, and so had become completely distorted; and he had to be made to feel that many things were stronger and more powerful than he. But essentially this is not true. It is a necessity of the curve of progress, that's all.

Man is potentially a god. He believed himself an actual god. He needed to learn that he was nothing better than a poor little worm crawling on the earth, and so life scraped, scraped, scraped him in every way until he had. . . not understood, but at least felt a bit. But as soon as he takes

the right stand, he knows that he is potentially a god. Only, he must become this, that is, overcome all that is not this.

This relationship with the gods is extremely interesting . . . As long as man stands dazzled, lost in admiration of the power, beauty, accomplishments of these divine beings, he is their slave. But when these become for him different ways of being of the Supreme and nothing more, and himself yet another way of being of the Supreme, which he must become, then the relation changes and he is no longer their slave—he is **not** their slave.

Disciple: Then the only objectivity is the Supreme.

Mother: There, you have said it, my child. It is this. It is exactly this.

If the word “objectivity” is taken to mean “real independent existence”—self-existence, independent and real—there is only the Supreme.

Disciple: Nevertheless, there is something disquieting about this almost total subjectivity.

Mother: Oh, why?

Disciple: One wonders what is real, what one really comes across? Isn't everything a tissue of imagination? This is rather disquieting.

Mother: But when one has the positive experience of the one and only existence of the Supreme and that all is only the Supreme playing to Himself, instead of being something disquieting or unpleasant or troubling, it is on the contrary a sort of total security.

The one reality is the Supreme. And all this is a game He plays to Himself. I find this much more comforting than the opposite view.

And after all, this is the only certitude that all this may become something marvellous; otherwise. . .

And this too depends altogether on the stand one takes. A complete identification with the game as a game, as something self-existent and independent, is probably necessary in the beginning, in order to play the game properly. But here's a moment when one reaches precisely this detachment and so complete a disgust for all the falsehood of existence, that it is no longer tolerable unless one sees it as the inner play of the Lord in Himself, for Himself.

And then one feels this absolute and perfect freedom which makes the most marvellous possibilities become real, and all the most sublime things imaginable are realizable. [Mother enters into contemplation.]

You will see, there is a moment when one cannot bear oneself or life unless one takes the attitude that it is the Lord who is everything. You see, this Lord, how

many things He possesses. He plays with all this—He plays, He plays at changing the positions. And so, when one sees this, this whole, one feels the illimitable marvel, and that all our most wonderful aspirations, all these are quite possible and will even be surpassed. Then one is comforted. Otherwise, existence. . . it is inconsolable. But like this, it becomes charming. I shall tell you about this one day.

When one feels the unreality of life, the unreality of life when compared with a reality which is certainly beyond, above, but at the same time within life, then, at that moment. . . “Ah, yes, at last this, it is true—at last this, it is true and deserves to be true. This is the realisation of all possible splendours, all possible marvels, yes, of all possible felicities, all possible beauties, yes, this; otherwise. . .”

I have come to that!

And then, I feel as though I still have one foot here, one foot there, which is not a very comfortable position, because. . . because one would wish that there be nothing but That.

The present way of being is a past which truly should no longer be there. While the other: “Ah! At last! At last! It is for this that there is a world.”

And everything else remains quite as concrete and real—it does not become hazy! It is just as concrete, just as real, but. . . but it becomes divine, because. . . because it is the Divine. It is the Divine playing.

28 September 1966

Disciple: Why is there suffering? How to cure suffering?

Mother: For a long time quite recently, that is to say, for days together, there was a very acute, very intense, very clear perception that the action of the Force translated itself externally by what we call “suffering” because that is the only kind of vibration which can pull Matter out of its inertia.

The supreme Peace, the supreme Calm are deformed and disfigured into inertia and into *tamas*, and precisely because this was the deformation of true Peace and Calm, there was no reason why it should change! A certain vibration of awakening—of reawakening—was necessary to come out of this *tamas*, that could not pass directly from *tamas* to Peace; something was needed to shake the *tamas*, and that is translated externally by suffering.

I am speaking here of physical suffering, because all the other sufferings—vital, mental, emotional sufferings—are due to a wrong working of the mind, and these. . . may simply be classed together as Falsehood, that’s all. But physical suffering

gives me the impression of a child being beaten, because here, in Matter, Falsehood has become ignorance; that is to say, there is no bad will—no bad will is there in Matter, all is inertia an *ignorance*: complete ignorance of the Truth, ignorance of the Origin, ignorance of the Possibility and ignorance even of what is to be done in order not to suffer physically. This ignorance is everywhere in the cells, and it is only the experience, the experience of what is translated in this rudimentary consciousness as suffering, which can awaken, bring forth the need to know and to cure, and the aspiration to transform oneself.

It has become a certainty, because in all the cells there is born the aspiration, which is becoming more and more intense and which wonders at the resistance; but they have observed that whenever something goes wrong in the working (that is to say, instead of being supple, spontaneous, natural, the working becomes a painful effort, a struggle against something which takes the appearance of a bad will, but is only a reticence that does not understand), at that moment, the intensity of the aspiration, of the call, is tenfold, becomes constant. The difficulty is to remain at that state of intensity. Generally, everything falls back, I cannot say into somnolence, but a kind of relaxation: you take things easy; and it is only when the inner disorder becomes painful that the intensity grows and remains permanent. For hours—hours together—without slackening, the call, the aspiration, the will to be united with the Divine, to become the Divine, is maintained at its maximum. Why? Because there was externally what is called a physical disorder, a suffering. Otherwise, when there is no suffering, from time to time one soars up, then one falls back into a slackening; again another time one soars up once more. . . there is no end to it. That lasts eternally. If we can’t things to go fast (relatively fast according to the rhythm of our life), this smack of the whip is necessary. I am convinced of it, because as soon as you are within your inner being you look upon that with contempt (as regards oneself).

But then, all of a sudden, when there comes this true Compassion of the Divine Love, and when one sees all these things that appear so horrible, so abnormal, so absurd, this great pain which is upon all beings and even upon all things. . . then there takes birth in this physical being the aspiration to soothe, to cure, to remove that. There is in Love, at its Origin, something which is translated constantly as the intervention of Grace: a force, a sweetness, something like a vibration of solace spread

everywhere, but which an illumined consciousness can direct, concentrate on some points. And it is there, there itself that I saw the true use one can make of thought: thought serves as a kind of channel to carry this vibration from place to place, wherever it is necessary. This force, this vibration of sweetness is there in a static way upon the world, pressing in order to be received, but it is an impersonal action. And thought—illumined thought, surrendered thought, thought which is no longer anything but an instrument, which tries no longer to initiate things, which is satisfied with being moved by the higher Consciousness—thought serves as an intermediary to establish a contact, a relation, and to enable this impersonal Force to act wherever it is necessary, upon definite points.

It may be said in an absolute way that an evil always carries its own remedy. One might say that the cure of any suffering coexists with the suffering. So, instead of seeing an evil “useless” and “stupid” as it is generally thought to be, you see that the progress, the evolution which has made the suffering necessary—which is the cause of the suffering and the very reason for its existence—attains the intended result; and at the same time the suffering is cured, for those who are able to open themselves and relieve. The three things—suffering as a means of progress, progress, and the cure of suffering—are coexistent, simultaneous; that is to say, they do not follow each other, they are there at the same time.

If, at the moment when the transforming action creates a suffering, there is in that which suffers the necessary aspiration and opening, the remedy also is taken in at the same time, and the effect is total, complete: transformation, with the action necessary to obtain it, and, at the same time, cure of the false sensation produced by the resistance. And the suffering is replaced by. . . something which is not known upon this earth, but which is akin to joy, well-being, trust and security. It is a supersensation, in a perfect peace, and which is obviously the only thing that can be eternal.

This analysis expresses very imperfectly what one would call the “content” of Ananda.

I believe it is something that has been felt, experience, partially and in a very fleeting manner, through all the ages, but which has just begun to concentrate and almost concretise itself upon earth. But physical Matter, in its cellular form, has, one cannot say fear or anxiety, but a kind of apprehension of new vibrations, and this apprehension naturally takes away from the cells their receptivity

and assumes the appearance of uneasiness—it is not suffering, but an uneasiness. When, however, this apprehension is counter-balanced and cured by aspiration and the will for total surrender and by the act of total surrender, then this sort of apprehension, having disappeared, becomes a supreme well-being.

All this, they are as though microscopic studies of the phenomena of consciousness, free from mental intervention. The necessity of using words to express oneself brings this mental intervention, but in the experience it does not exist. And it is very interesting, because the pure experience has a content of truth, of reality, which disappears as soon as the mind intervenes. There is a savour of true reality which altogether escapes expression because of that. It is the same difference as between an individual and his portrait, a fact and the story told. It is like that. But it is much more subtle.

And then, to come back to what we were saying just now, when one is conscious of this Force—this Force, this Compassion in its essential reality—and when one sees how it can act through the conscious individual, one has the key to the problem. [Mother's Collected Works, vol. 11, Notes on the Way (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1980), pp. 35-44.]

THE GOLDEN HARVEST

Nolini Kanta Gupta

The poet-saint Ramprasad says:

"O my man, you do not know how to till!

If you knew! Oh, you have such a piece of land—

This human life of yours!

You could have reaped gold from it."

Indeed, this human body is the precious land from which one could reap a harvest of gold. For this body has the proud privilege of receiving the golden touch of the Divine materially and to hold it and maintain it. This materialisation of the Divine is the supreme alchemy of which the body is capable. There are other forms of union with the Divine, all forms of consciousness, of the mind, of the vital—subtle perceptions, thoughts, emotions, even sensations—all delightful but immaterial: even without the body they can be felt and experienced, they are true and real in their own authenticity. But the body brings in a new element, altogether different a phenomenon. It makes a thing living, real materially. The human body has this strange virtue of

Touch—the body contact—which makes what is dead (matter) alive. . . We know the biblical adage "The proof of the pudding is in the eating thereof." This capacity of eating is the privilege of the body alone: only the body can supply this proof that makes a thing concretely real. Why did Ramprasad utter these words somewhat rough and uncouth to a civilised hearing?—"Oh, Mother, I will eat you up, devour you, even as I do a plate of vegetables!" There is delight in devotion, there is joy in surrender, even ecstasy in love, but where is the inexplicable exquisiteness of utter oneness in the physical embrace—as for example in Radha's experience?

Radha is the personification of the supreme global and integral identification of the Divine with the human, or rather the transfusion of the Divine Person into the substance of the human person. Radha says, every drop of blood, every particle of flesh in her body cries out for every drop of blood, every particle of flesh of Krishna's body. Radha has made as it were a fossil transmutation of her body, replacing it bit by bit by Krishna's body. She feels she is none other than Krishna even physically himself. It is an utter unity and identity—not merely in the Vedantic way, up there in Atman, but down here also: it is an infusion or immixture in Nature also. It is a kind of coalescence by fusion as of the subatomic particles (the matrix, by the way, of the supreme incalculable energy). Because of this supreme union and identification, even down to the material body, Radha feels that her body is no longer her own but Krishna's and therefore utterly sacred. She cries out as the Vaishnava poet says, "O sister, when this body dies, do not burn it or throw it into the river, but keep it suspended on a branch of the tamal tree. Tamal has a dark hue, my Krishna is also of dark hue. I love tamal because I love Krishna."

The earth, the body that has once received the touch of the earth-made body of the Divine, never loses the virtue of the contact. That contact remains imbedded in the substance of the mortal human body: it abides there as a secret aroma, as the fragrance of a flower hidden in its pollens. So long as the flower lasts, the perfume will last—even after, even when it has withered. [From *The Mother: A Bouquet of Homage*, edited by A. Basu (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Research Academy, 1980).]

The Divine is present in the very atoms of our body.

—The Mother

FREE MATTER

Satprem

[The following passage is an extract from *Sept Jours en Inde avec Satprem (Seven Days in India with Satprem)*, a series of interviews with Satprem, author of *Sri Aurobindo or The Adventure of Consciousness*. The interviews were conducted by Frederick de Towarnicki (identified in the extract by "T") for the radio program *France-Culture*. The French edition of the book was published earlier this year by Editions Robert Laffont. Satprem speaks of his adventurous life from his childhood on the coast of Brittany to his concentration camp experience to his adventures in the jungles of South America, and finally of his years with Mother "collecting" Mother's Agenda during her search for the key to physical transformation. At the present time the book is not available in English, but there are hopes an English translation will eventually be published. Satprem has very kindly given us permission to publish the brief extract. The translation is by the editor of Collaboration.]

Towarnicki: How does the traditional spirituality of India manifest today: Buddhism, Hinduism, etc.?

SATPREM: Ah, it's always the same thing! They all do meditation, they all withdraw from appearances and activity, and then they tried to reach another depth of consciousness, and then there you are. It's the old story. That's lasted. . . several thousand years.

And what is their solution?

Where is India today with its spiritual power?

It's one of the most corrupt countries in the world. Instead of embodying the truth, as the Rishis of old knew how to do, they've wanted to confine themselves to pleasant little meditations, and then life went on stirring as much as it could, and interests, the mechanism took possession of Indian matter, because they neglected Matter. So now, they have to find again behind that false crust—find again the potent truth.

T.: Can you say that beyond Buddhism...

SATPREM: Yes.

T.: . . . the source from which Sri Aurobindo, Mother or you drew is very close to the teaching of the Vedas, the Rishis?

SATPREM: Ah, they're the only ones (whom we know of in any case).

The Rishis had the knowledge of "that." They had the knowledge of the truth in the heart of Matter: what they called "the sun in the darkness."

The atom is a sun—a sun covered with a great darkness.

The Rishis knew that.

Only, if the Rishis, five, six, seven thousand years ago, had discovered, had

really embodied the secret, but then evolution, our human evolution would not have taken place! It wasn't enough for a few Rishis on their pinnacle to discover the secret. All humanity has to discover it—reach it.

Evolution is not, once again, a matter for a few privileged people. There are forerunners: the Rishis were forerunners.

There are always, at the beginning of an experience or a civilization or a cycle, there are always those who herald, who lay down the course or trajectory of a whole age—who see the trajectory, who tell you, "It will be like this, this is the goal." And afterwards, you have to travel the whole road, you know, so that it's not a fact for one little individual any more, but a fact for the whole species.

Before, it was a fact for a privileged civilization; but now it's not even a fact for a civilization any more: it's only the one human group here which has to have the experience.

T.: The Rishis were Vedic priests who lived before Buddha. . .

SATPREM: Yes, the Rishis . . . were first of all warriors. They lived perhaps 7,000 years ago, that we don't know too. It was well before Buddhism. Buddhism dates from 500 years before the Christian era. It was well before the Upanishads, which are already a rather distorted form of the Vedas: already you're entering the intellectual cycle.

The Vedas have the secret. The murmur it, they say something about it in an imaged form.

You can't judge what a . . . fantastic revolution the discovery of Mother and Sri Aurobindo is.

You know, in our world everything is devalued. Things have been so inflated—all sorts of little things have become enormous—that nothing seems to mean anything. Our mental world is very devalued. It's the most tremendous devaluation.

But, really, the discovery of Mother and Sri Aurobindo is. . . There has never been anything more important since the appearance of the first living matter.

It's the change in the Law of the first living matter.

I don't know if man can really grasp what that means. . .

And I would really like to come back again to the process of the descent into the body.

I would like men really to grasp the practical secret, the "why you can." At the very time when all biology is telling you, "You can't."

Biologists tell you, "The order of the

chain of amino acids determines for ever if we'll be men, mice or a giraffe. If it forms a chain in such a way, you will be impelled to form a mouse; if it forms a chain with a little difference, you will be impelled to form the proteins of man or the proteins of a giraffe." There isn't. . . there's no way out. There's no way out. Except by accident, through some accidental radiation which will produce monsters.

So really, if a human being found the "passage," as the Rishis said, through which you could get out of it—but not into Nirvana, you know—to get out of it into a Matter which will be. . . really what it is. Because we don't know what this Matter is.

In fact, if you take human thought from its origins—from what we know of its origins—you see that there is a tremendous (what should I say?) degradation or "decomposition" of a first truth or a first discovery made by the Vedic Rishis (if we only go back as far as that, because there were perhaps other things before, too).

T.: Four thousand years? . . .

SATPREM: At least. At least 4,000 years ago. And more probably, five, six, or even seven thousand years. Because, for such a long time, what they said, the mantras they repeated, were said by word of mouth, and how long did that last?—We don't know. [I.e., because the earliest history was passed along by word of mouth and not written records, we don't know how far back it goes.]

But really, if you take some of the texts of the Rig-Veda, which are really the most ancient texts humanity knows, you see that those people had a secret, and a secret in Matter.

I don't know, I have some of those texts of the Rig-Veda which are . . . which are full of light.

They say this (this is in the Rig-Veda): "Immortal in mortals, it is the energy which brings out our divine powers." And again this: "Let us conquer right here, let us wage the battle of a hundred heads." And again, in the Atharva-Veda: "I am the son of the earth, the sun is my mother." And again: "O earth, let me tell of thy beauty, of thy villages and thy forests, of thy war councils and thy battles."

It wasn't little meditators saying that.

And then, they say still more extraordinary things, if we understand that in their imagery the Rock (what they call the Rock: mountain, stone) is the symbol of Matter, the first terrestrial formation.

Here is what they say (still in the Rig-Veda): "Our fathers, through their mantra [that is, the vibration of a sound, the vibration of consciousness] . . . by their

mantra broke the strongest and most refractory places; by their cry they broke the rock of the mountain to pieces. They made in us a passage to wide heaven [that is, in Matter—not up above on the meditating peaks: in Matter]. They discovered the sun housed in darkness . . . They found the treasure of heaven nestled like a fledgling in the secret cave. That treasure in the infinite rock."

And again they say this: "The mountain [that is, still Matter, the symbol of Matter], the fecund mountain split in two delivering up the supreme birth. So, in truth they awoke and saw totally [that is, through all the eyes in the body], they saw totally: behind, around and everywhere, in truth they had the very ecstasy you enjoy in heaven." And finally, "They discovered the honeycombs covered by the rock."

So, they are people who had knowledge of a secret in Matter.

Something that has nothing to do with the Upanishads or anything which created the tradition of India, because. . . don't forget that the Upanishads—which came perhaps 2,000 years later and became the basis and Gospel of all India—the Upanishads tell you, "Abandon this world of illusion" . . . "Brahman is true, the world is false."

The Niralamba Upanishad says that.

So you see the decline, if I may say so, the degradation. Instead of seeking the "battle of a hundred heads" as the Rishis declared, they closed their eyes, crossed their legs, and then salvation was in heaven. And in fact, I'm not very familiar with what other mystics said, but most have followed that ascending, ascending, ascending path, and then you go away. And paradise is "over there," and it's after death that, and the whole story. . . all the degradation really or the loss of the human secret.

Well, that's what Sri Aurobindo and Mother rediscovered.

And that's why I say there hasn't been a more fantastic discovery since the first living matter appeared on earth. Because it's the very law of that first living matter which is changed.

That is, all our biology collapses before that discovery.

I would really like to tell how it's possible in language you can understand.

The fantastic discovery is what first Sri Aurobindo and then Mother found (because Mother continued the path and remade Sri Aurobindo's discovery).

They discovered what they called a "mind of the cells."

And that's the fantastic discovery. You can try to put the process into

words in this way . . .

We all live very far from our body, in one little part of our being which we have developed to a tremendous degree, and very usefully developed too, which is the intellectual mind. You can't do anything without its being immediately "snapped up" by a thought and put into a little compartment. That's really the first of those layers I spoke of [earlier], which cover us—which veil the reality of Matter from us.

Because, what do the biologists know of it? They look at it through a microscope, but what does a microscope tell you? Does it mean that you have "experienced" the cell?—They catalog it, take a picture of it, but with what? Who looks through the microscope?—Their head looks through the microscope and makes a picture or projection of its own mind in the cell.

Well, first of all, that first intellectual mind has to be reduced to silence.

Then you find that second mental layer, the mind of the emotions: all the passions, emotions and all that, which also makes a very, very considerable covering.

And still lower. Because, as the layers become clear, you automatically see the next layer appearing. In our normal consciousness it's all a kind of confused, undifferentiated magma: the passions take on an intellectual appearance, the intelligence is used to cover up all sorts of desires. It's a magma in which there isn't any differentiation. You say the "thought"; you say the "feelings," but in fact nothing is pure in all that—it's an enormous mixture.

So there is also that "pure" affective mind you touch once you've gotten through the intellectual layer: all the feelings, all the emotions, all that also confuses and colors our perception of the body. All our moods are there constantly coloring the reality of what we can be.

So later you get through that too. That is, you reduce the feelings to silence; you neutralize the emotions or "clarify" them. And all that is a battle. It's really, as the Rishis said, a "battle of a hundred heads," because you cut off one and another one pops up.

Then, deeper, when that layer of the emotional mind is stilled,—you find the mind of the sensations. For all that is dressed in a language: it's a vibration which is infinitesimal but which is translated into a language. You then find all the usual sensations which form the tissue of our being.

And then, if you go to the root of all those sensations, you find what Sri Aurobindo and Mother called the "physical mind."

That's really a sort of primary mind of Matter. That is, a sort of relentless memory which, as soon as it's gotten a habit, repeats it indefinitely. If it's bumped somewhere, it will remember it 50 years later. If you told it, "Oh, it's going to be an illness and it may last 3 months or 6 months," instantaneously it's as if the cell received an imprint, and you have to be ill for 3 months, you have to be ill for 6 months. You have to be. And then, if you tell it, "If you take such a medicine, you will get better," the cell very obediently says, "Ah, good, I'm going to take the medicine and I'm going to get better." It's a sort of hypnotism.

And that's where you begin to touch—or Mother and Sri Aurobindo began to touch—the secret. That primary matter—those cells—, it's a good will, as Mother says: a stupid good will. There aren't any laws in it: there is a hypnotism and a fear. That is, everything that's imprinted on that first cell will be repeated indefinitely with an untiring good will.

So, of course, its first imprints are fear, aggression. It's the whole world devouring what is around it, that teeming, threatening life: life is a disaster for the first living matter. It steps out into a disaster and that's a fear for it, and at the same time an aspiration, in the very heart of that cell, for the cessation of that threat and that pain. That is, a call for death basically.

T.: So the fishbowl is formed.

SATPREM: Yes, the fishbowl is formed.

It's a series of bowls, if I may say so. The flagellum has gotten its little flagellum habit; the fish has gotten its little fish habit because it was in such an environment, and then the bird too has gotten its bird habit because it was in another environment. Each species has wound up a certain habit.

So biologists tell you, "It's because there is such and such a helix of amino acids that it happens like that."

But it's not true.

The fantastic discovery is that there aren't any physicals "laws." There are physical habits, determined by a certain environment.

And those habits, that stupid good will can be turned any way you like. Only, obviously, it's not with our head that you can change the habits of this Matter—if you want to change the habit of Matter, you have to go touch it. We only touch our head, our feelings, our passions and our habits.

What would we touch the cell with?

First you have to get through all those layers.

And there is the fantastic discovery: you can imprint on the cells any habit

at all.

Instead of that "catastrophic" habit. . . For example, if some little thing has happened, the cell panics and starts to wind up layers and layers and layers of skin, to make a tumor. Because a very little thing happened in the beginning, it says, "Good, fine, that's my habit, I have to make a layer of skin, then a second layer, then a third layer. . ." It makes its tumor. Stupidly, there was a little accident and it took up the habit: I have to twist like this, I have to twist like that. . .

It's simply a habit.

But having gotten through that layer of the physical mind with its dreads, its fears, its. . . all the little habits which you wind up constantly, and then the "oh, it's going to be cancer," "oh, it's going to be death," "oh, it's going to be. . ."—all that is microscopic, but imprinted—if you can infuse, get through that layer, you discover what Mother and Sri Aurobindo called the "cellular mind." That is, a consciousness of the cell which can obey another mode of reaction.

T.: Another program.

SATPREM: Yes, another program [i.e., another set of imprints].

Instead of a catastrophic and mortal program, the cellular mind can obey a solar vibration, a vibration of joy, a vibration of love.

Instead of winding up death, it can wind up something else. And not. . . not through an extraordinary feat: simply by getting out of all those layers of habit which were covering it up. There aren't any "laws"! There isn't any "death"! We want a law. We want death. But the cell wants nothing. It wants whatever you want!

So that's a tremendous freedom, if you succeed in establishing communication, if I can say so, with that cell. If, instead of giving it that habit of catastrophe, you give it the habit of joy, space, wideness.

That's what Mother and Sri Aurobindo called the "mind of the cells." It's really like a child's mind. You can instil into it a whole other life, a whole other. . . a whole other way of being.

So there, from an evolutionary viewpoint, things can stretch out over long periods, but from the moment when the central will of the cell is open to something else, you can remodel man. . . as you like.

In fact, Sri Aurobindo tells us almost nothing of the secret. Because obviously there's not much point in explaining it: it has to be lived. But there is one passage where the secret is really told, bared.

It's this one, in a letter, I believe. He says this:

"And there is too an obscure mind of the body, of the very cells, molecules,

corpuscles. Haeckle, the German materialist, spoke somewhere of the will in the atom, and recent science, dealing with the incalculable individual variation in the activity of the electrons, comes near to perceiving that this is not a figure but the shadow thrown by a secret reality. This body-mind is a very tangible truth; owing to its obscurity and mechanical clinging to past movements and facile oblivion and rejection of the new, we find in it one of the chief obstacles to permeation by the supermind Force and the transformation of the functioning of the body. On the other hand, once effectively converted, it will be one of the most precious instruments for the stabilisation of the supramental Light and Force in material Nature." [Sri Aurobindo, *Letters on Yoga* 1:340]

That's what Sri Aurobindo says.

"To stabilize," that is, to establish a new mode of vibration or being in Matter.

Certainly it's probable that a certain number of scientists will find that bodily transformation or that change of programming in Matter impossible.

But they're forgetting one thing: evolution is something **perpetually** heretical. There's nothing less orthodox than evolution! It has spent its time **breaking** impossibilities—what was impossible for the fish became possible later in spite of everything.

So Sri Aurobindo, with his marvellous humor, very well imagines a logician there, at the beginning of evolution, looking at things—looking at Matter. . .

Here are the remarks he attributes to that first imaginary logician:

"When there was Matter only and not Life, if you had told a logician that soon Life would be born on earth, in a body of matter, he would have exclaimed, 'It's impossible! It can't be done—What, that mass of electrons, gas, chemical elements, this pile of mud and stone and inert metals, how are you going to get Life out of that? Are metals going to walk?'"

Are cells going to get out of their programming?

That's the challenge of Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

That's really the question of our time. It's not philosophy any more, it's not the history of one civilization following another. . .

It's really a revolution to be made in Matter.

* * *

T.: But someone listening to us right now, who hasn't been to India, who hasn't read Sri Aurobindo, who hasn't heard of Mother, what can he do, if the path interests

him, to try it out?

SATPREM: Yes, you can do something consciously. But you should also know that the thing is being done, whether you want it or not.

That too is important.

That is, whether men are conscious of it or not, whether they want it or not, the whole human species is taking a turn into another evolutionary stage. And that's being hammered into every consciousness, every nation, every grouping: it's everywhere. Things are being broken, broken, broken.

But, there are beings who like not only to understand, but ultimately put true meaning into their life, and who would like to "participate" in that overwhelming revolution, which can be carried out. . . which must be carried out **everywhere**.

Evolution is not "Hindu," you know. It has to be done, the process has to be able to be pursued **everywhere**, consciously. And not just when you're in privileged conditions, but in our daily life.

And that's where there is really something so simple to be done, so simple!

What do we do when we go down the street? What do we do when we take an elevator? When we go up and down stairs? What happens in this human head?

There occurs a stupid, tiresome rumbling, repeating and repeating, "I have to do this," and "I don't have to do that, and "perhaps this is going to happen" and "perhaps that won't happen. . ." It's a kind of terrible mechanism that you breathe very naturally, but it's quite terrible: a mechanism that winds up and winds up one thing after another, 10,000 things.

Well, that's where you can **grasp** hold of the secret. That's where you can **start** working. Because all those so-called useless hours filled with that buzzing when you're going down the street, taking an elevator, going up stairs, you could fill with another vibration, which would already be the beginning of a solar vibration, luminous, joyful.

And that's where India can help you. And that's how Mother also found a practical means: she used a mantra.

What is a mantra? It's a sound. Everything has a sound. I'm sure scientists could easily discover the sound of a pebble.

Everything has a vibration. A plant has a vibration. Each thing has a vibration which is the vibration proper to its species. Fire has a vibration. If we come to the human kingdom, joy has a certain quality of vibration, and anger has another quality. You can understand that there is a vibratory difference (even without words) between a state of joy and a state of pain or a state of anger. And you can also understand

(even without words) the different vibration there can be in a man who is in a certain state of serenity and a man who is filled with desires. There too there is a kind of vibratory "medium" which is different.

And in India they've found the science of those sounds or vibrations.

If you have the sound of something, you can reproduce it.

To emit the sound of something is to create it in some way or reproduce it.

So, they have a whole science with which, through sounds, they can reproduce states or vibrations of joy, vibrations of love. They have used it also for frightful, magic purposes, to do evil, to cause accidents, to send out all sorts of destructive and negative vibrations.

But. . .but there are sounds of joy, light, truth, love—that exists.

And that's mantra.

So nothing is simpler: a mantra, that is, one sound, two, three sounds, you can repeat it in your head to begin with. Instead of letting yourself be constantly invaded by that indeed painful jumble — you have pain in your temples, you know, you live in a constant hornet's nest, and not only do you wind up ideas of defeat and catastrophe, but you "attract" catastrophes, you attract illness—our thoughts are magnets. Instead of attracting every catastrophe, if you took hold of yourself every time, held yourself back in order to "attract" a vibration of joy, let us say, well-being?..

So you can practice repeating that mantra, which has several sounds, when you're going up stairs, when you're going down the street—every instant you can repeat it. And since matter is very "repetitive," in fact, you can, at first in your head, begin to **wind up** another sort of mechanism. And our intellectual mind, which is very senseless in its materiality, in its substructure, will quietly start to repeat the mantra just as well as "I didn't close the door" and "I didn't take my scarf" and "I'm going to miss my appointment." It will repeat the mantra.

And then you notice that this matter is marvellous! It's something that can take every imprint, and, instead of repeating all that foolishness, can just as well repeat joy and beauty.

Then that sound, that vibration descends from level to level in matter: from the intellectual mind it begins to go down into the heart, then it goes down lower. . .and the vibration starts to fill the body. And little by little it's as if the being—the body—changed in density. As if you were filled with another vibration.

Then all those old habits. . .are disconnected. It's not that you fight against

her, because that's endless: you punch one rotten thought or idea, it comes back 30 seconds later. While that, as soon as it's gotten hold of its good vibration—which is like a vibration of space, joy, like the bubbling of the sea: a little wave, when it rolls over the beach, bubbles, has a little vibration—matter winds it up with a lot of pleasure. And it ends up doing it automatically. And . . . (at least it's the experience of some) even in sleep you catch yourself (I've caught myself; it can happen to other people), my body catches itself repeating, repeating the mantra.

Then you understand how the law of so-called death, the law of accident—all those laws—are dissolved by the vibration, because they don't have an "intrinsic" existence in the cells. The cell repeats anything you want. And it's we who ceaselessly, through our habit, through our feeling of what is inevitable, possible, impossible, who attract illnesses, accidents, death, deterioration, wear and tear.

And in the end it's a whole other vibratory mode which begins to . . . (what should I say?) "throb" in this matter. And it can be done in the streets—I've done it everywhere, in every circumstance: the most stupid, the most impossible, in places that seemed suffocating, in . . . I've done it everywhere.

T.: But up till now, to our knowledge, no one has ever triumphed over death. And Mother, who engaged in combat with death, on the path of Sri Aurobindo, herself died. So, what happened?

SATPREM: First of all, I don't know if one single man can individually, for himself, conquer the law of death.

One privileged individual doesn't have any meaning. It doesn't have any meaning. It has to be a process of the whole terrestrial consciousness.

But not necessarily: you can escape the law of death. But . . . but that's where you come to the problem—not problem: the central difficulty.

You know, as the cell is purified of all its catastrophic and mortal habits, just what does that mean?

What you don't understand is that from the moment when matter is purified of its catastrophic habits, it instantly becomes all matter: there aren't any walls, there isn't any separation. The little individual energy that has been closed up in a bowl is no longer a little energy turning in a circle: it's a tremendous energy. The same one that revolves the universes.

And then those who lived near Mother know what that means, a little bit.

She told me. . . She told me many times. "But I have to cover myself with veils! I have to cover myself with veils. Otherwise it's unbearable."

That energy is unbearable. It is so tremendously "pure," if I dare say so, and "solar," that all our little defeatist rumblings—everything that makes up the substance of our being—it's as if all of a sudden you turned a searchlight on a rat in the bottom of a hole. It all starts to struggle. When you were near Mother, all those very dark things in the depths of human Matter began to suffocate and squirm and feel you were going to . . . you were going to put an end to their career.

So it's not enough to become the new species. The old species shouldn't kill you.

And here we touch on something which is . . . which is very painful and really the center of that human misery.

It's that the earth (we can speak of the Ashram, but that's simply a symbolic representation of the earth: some human beings are there—some matter to be transformed in some way). . . well, all that matter is very rebellious to space, wideness. It very much clings to its creakings. It very much clings to its petty ideas, its petty powers, its petty ways of being—even if its ways of being are "yogic." So go get it out of people's consciousness that it's not done with legs crossed burning incense around a photo.

So, more and more they were starting to say, "But she's becoming unbalanced. She's old. She's 92, 93, 94, and that's long. It doesn't come to an end."

That's all very sad to say, but. . . that's the way it was. They were at the end of their tether with Mother.

They were at the end of their tether.

I know from my own experience that it's really because I had so much reached the end of every possible experience, from the day when I cried out in the [concentration] camps. . . And I cried out on the roads of India, I cried out. . . really at the end of my humanity, with such an intense call for "something else"—really for that space and that light and that beauty. I had such a need that in some way I could "bear" that power of light. And even when I felt that it was sort of crushing in my whole body, because it's such a tremendous pressure, you know, that energy; even when it was like that, I said, "But yes, yes! And more and more! And even if you have to burst from it. . . but let us burst like that! Not in the medical way."

And then I saw. . . I saw her; she was the 92, 93, 94, and she was so alone. She was surrounded by so much incomprehension. They used to come to see her

and assail her asking her such petty, mean questions; "Should I sell my car at such a price?" "should I marry such a woman?" "should I . . . should I . . .?" They snowed her under with bundles of letters, bundles of questions; or else with bad will: "I've had enough of it! I've had enough of it! (as I said at the beginning, besides), I've had enough of it, I'm getting out of here!"

It's very difficult to bear the Truth—the living Truth. The living Energy.

So I saw her. . . Those cells, that body which was so clarified, so clear, so transparent, it constantly, constantly absorbed the negation that surrounded her, the refusal that surrounded her or even the revolt that surrounded her. Each time it was as if those cells caught a human illness, or perhaps the human illness—the human illness. And each time she had to repurify her own body of all those suggestions, all that bad will. . .

And who believed?

Who said, "But Mother. . . Mother is going to find the passage. Mother is going to go through."

But who believed?

She said to me, toward the end, "I have no one here."

So that being who was seeking so much for the earth, who so much wanted the love, the beauty of the earth, and. . . "I have no one." It was so. . . moving, poignant, you know, to see her more and more crushed, if I can say so, by the pain of that human refusal, that human incomprehension.

Then there, I really loved Mother.

She was great.

She was heroic.

And then one day the door was closed on me.

But what Mother sowed in the earth, with so much pain, is irreversible.

That's what is in the process. . . That same rumbling, you know, which you saw in the disciples around her, which you can see, well, it's rumbling everywhere all over the earth! It's all the little rats coming out of their hole, all the little cockroaches scurrying about, all the cruelty, all those dreadful things which. . . which are coming out everywhere as if you had opened the sewers.

And why? . . . There is really a blinding searchlight turned on that, bringing up from the depths of all those holes all the filth, for it to disappear. So that something else, in the heart of Matter, behind those rat's nests or saint's nest, so that from the bottom of all that there can surge up a new air, a new possibility.

That's the phenomenon which is occurring. And it's occurring no matter

what our will is.

But why not with a little bit of our own breath?

For once in the evolution, men could participate in their own transformation.

All the time, all the time, Mother's body was repeating that same vibration, that same mantra.

Men can repeat it.

OM NAMO BHAGAVATE
OM NAMO BHAGAVATE
OM NAMO BHAGAVATE
OM NAMO BHAGAVATE

BETWEEN TWO WORLDS

Dick Batstone

[This is the third instalment in the series taken from the diary kept by an English disciple of Sri Aurobindo and Mother during his visit to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in 1959-60.]

[Late March 1960. From a letter to friends:]

Many thanks for your letter. Let's begin with your question, "What is an Ashram?" A glossary I have here says, "Ashram—hermitage. It is usually used as a centre for penance, sadhana, education or social service." "Hermitage," with its associations of solitude and a cell by a spring, is a bit misleading, when one is applying it to a community of over 1,000 people, and this ashram here in Pondicherry is not a centre for penance, education or social service—though there may be incidental traces of these things in it. It is a centre for sadhana, and sadhana, says the glossary, is "spiritual discipline for attaining self-realization." Again, one may quibble with this definition, as Sri Aurobindo's yoga is not confined to self-realization. But you get the idea, I hope.

Another book I have here says, "An Ashram means the house or houses of a teacher or master of spiritual philosophy in which he receives and lodges those who come to him for teaching and practice." I believe that in the past they were often in forests, and varied in size from that of a sage with a few followers to the equivalent of a university.

At present there are many ashrams all over India. Tagore and Gandhi, for example, had their own, and there is another famous one near here, founded by Sri Ramanana Maharshi, which is visited, I think, by Larry, the hero in Somerset Maugham's *The Razor's Edge*.

People who practice sadhana are called "sadhaks" by the way.

The Sri Aurobindo Ashram, it seems, is different from the accepted pattern of what such a place should be. The traditional Hindu thinks of an ashram in terms of poverty, asceticism and other

worldliness, where the body is tolerated as a necessary snag, but here emphasis is on the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth, and life more abundantly—physical, emotional and mental, wherever it's consistent with the primary aims of sadhana. Thus money is not treated as unimportant, or to be renounced, but is recognised as a useful agent for God's service, and though sadhaks have a minimum of private possessions, they don't cultivate unnecessary hardship, and the Ashram as a whole owns a good deal of property and equipment.

A man apologised to me recently for having a bookcase in his room; it was, he said, necessary for him, for his work as a teacher.

One sadhak told me how shocked he was, when he first came here, to find men and women doing the same physical exercises, and wearing shorts too. Asking where the Mother was, he was told she was playing tennis. He found no ochre robes, no chanting of Sanskrit, no ashes on the face. But also, he noticed, there was no dirt and no dysentery. Gradually he came round to the view that an Ashram could aim at spirituality that was incarnational, and expressed the Divine in terms of this world.

Beauty, too, is given an importance that you wouldn't find in an ashram that looked upon all visual distinctions as illusory. For instance, there is the great appreciation of plants here. The Ashram courtyard is like a Japanese garden—really very beautiful, with flowering trees, slender palms, cacti, shrubs, climbing bougainvillea and all sorts of Indian and European flowers—most of them in pots—roses, dahlias, morning glory, verbena, canna and so many whose names I don't know. They are in pots because the soil is so poor and sandy that any moisture drains away or evaporates very quickly. As soon as a plant is past its prime, it is taken away to the nurseries and a pot of something else is put in its place. The effect is wonderfully refreshing, especially when contrasted with the bare, dusty ground seen elsewhere, all burnt up by the heat.

Today I saw my first snake-charmer. He was sitting by a road playing on a bell-bottomed pipe to a huge dark cobra in a basket. The snake seemed critical and not very charmed.

17 April 1960

I have seen the Mother. At 9:30 I called on N., who had arranged the interview. He took me to a building where flowers are distributed to people who want them for puja. We chose three flowers to give to Mother, and then went to the main Ashram compound. There Nolini met

us and led me up green-carpeted stairs to Mother's flat. At the door a strongly built elderly man, naked to the waist and bush-bearded, ushered me into the room and then left with Nolini.

On the right of the door through which I had come sat the Mother on a small throne or high-backed chair. Behind her head was a green woven figure of her emblem; at her feet a deerskin. On her right, half facing her, was a small armchair, to which she signalled me. I gave her the flowers, which she put down on a little table on her left, and then thanked her for seeing me.

When I had sat down, I lost all energy to speak for a minute or so, and remained silent, waiting for peace and order to return to my mind. On looking up, she smiled at me and we laughed.

"Should I stay here at this Ashram, Mother?" I asked, conscious of the effort of putting the question, and of supreme suspense as to the answer.

She looked into my eyes and then said, in a high, slow, gentle voice, "Yes, if you want to stay here. . . . You must feel within yourself a definite call to the supramental life. Do you really want to stay here?"

I went on, "Part of me gets into a panic at the thought—but part of me makes me have to ask you if I should stay—if it is best for me or not. I promised my people in England to come back, but since I have been here I have been uncertain what I should do."

"You say you have promised you would return; that is a serious thing, then. You have to be very sure of the Divine call if you are to break that promise without harm to yourself. If you stay, you must be able to feel that you can do your family more real good from a distance than if you go back to them." She paused, then went on, "You see the question may not be 'Pondicherry or London?' It may be that you should come here and then return, or alternate between the two, or even not come again in this life. The question need not be so clear-cut. I have followed you at Darshan and at Balcony in the mornings and I have felt that it may be right for you to go back and face your old life until it becomes ridiculous for you—until the people you live with become like strangers to you. Then there will be no question about where you should be. Have you been happy while you have been here?"

"Yes, except when I have been thinking about whether to stay." We laughed, and she said, "Except for the problem!"

"Yes, I don't seem able to get below the surface mind to find answers to questions from within, for myself."

"That is because you put the questions in the wrong way—you expect an answer either yes or no. But it doesn't come like that. Have you done any work here?"

"No, not yet."

"I think you should stay for another month or two—will your parents be all right for that time?—and do some work, putting the problem out of your mind. Then you will be able to judge better for yourself how it suits you here. You will get more into the spirit of the place, and see how it works in practice, doing your work as an offering to the Divine, and testing how the various parts of your being react. Then, when you see more clearly, or have a greater resolution, let me know, and we will have another talk about it."

She then discussed the money side of staying and what sort of work I should try, and then she went out to find the bearded man to fetch Nolini.

While she was gone, I looked around for a moment. Against the far wall was the big double throne, covered with a tigerskin, which is to be seen in photo-

graphs of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother giving Darshan. The room contained many carvings, bronzes, ivories—objects of Japanese, Indian and European art.

The Mother came back and said, "Have you seen Sri Aurobindo's room?" and led me to the door into a parallel apartment, equally large but rather dark, as the window shutters let in little direct light and because of the colour of the floor and furniture. Everything gave an impression of solidity and massive proportion. There were bookcases, a writing desk, a settee and two or three tigerskins. The bust [of Sri Aurobindo] by Elsa Fraenkel, which I had seen before in London, stood between the windows.

"Is that like him?" I asked.

"No," said the Mother, "It is not a physical likeness, but it shows very well a certain quality of his mind—his vision of intellectual truth, which is why I like it and keep it here."

She told me how Sri Aurobindo lived in this room for 24 years without going out of it. Then Nolini came, and she told him to take me to P., to start work proof-

reading.

"Viola," she said.

Before I left she gave me two flowers. "Has anyone told you the names we give to the different flowers here? This one is Divine Grace, and this is Psychic Love. Voila."

In appearance the Mother looks old and frail, her head perpetually sunk forward, as if from continual intent gazing into people's faces. She had some dark-coloured cosmetic around her eyes. These, her eyes, and her smile were not old at all. Nor was her mind. She gave the impression of absolute accuracy of judgment based on direct insight, and of a concern not to impress for irrelevant reasons, or say things in any way other than the best for the person concerned. Combined with endless patience and kindness, she has a brisk practical sense, and a lightness of touch.

She wore a white dress, with a pale golden-coloured scarf tied tightly over her hair.

A VIEW OF THE HEIGHTS: SRI AUROBINDO'S YOGA

David Hutchinson

[A young man from San Francisco has offered the following reflections which arose from his study of Sri Aurobindo's work. Perhaps readers will find a kindred spirit in the author in his attempts to grasp and put into action the principles of Sri Aurobindo's yoga.]

Introduction

"The secret of success in Yoga is to regard it not as one of the aims to be pursued in life, but as the whole of life" (Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 65).

Sri Aurobindo's yoga in *The Synthesis of Yoga* [1] is broken down into four areas—action, knowledge, love, and self-perfection—but in fact the yoga is a unified movement, comprising many aspects, stages, realizations, and methods. Yet there are several concepts which are fundamental to the whole and emerge in chapter after chapter, seen from different standpoints. I hope this essay will serve to show both the interrelatedness and the individuality of the fundamental aspects.

When Sri Aurobindo began writing the monthly installments for the *Arya* that were later to be gathered into the *Synthesis*, he had been practicing yoga exclusively for four years, and his spiritual development had begun earlier, as the result of his genius absorbing the spiritual heritage of India. His yoga continued long past the period when the *Synthesis* was

written (or even revised), and the yoga continues today. Some aspects of it are more fully brought out in his letters to disciples; others are hidden away in *Savitri* [2]; some have only emerged with the Mother in recent decades [most notably in *Mother's Agenda*; editor's note].

Six and a half years before the first issue of the *Arya* (on August 15, 1914), Sri Aurobindo went into retreat with a yogi, and through silencing his mind experienced the silent Brahman. Four months later he was arrested and jailed on a sedition charge; he was held as a pre-trial and trial prisoner for a year. In jail he undertook the yoga of the *Bhagavad Gita*, and a major turning point in his sadhana was reached. A year later he left active political life and went into seclusion in Pondicherry, where the *Arya* was written between 1914 and 1921; in fact, he never left Pondicherry until he dropped his body in December 1950.

Synthesis

Sri Aurobindo's use of "synthesis" has a particular connotation as applied to systems of yoga. He does not mean a combination or selection of elements, or successive (even simultaneous) practice of them. A true synthesis comes by finding "a central principle common to all, which will include and utilise in the right place and proportion their particular principles"

[3]. This principle is a union, on one hand, of the more common yogas (Sri Aurobindo terms them "Vedantic"), which are based on the Purusha (God, conscious being) as the lord, and on the other hand, Tantra yoga, which is based on Shakti (Divine Mother, conscious energy) as the highest reality. It is the progressively biune and ultimately identical realization of these which is the central principle of Sri Aurobindo's yoga, and the grades of conception / experience / realization / manifestation which are involved in their mutual interplay pervade the *Synthesis*. "It is the self-fulfillment of the Purusha through his Energy" [4]. In this context it is useful to know that it was the arrival of the Mother in 1914 which influenced Sri Aurobindo to begin the *Arya*—an outward display of the Shakti-Ishvara interaction. "No synthesis of Yoga can be satisfying which does not, in its aim, reunite God and Nature in a liberated and perfected human life" [5].

The surrender to, faith in, ascent into, descent of the Divine and its Shakti is, in a sense, the central movement of the whole yoga. Once surrender to this biune consciousness-force is complete, "your way is sure and your perfection inevitable. A supreme Presence within you will take up your Yoga and carry it swiftly along the lines of your Swabhava [self-nature] to its consummate completion"

[6]. "Abandoning all disciplines, take refuge in me alone" (Gita 18:66).

Equality

Equality is both the "first word" of works and knowledge, the "first necessity" for spiritual perfection. "Remember first that an inner quietude. . . is the first condition of a secure sadhana" [7]. As in all of the "special psychological processes [of yoga]" it is "founded on a fixed truth of Nature" [8]. The Gita (5:19) asserts that Brahman is equality, and then (5:24) that a person who knows this Brahman becomes it. For Sri Aurobindo, this becoming involves two stages: identity in consciousness and identity in manifestation (action based on equanimity).

Identity is closely tied to equality; it is the fundamental power of the supermind (vijñana); it is the truth behind concentration, which in turn is necessary to surrender—"The effective fullness of our concentration on the one thing needful to the exclusion of all else will be the measure of our self-consecration to the One who is alone desirable" [9]. Identification with states of consciousness comes about by the power of faith—"The faith of each man, O Bharata, is according to his stuff of being. This Purusha, this soul in man, is made of faith, and whatever is his faith, verily he is that" [10].

Concentration "is the means by which the individual soul identifies itself with and enters into any form, state or psychological self-manifestation. . . of the Self" [11]. From an increasing equanimity one can reflect and absorb the silent Brahman; the egocentric orientation of consciousness is attenuated, ultimately dissolved; and through the active faith of the soul in Ishvara-Shakti, one's nature and action are transformed into the active Brahman.

A movement closely tied to equality and the abolition of desire is the stilling of the mind. In its beginnings it passes from quietude to calm, then peace, and finally silence [12]. The highest stage of this movement is the silent Brahman, but it must be understood that the silent Brahman is essentially one with its active aspect, even though they can be experienced distinctly. The mind's tendency to see dissolution in an eternal stillness as the highest state is a result of its foundation in the separateness of matter; it does not recognize that manifestation is linked inseparably with the absolute. "All the Timeless presses towards the play in Time; all in time turns around and upon the timeless Spirit" [13].

The Vital

There is in man an aspect which Sri Aurobindo calls the vital being. In many

ways it is the key to a successful understanding and practice of yoga. In its purity the vital is a delegate of the divine Shakti—it has a proper function, which is to enjoy and possess and act. But its distorted action, its wrong movement, creates desire—which is the strongest support of the ego and thoroughly mixed in with it. This distortion comes about because man is an evolutionary being, and his vital is a development out of a physical body. The limitations of this body transmit a consciousness of incapacity to the vital, which reacts with a desire to possess, to expand, to maintain. The mind in turn, being a development out of the vital, is tangled up or "shot through with the threads ... of this Prana [life-force]" [14]. Desire is not a necessary state—it is the result of a power, still in development and still imperfect, being misled. The mind has higher ranges which can follow a more illumined path, but to reach them one must deal with mental desire, which is an admixture of this wrong movement of the vital with the mind proper.

Purification of the vital from desire is related to several methods, stages, and experiences. Some of them are minor and directed to secondary goals. The most important movement here is the emergence of the psychic being from behind the cloud of the surface desire-soul. It is only the psychic which in Karma Yoga can make the correct offering of action to the Divine; in Bhakti Yoga it is the psychic which establishes the divine relation; in Jnana Yoga the psychic rises into the Absolute after being released from ego-sense.

The progressive widening of the vital consciousness can also lead one to a realization of the cosmic Life-Force, and if this is rightly transcended, the cosmic becomes a movement of the Divine Shakti, the Divine Mother. The vital in all its complexity—the vital being, the surface desire-soul, the vital plane of consciousness, other vital beings, the vital's influence on mind—is an "almost illimitable" source of experiences, not all beneficial by any standard. One must recognize the secondary character of these occult phenomena and bypass them or rely on the true soul to guide one through them. Also, the practice of equality is primarily a method of overcoming desire and ego, and replacing them by oneness with the cosmic and transcendent Divine.

In its wideness and truth the vital being is an aspect of consciousness-force. But in the evolutionary emergence, its movements are usually false, incomplete, ignorant, and misleading. In most of our everyday life we are interacting with others on the vital as well as the physical and mental planes. This give and take can be uplifting or degrading—

and in most people it is subliminal, not subject to conscious control. Realizations (not simply experiences) of higher consciousness cannot be had as long as one's action is thus blown about by vital winds—some sort of control is necessary, which is only complete when one surrenders totally to the Ishvara, who is in unity with the source of the vital.

The Yoga Of Divine Works

The Yoga of Divine Works has three central movements, all hinging upon one's character as an active, willing person. The first is based on a recognition of the fallacy of desire, and thus one renounces desire for the results of actions. This begins to loosen the hold of ego on motivation and is primarily an inner offering, as are the second two. Next, one surrenders the action itself, and in the perfection of this offering becomes a passive instrument of the will of God. The next stage is a falling away of even this sense of being an instrument. Then the Divine Shakti transforms the being, free from any constricting ego-sense; but its perfection can only come when the instruments have all been purified, and not just the ego eliminated. "After the removal of the veil of ego, the removal of the veil of Nature" [15]. Only the direct action of the supermind can do this. So the fourth stage of Karma Yoga is action performed by the Divine Shakti through the supramentalized vessel of the individual.

"In this Yoga all depends on whether one can open to the Influence or not" [16]. The central aspect to a yoga of action is the will behind the action. The action must be done right, it must be done for the right reasons. Because in this yoga one is using intention as the human aspect to be transformed first, the first necessity is turning over (surrender) of that will to its divine source. This can only be done fully if we can concentrate with all of our being on the Supreme, and if the limitations of ego-desire have been weakened by the practice of equality. The psychic being, because it has knowledge of and power over the extended subliminal mind, life, and body, needs to emerge so that the sacrifice (surrender) can be complete. The most natural and compelling movement of the soul (an expression of Ananda, the divine bliss) is to offer itself to its greater ether of Bliss and be dissolved in this bliss.

There are three powers which in general are the sources of our actions—and a fourth which is yet to come. The first is the vital being—these impulses are mostly for satisfaction, power, and acquisition of various kinds; a life governed by the vital may be very dynamic, but it carries the burden of a large ego and often violent

defects. The mind can also lead one's being—at its utmost it erects ideals and tries to persuade the vital and physical (bodies) to adhere to them. But the mind is easily misled by influence of the vital desire, and the natural limitations of the mind prevent it from being effective. The third power is that of the psychic being. Psychic guidance is the first which is in its essence a pure movement towards the Divine (although imperfections of the instruments may distort the original impulse). Total surrender of the psychic to the Divine brings the fourth power—the Divine Will. Here is the complete manifestation of it, but at all stages this Will expresses itself, more or less, according to the purity of the individual. It can reveal itself at any point, on a scale from faint intuition up to a total perception/will of what is to be done.

The Yoga Of Integral Knowledge

The movement of knowledge in Sri Aurobindo's yoga has three stages—vision, total experience, and identity with the Absolute. It is essentially a path of purifying the instruments, especially the buddhi, until one reflects Sachchidananda (vision), until one feels it in the mind, life, and body (experience), until one's consciousness becomes it (identity). This is also spoken of as the three powers of concentration—knowledge, acquisition, and identity [17]. Purification of the instruments is initially achieved by drawing back into the purusha of each, which frees one from the self-imposed limits of its surface form. The most subtle form to be transcended is the ego-seed which resides on the mental purusha; when that is done, the soul is free to rise into the Brahman, the aim of knowledge.

Sri Aurobindo is quick to point out that the true Absolute, which is the goal of knowledge, includes the relative forms of knowledge, secular and occult, as well. None need be eliminated, but all must be undertaken in the right consciousness and for the right reasons—the Divine. This means that both these forms of comprehension of the complexities of the world are secondary to possessing the Divine, and need to be recognized as such. This is especially true with knowledge and experience of the vital plane and consciousness, which can be extensive and is particularly appealing [to the untransformed or unenlightened consciousness].

Levels of Reality

Sri Aurobindo's metaphysics is based on the triune principle of Sachchidananda; all the levels of reality below it are essentially settled relations between the soul and Nature—each has a different appearance,

laws, consciousness, and movements. The arrangement which Sri Aurobindo uses most extensively is a sevenfold hierarchy of "mind, life, and matter, the triune spiritual principle of Sachchidananda and the link principle of vijnana" [18]. The pure existence, consciousness-force, and delight [of Sachchidananda] is originally organized by a supramental gnosis into a unified but multidimensional whole—the supramental "real-idea." Ishvara-Shakti coincide here, and could be equally well termed Purushottama, or supreme soul. On the overmental level their action, spheres of influence, appearance begin to differentiate and separate. Ishvara descends from its identity with Shakti, which becomes the pliant energy, but no longer one substance with what is now termed Purusha. One stage lower, Purusha becomes the upholder/remover of the sanction which allows Prakriti (nature) to act; it becomes the light of consciousness which sets the photoelectric energy running; and if this light turns away, nature's motor runs down and eventually stops. Lower still, the conscious soul (Purusha) has become silent, withdrawn, and has lost all influence on the world—which is now a mechanical creation acting by its self-contained and circumscribed forces, laws, gunas.

The pure spark of this Purusha—soul—is the grain of sand around which the pearl of the "formed soul" develops in man. This is the psychic being, whose guidance is so imperative in the yoga of action, whose ascent into the Absolute is the aim of knowledge, and whose essential nature of Ananda is the secret to the yoga of love. In fact, the identity of the soul with God and Nature completes the synthetic yoga—God, Nature, and the individual then become three aspects of a single reality. On yet lower levels the Purusha becomes the soul of mind, the soul of life, the soul of body. Around this multiple soul is formed the subliminal. Its purity is only partially manifested and felt in our present conscious life. This subliminal being is the gateway to the cosmic consciousness in which it exists, but for purity of motive and movement, this consciousness must be led by the psychic; for ultimate realization and transformation, the soul must surrender to the Purushottama and merge with it.

This merger, and the descent preceding it, must not be misunderstood. Each stance of the Purushottama in its self-modulations is an eternal status, a grade of existence; each is necessary to the perfection that is the whole. Yoga is not a blurring of distinctions, a permanent dissolution of the individual, or an elimination of any aspect of life; it is the progressive illumination of confusion by truth and manifestation of the divine nature through the transformed

individual.

Sri Aurobindo often makes use of a fivefold classification of Purusha, one that has a tradition in Vedantic thought. To be exact, the terms often denote vessels or sheaths, and Sri Aurobindo has employed "Purusha" for "kosa" (vessel), changing the meaning to "the soul made of matter," or of life energy, of mind, of gnosis, of delight.

Each of these Purushas can enter into and reflect Sachchidananda, but the gnostic soul is the first "to participate not only in the freedom, but in the power and sovereignty of the Eternal" [19]. Even so, the gnostic soul is still subject to voluntary limitation to an individual center. This is only overcome when the gnostic soul enters into the soul of love.

The relation between delight (Ananda) here and in the trinity of Sachchidananda is not always clear. In the movement of identification upward, ending in the Anandamaya Purusha, the Ananda (as also in the yoga of love) is the crown of existence. "The supermind (vijnana) itself in the descending degrees of the manifestation emerges from the Ananda and in the evolutionary descent merges into the Ananda" [20]. However, as an element of Sachchidananda, Ananda is equal in status and importance with Sat (existence) and Chit (Consciousness).

The Yoga Of Divine Love

Book three of the Synthesis, the Yoga of Divine Love, is where Sri Aurobindo makes it clear that the summit of love—divine delight, Ananda, the delight in existence—is also the crown of existence. Even the consummation of the yoga of knowledge is an absorption of the gnosis into this divine beatitude, where "every darkness will be converted into a pregnant glory of light and the discords which the mind creates...will disappear on the eternal summit, in the infinite extensions where they are always one" [21].

The essence of the yoga of love is the eternal relation between the soul and God. This relation is founded on delight, it moves in delight, its substance is delight. All approximation to this play of Ananda between aspects of the one Purusha is a lower and impure form of love; all must be merged into this divine relation of the lover and the loved. This bliss of the presence of the divine in this relation "is an ecstatic contemplation;...its bliss is not the peace of unity, but the ecstasy of union" [22].

Bhakti yoga begins with emotions. Since it is a way of putting oneself into relation with God, the character of one's relation with it and one's motivation for it are all-important. The emotion of fear, really a

lower form of awe at the power of God, is incompatible with the love that must develop, and is more proper to Karma Yoga, where one surrenders to the divine ruler.

"As supramental Truth is not merely a sublimation of our mental ideas, so Divine Love is not merely a sublimation of human emotions; it is a different consciousness, with a different quality, movement and substance." "The true love for the Divine is a self-giving, free of demand, full of submission and surrender;...In return the Divine Mother also gives herself, but freely—. . .recreating you in the divine nature. . .her love enveloping you and carrying you in its arms" [23].

Mind

Sri Aurobindo saw many levels to existence and to consciousness. One key aspect to the yoga is a constant movement upwards—there is always a stress on using the highest or most evolved aspect of oneself to contact the Divine. The Synthesis is based on a view of man as being primarily a soul in mind [24]. In other words, man's characteristic type is as a mental being, but his true consciousness is the soul behind the mind. "At first what is necessary is that the pure touch of the spiritual force must intervene in mental nature" [25]. The three fundamental processes of the mind used are knowing, willing, and feeling. The triple path of the Gita is essentially a turning of these three into spiritual movements. The intellect (buddhi) is also given importance as the "natural leader" of the mental machinery below it—it is the highest form of consciousness that a man who cannot transcend his mind is capable of using—hence the importance of its correct working. There are many mental and supramental levels beyond the buddhi; one that plays a great importance in the ascent and purification of the intellect is intuition, the intuitive mind.

A transformation of one's body, vital, and mind by a supramental consciousness-force/gnosis/"real idea" is always the culmination of this yoga, after which a truly divine life of the individual begins. Yet in an unfinished chapter written as part of a revision of the Synthesis which Sri Aurobindo had planned, he speaks of the relative place which the supermind holds in the goals of yoga—one's effort should always be directed toward the Divine for its own sake, and nothing else.

He also speaks of the possibility of mistaking other extraordinary experiences as being supramental. This is important. Knowledge, in its wider sense of physical, vital, mental, and supramental understanding, is the "foundation" of the triple path, and the necessity for accurate discrimination is always needed. This is

especially true on higher levels of experience, where an extraordinary or forceful experience can mislead one into believing that it is the supreme status.

One such discrimination is a trinity which must be seen in its whole and its parts, and which pervades the Synthesis. There are constant warnings not to fasten onto one as the sole truth or reality of things, to the exclusion of the other two. These are God, Nature, and the soul (transcendent, cosmic, and immanent), which "must be, as it were, three consenting parties to the effort [of yoga]" [26].

Perfection

In some areas the Synthesis only points to the culmination of a movement instead of explaining it at length. This is done with the transformation of the body, which is, when the rest of one's being is perfected, the final stage which involves change from a lower condition to a higher; after that begins the perfect supramental action. The reasons for this omission may be unclear, but it illustrates an important aspect of a yoga of self-perfection—that the necessary faculties for living a divine life are not yet formed in man. Perfection does not mean simply moving in tune to some ongoing cosmic dance, or resting eternally in a unitary consciousness beyond change—it is an action of the transcendent through the individual in harmony with the universal.

While it is true that man's present being—physical, vital, mental—needs to be transformed by a supramental action upon and in it, this supramental action cannot occur without first building a bridge between the mind and the supermind. The latter chapters of book four of the Synthesis describe the gradations of consciousness that form this link.

There is a confusing point here. If the soul (psychic being) is identical in essence and consciousness with God, why is it necessary to develop anything? The answer is that the soul is here to express itself fully and perfectly, and this perfect action is only possible if it has perfect instruments to act through.

There are different ways to mark off the levels of mind leading to supermind, but three things should be noted about such explanations. First, all the levels are continuous, and so their labels are convenient maps; but the conceptual borders thus marked off do not indicate impassable walls, merely useful categories "for the better possibility of understanding in an intellectual statement" [27]. Second, every level below the supramental is limited in some way by the confused action or inherent limitations of the mind (even cosmic mind). Third, although fluid and variable, these distinctions assume a

great importance once one begins to experience and develop them, particularly because of the mind's tendency to stop short at a vast and lofty, but not yet perfect condition. Sri Aurobindo often asserts that a person's conception of the goal in effect limits him to it—it is a curious power of the mind to thus erect self-imposed boundaries, which is based on the power of identity and faith.

Mental intuition is the mental action immediately above the pure human reason. When completely formed, intuition, as used here, encompasses a wider concept than normally understood. But this complete intuition is not yet manifest generally—what is possible to most people is sporadic illumination of one's mind, a light quickly covered up by mental interpretations and other movements. By becoming passive to their higher intuitions (i.e., not subconscious instincts), people can extend the scope of this intuition until it develops into an intuitive mind proper. The action of the complete intuitive mind has four aspects—"an intuition that suggests its idea, and intuition that discriminates, and inspiration that brings in its word...and a revelation that shapes to the sight its very face and body of reality" [28]. These four are usually developed progressively, the first two forming a lower mental gnosis and the last two a higher one. Even here Sri Aurobindo is quick to point out that the lower is necessary for a complete action, and without it the higher could not communicate adequately with more normal mental actions.

By the pressure of the supermind, the intuitive mind begins to change into the divine reason. Here, the direct action of the supermind first manifests, although still in a circumscribed manner. In essence this action is a reversal of all the lower actions of mind and intuition; here consciousness begins to move from essence to phenomena, from unity to diversity, from the transcendent to the individual, rather than the reverse, normal action. (This human/divine inversion of movement and orientation is often shown in symbols by a reversal of an earth or human symbol—such as the interlocked triangles of the Sri Yantra, an element of Sri Aurobindo's Yantra.) Divine reason is also marked by the capacity, for the first time, of the individual to form thoughts and volitions "wholly on the supramental level"; but it has the flaw that once formed, these "real-ideas" must pass through mind to be manifested.

Supermind

Nothing about Sri Aurobindo's yoga can be truly understood without at least a hint of the nature, scope, and movements of the supermind.

"I mean by the supramental the Truth-Consciousness whether above or in the universe by which the Divine knows not only his own essence and being but his manifestation also. Its fundamental character is knowledge by identity, by that the Self is known, Sachchidananda is known, but also the truth of manifestation is known, because this too is That—... Supermind is the Knower possessing knowledge... a dynamic and not only a static Power, not only a knowledge, but a Will according to Knowledge" [29].

The Synthesis stresses the contrasting character of the mind (including the intuitive) and the supermind. This is important because, until one is guided by the psychic being or the spirit, one's way of knowledge, will and feeling is primarily mental. The basic difference between mind and supermind is that the mind is a product of inconscient matter, and is constantly struggling to bring together particulars into a whole; whereas the supermind is established in unity, and all its actions are spontaneous harmonies of the whole, which always retain a consciousness of the essential unity—it is "truth-light full of truthforce" [30].

The transformation of one's being by the supermind is everywhere shown as the final transition beyond which lies the obscurely shining realms of a pure supramental action. Two other transformations, either of which can precede the other, are the psychic and the spiritual. The psychic transformation is a change of our self-awareness from ego and false desire-soul to the true soul. The spiritual change is an experience of higher states—Sachchidananda at the highest—and channeling their energies through a still imperfect individual system. The supramental transformation involves a

perfection of all previous movements, parts of our being, and states of consciousness—including the body and physical sensation.

Once the supramental transformation is complete, a new type of man emerges, with a corresponding change in his subsequent growth and evolution. It is a new life, an new yoga—a life divine. "A supramental or gnostic race of beings would not be moulded in any fixed pattern; for the law of the Supermind is unity fulfilled in diversity, and therefore there would be an infinite diversity in the manifestation of the gnostic consciousness. . . In the gnostic evolution there would be a great diversity in the poise, status, harmonised operations of consciousness and force and delight of existence. There would naturally appear in time many grades of the farther ascent of the evolutive Supermind to its own summits; but in all there would be the common basis and principle" [31].

In a letter written to his brother in 1920, Sri Aurobindo states, "The physical body, the life, the mind and understanding, the supermind and the Ananda—these are the spirit's five levels. The higher we rise in this ascent, the nearer to man comes the state of that highest perfection open to his spiritual evolution. Rising to the Supermind, it becomes easy to rise to the Ananda. One attains a firm foundation in the condition of the indivisible and infinite Ananda, not only in the timeless Parabrahman but in the body, in life, in the world. The integral being, the integral consciousness, the integral Ananda blossoms out and takes form in life. This is the central clue of my yoga, its fundamental principle" [32].

"Within this moisture living,
Thy lamp now first is giving
A Clear and splendid sound." [33].

Notes

1. Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga* (Ponicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1973).
2. Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1973).
3. *Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 37
4. *Ibid.*, p. 39.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
6. Sri Aurobindo, *Essays on the Gita* (Ponicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1972), pp. 574-75.
7. Sri Aurobindo, *Bases of Yoga* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1960), p. 23.
8. *Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 3
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 78-79
10. Jhunjunwala, S.S., *The Gita* (Auroville: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1974), p. 206
11. *Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 306.
12. *Bases of Yoga*, p. 10.
13. *Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 112.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 337.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 240.
16. *Bases of Yoga*, p. 32.
17. See *Synthesis of Yoga*, part 2, chapter 4.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 429.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 480.
20. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1977), p. 990.
21. *Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 488.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 549.
23. Sri Aurobindo, *Letters on Yoga* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1977), 2: 754, 757.
24. See *Synthesis of Yoga*, pp. 598-600, for other views.
25. *Life Divine*, p. 955.
26. *Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 26.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 793.
28. *Ibid.*, pp. 783.
29. *Letters on Yoga*, p. 242.
30. *Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 465.
31. *Life Divine*, pp. 971, 1009.
32. Quoted from Purani, A. B., *The Life of Sri Aurobindo* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1978), p. 171.
33. Proteus to the newborn homunculus in Goethe, J.W. von, *Faust*, trans. by Bayard Talyer (New York: Random House, 1950), p. 131.

EXPRESSIONS OF AUROVILLE

THE MOTHER ON AUROVILLE

• There are people who live in Auroville and who insist on keeping to all the old habits—the old ones and the new ones too—which damage and lower the consciousness, things like smoking, drinking and, of course, drugs... If they ask my advice, I tell them: All that is as if you were cutting pieces out of your being. I advise you not to drink because it diminishes the consciousness and spoils your health.

I can affirm from experience that all that drugs bring by way of experiences, all that contact with the invisible world can be had in a much better, much more conscious and controlled way without drugs. Only one must control oneself.

Some people believe that smoking, drinking, etc., will form part of the life of tomorrow. They will realize that they are imprisoning themselves in their own desires. But anyway, I am not a moralist, not at all, at all, at all. That is their business. If they want to go through this experience, let them do it. Only, the Ashram is not the place for that. Thank God, at the Ashram we have learnt that life is something different. True life is not the satisfaction of desires.

We want to grow in consciousness, we don't want to go down into the pit of desires. To those who refuse to understand, I say, "The aim of Auroville is to discover a

new life, deeper, more complex, more perfect, and to show the world that tomorrow will be better than today." 7/28/1970.

• Moral laws have only a very relative value from the point of view of Truth, besides they vary considerably according to the country, the climate and the period.

Discussion are generally sterile and without productive value. If each individual makes a personal effort of perfect sincerity, uprightness and good will, the best conditions for the work will be realized. August 1966.

• [To someone returning to the West:]

Everything can be part of sadhana; it depends on the inner attitude.

Naturally, if one lets himself be invaded by the Western atmosphere, farewell to sadhana.

But even in the most materialistic milieu, if one retains one's aspiration and one's faith in the Divine Life, the sadhana can and should continue.

• If the need is a true one, the means to do it will come spontaneously. 3/31/1970.

• Disciple: What exactly should I do to accelerate the sadhana?

Mother: Wait quietly for the exact indication; all mental intervention and decisions are arbitrary. The clear indication comes in the silence of the mind. 3/31/1970.

• Disciple: What are the steps to follow for (1) sadhana and (2) silence of the mind?

Mother: (1) Do work as sadhana. You offer to the Divine the work you do at the best of your capacities and you leave the result to the Divine.

(2) Try to become conscious first above your head keeping the brain as silent as possible.

If you succeed and the work is done in that condition, then it will become perfect. 4/2/1970.

• Disciple: Should I spend some time in solitude?

Mother: It is the old methods of yoga which demand silence and solitude.

The yoga of tomorrow is to find the divine in work and in relation with the world.

Look within yourself, reflect upon it and tell me what your choice is. 1/24/1971. [From The Mother on Auroville (Auroville: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, 1977).]

NEWS OF AUROVILLE

In May the Supreme Court of India issued several orders in the case of Auroville/ Government of India versus the Sri Aurobindo Society. On May 8 the following court order was issued:

"We direct the [Government-appointed] Administrator [of Auroville], Shri L.P. Nigam, to have the 37,000 shares belonging to Sri Aurobindo Society in Geo Industries and Insecticides, India Ltd., Madras, valued by a recognized valuer of his choice. Liberty to the parties to place the necessary materials before the valuer. The Administrator will forward the report of the valuer to this Court immediately after it is filed. The valuer will submit his report within two weeks after referring to him.

"The Executive Committee of Sri Aurobindo Society shall file a statement of the assets movable and immovable of the Society before the Administrator within four weeks from today in regard to the Auroville property.

"Mr. Venugopal, who appears in behalf of the [Sri] Aurobindo Society agrees that the Executive Committee of the Society will withdraw its letter dated January 17, 1981, by writing a suitable letter to the Chief Secretary to the Government of Tamil Nadu [state]. We also direct that the Committee will not interfere in any manner with the construction of the Matrimandir, the charge of which has been given to the Aurovilians.

"We direct the residents of Auroville as also the Executive Committee of the Sri Aurobindo Society to submit to the Administrator a detailed list of the respective day to day activities which are conducted on the property called Auroville property within one week from today.

"The parties will abide by any directions which the Administrator will be free to give. Liberty to parties to apply to the Court."

On May 13 the following order was issued:

"Justice L.P. Nigam, Administrator, Auroville, hereby notify... that none should attempt to create fixed assets in Auroville property without prior permission in writing of the Administrator and anyone seeking permission in that behalf has to bear in mind that such assets, if permitted to be created, will not be his exclusive property but will be the collective ownership of the community residing in Auroville, irrespective of the nationality or religion of the residents."

• The Supreme Court order of 8 May has been recognized in an unprecedented way that the Matrimandir is under the charge of the Aurovilians and not to be interfered with in any way by the S.A.S. This central breakthrough has generated an extremely positive response from the Aurovilians with many more coming to work there. S.A.S. blockage of cement permits and funds, which have impeded the growth of the Matrimandir, have now begun to dissolve. The heavy pre-cast beams for the structure of the sphere are being concreted and set in place with the help of the new crane, section by section; encasing the ramp in ferro-cement continues. Piero and Gloria of the Matrimandir staff recently returned after spending three months in the United States exploring solar systems, aircooling and circulation systems and other aspects in connection with the Matrimandir.

• Land dispute resolved: For many months, while the Supreme Court case has been pending, Aurovilians have been landlocked in the local Tindivanam Court with the S.A.S. The S.A.S. has claimed possession of most of the cashew plantations in Auroville communities such as Forecomers and has particularly instigated trouble at Amba Gardens (Auromodele). These disputes over lands clearly under the responsibility of Aurovilians led to a local court action, which the S.A.S. hoped would result in the magistrate's appointing a government receiver to take over the harvests until the court determined who is in actual possession. On July 9, however, the magistrate ordered that the proceedings be dropped. This amounts to de facto recognition that Aurovilians are in charge of the lands.

• Several meetings during the summer studied new financial guidelines for Auroville. After many drafts, some new guidelines were formulated, which try to take into account the present complex financial situation of Auroville and to move toward the ideal defined by Mother regarding the circulation and use of money in Auroville. The need for Auroville to be self-supporting has been reemphasized. Interestingly, during this period of discussion, the amount of money passing through the Envelope system has steadily increased.

The two main problems still to be solved are a clear definition of priorities and how to become self-sufficient.

It was felt that in addition to the Envelope group meeting every Friday afternoon, another group working in close connection with the Envelope group should study these two questions in detail and recommend practical solutions.

Simultaneously, the Handicrafts group is getting more collectively organized. In accordance with the guidelines, all the productive units are meeting together to work toward greater self-sufficiency.

The first practical resolution of the Handicrafts Cooperative has been to include all the units not yet under the Artisana Trust within the Trust, so that one legal body will represent all the fund-generating units in Auroville. This body will declare all its assets and properties held in trust for the benefit of Auroville. Artisana Trust at the same time seeks tax exemption. A revolving fund has also been proposed to create a pool of capital to help new units start.

A clarification has been sent to the government of India stating that all these activities generating funds in Auroville were in no way "personal" businesses, but were a collective means for Auroville

to become self-sufficient, as well as a research field for Auroville's experiment in a new way of sharing money.

Financial Guidelines: What follows are extracts from the new financial guidelines recently formulated in Auroville:

Towards more clarity on personal possession: "I hereby declare that I will not claim any right of ownership over any asset (land, building, equipment) created by me or with my help in Auroville.

"All lands and assets in Auroville are to be held in trust by the whole of Auroville for the sake of attaining and realizing the ideals expressed by the Charter of Auroville."

On Personal Funds: (1) The amount of money received in Auroville via individuals for "personal use" should be declared to the collective through the community representative of the Envelope group, for which forms will be provided; such a disclosure would help bring more awareness of Auroville's finances as well as to see clearly the funds actually entering and circulating in Auroville.

(2) The statement of accounts of each individual would be given to the representative of the Envelope group, where it will be collected and kept.

(3) It is recommended that a minimum of 10% be offered to the collective, through the community representative of the Envelope group, toward the Envelopes.

(4) Any amount received above 1,000 rupees a month should be channeled through the recognized channels, namely, Auroville Fund for Indian currency, and Auroville Pour Tous Fund for foreign currency. This will satisfy the income-tax as well as the foreign-exchange regulations. Any amount below the limit of 1,000 rupees received may be channeled as convenient.

Projects Funds: (1) All funds collected for or in the name of Auroville are to be received through its community channels.

(2) All projects funds entering Auroville will pass through Auroville Fund, for Indian currency; Auroville Pour Tous Fund, for foreign currency; Auromitra, for rural development projects.

(3) From these projects funds, 10% will be contributed to the Envelopes.

(4) The Auroville Cooperative will coordinate all projects proposals, and funds solicited in the name of Auroville. Friends of Auroville or individuals willing to fund specific projects and Aurovilians who have projects to present should coordinate them through the Coop.

Funds Generated in Auroville: Profits from Auroville commercial units should be directed toward the collective realization of Auroville's self-sufficiency. All units should come under one legal entity

(Artisana Trust). The net profits after deductions will be made available to Auroville for maintenance and development as may be decided in the Envelope meeting. The Handicraft Coop is to come up with more specific guidelines.

Funds Circulating within Auroville: As a first step toward more clarity in the functioning of the Auroville services, it is proposed that these services present to the Envelope meeting their monthly accounts of receipts and payments.

• *Auroville Review* no. 5 is now out and we urge all readers interested in Auroville to subscribe. The magazine, now being issued twice yearly, is a comprehensive and detailed presentation of Auroville's growth and projects, with photographs and graphics. Issue no. 5 contains articles on exploring the process of township development, "theatrical adventures in Auroville," "Finding a Way for Auroville Agriculture," an overview of education, a report on Bellaura, a handicraft workshop; the government's role in Auroville; "No Religions," an expression of Auroville's aspiration; "Auroville's Stand," from the counter affidavit prepared by K. Tewari on behalf of Auroville; and news of activities of Auroville centers abroad.

Subscriptions for America are \$7.00 a year for two issues by air. Readers may subscribe through Matagiri, Mt. Tremper, NY 12457, U.S.A. or directly from Auroville Review, The Center, Auroville, Tamil Nadu 605101, India.

Copies of issues numbers 4 and 5 are available singly from Matagiri for \$3.00 and \$3.50 respectively.

• Two Auroville children were invited to join with a delegation of other children from India to attend an International Childrens' Meet held in Bulgaria in August. The two Aurovilians, Aurokali and Alok, participated as guests of the government of Bulgaria.

• In Aspiration, the play *La Folle de Chaillot* was performed and work has begun on a drama adapted from the book *Illusions* by Richard Bach.

• Guesthouses are being run as services through the Envelope system. Papers of foreign visitors are regularized. Center Guest House is now being overseen by Rod since Myrtle's departure to the U.S. There is hope of a similar guest facility in Pondicherry.

• Auroville is now affiliated with the National Film Archive at Poona.

• Financial guidelines for the community are in the process of being formulated.

Project proposals will be channeled through the Cooperative and a 10% surcharge for maintenance and community services which support the projects will be written into proposals.

• The reorganized Cooperative now meets in the Matrimandir office.

• Aurovilians are expressing concern over the construction of an atomic energy complex at Kalpakkam, close to Auroville, consisting of 2 Candu heavy-water reactors, 1 fast test breeder, and a fuel-reprocessing plant. The extent of completion and activation schedules is a question. From what has been gathered, one Candu reactor is close to becoming operational, awaiting a supply of heavy water, while the fast breeder is still on the drawing boards. Aurovilians are discussing what they can do to ward off the danger, both in India and the world. Some information is available but more is needed.

• *Small Kids Meeting.* When asked to specify the sort of activity they would prefer, the children proposed to have a "meeting." This proposal was seconded by a rousing cry of "Yea, yea." The first business at hand was to determine the type of meeting to be conducted. "School" meeting was unenthusiastically received. "Pour Tous" meeting was proposed, with drastic results: one child threatened to leave immediately if it were so named. Finally "Small Kids" meeting was unanimously accepted. (The one adult present offered to excuse herself if necessary, but was permitted to remain.)

The next item on the agenda was "fighting." One four-year-old gave an eloquent speech on this subject: "There should be no fighting at school. This is Auroville."

Others agreed, although two at first insisted that fighting was fun. After some of the various aspects of fighting were discussed—such as the fact that if you hit someone, the chances are that they will hit you back, or the fact that crying is not very nice—it was mutually agreed that all things considered, the school would indeed be a nicer place if there were no fighting.

The next subject presented for discussion was sharing. It was agreed that one toy could be shared by many, but not one sweet. As a solution to this problem, it was proposed that the mothers be requested to purchase enough sweets for all the children. At this point the discussion got sidetracked into the subject of chocolates. The group pondered at length the idea (proposed by one of those present) of a chocolate bar that would reach from India to France. Finally one child indicated that he was tired of talking about food and the

discussion was terminated.

The last item of business at the meeting turned out to be an exchange of information about various monkeys the children had observed. It was noted that often monkeys are seen eating bananas. The meeting was then spontaneously adjourned in favor of play.

- The Certitude library has moved to Eco-House at Center.

- Utilite has taken a new and more collective orientation including guest facilities.

- A wave of Aurovilians has gone out on visits to Europe and America. Among them Narad and Mary Helen of the Matrimandir Gardens, who are currently in Houston, Texas; Shyam, Michael, Amrit and Auroson, also to the U.S.; Ingo from Forecomers, and Claudine, Martha, Jocelyn, and Surya. Bob from Center has returned to England. Alan from the Matrimandir Gardens nursery will remain in America indefinitely; Liska is taking care of the orchids.

- An envelope has been opened to receive contributions for the publication (in India) of the English translation of *Mother's Agenda*. Volume 1 has already been issued in India; at the time of writing, volume 2 was about to be issued.

Auroville has also begun collecting a small part of the funds urgently required for the legal work in Delhi.

- Sports in Auroville: A new renewal of sports started a few months ago. The youngsters were the only ones regularly practicing basketball and succeeded in forming a team selected for the Indian junior championship in Jamespur (Bihar) in December 1980. Thanks to donations from Switzerland, new installations have been started to do practicable football, and a running track, one handball court, and equipment to start gymnastic classes has also been purchased. Football has now become one of the most popular sports in Auroville and teams can at times challenge the best teams in Pondicherry. In basketball the girls, after much regular practice, are reaching a good local standard which will enable them to participate soon in local competitions.

[News items culled from the *Auroville Newsletter* and the *Banyenberry Bulletin*, both issued by Auroville for centers. Readers should bear in mind that "news" tends quickly to change, so things reported here may be different by the time readers see it.]

CONTRIBUTIONS FOR AUROVILLE

In the United States, contributions for various Auroville projects, including the Matrimandir, may be sent to the following centers:

Matagiri Sri Aurobindo Center, Inc.*
Mt. Tremper, NY 12457

Auroville Association*
212 Farley Drive
Aptos, CA 95003

East-West Cultural Center*
2865 W. 9 St.
Los Angeles, CA 90006

Sri Aurobindo's Action Center
P.O. Box 1977
Boulder, CO 80306

*Indicates tax exempt organization. Donations sent directly to India from abroad should be sent by registered airmail.

To visit Auroville: If you are interested in visiting Auroville, please write directly to Unity Resources, Eco-House, Auroville 605101, Tamil Nadu, India, expressing your interest and asking for a list of guesthouses and charges, and other relevant information.

GENERAL AND CENTER NEWS

- *East-West Cultural Center* (2865 W. 9 St., Los Angeles, CA 90006; telephone 213-480-8325) observed its 28th birthday on May 17. Several programs were held during the month to mark the event: On May 10 a program on "The Path of Transformation" was offered by Robert, Trudi, Frederic and Mitra; on May 17 Dr. Vasant Merchant, a longtime friend of the late Dr. Judith Tyberg, founder of the center, gave a talk. On May 31, the Center Players presented a one-act play, *Philosophy Indian Style*, followed by some Hindustani ragas on flute.

The center offers a regular group meditation Sundays 2:45 to 3:30 p.m., informal talks/discussion on Sri Aurobindo's and Mother's Yoga Thursdays from 8:00 to 9:30 p.m. in the library; and Sanskrit classes, taught by Kaivalya using Dr. Tyberg's texts.

- *New York City*: There is at present no active public center in New York City. However, people wishing information may contact Anie Nunnally, 408, W. 57 St., Apt. 8F, New York, NY 10019; telephone 212-757-7584. An informal study group has formed to read *Mother's Agenda*. The group will meet at various apartments once a month. Anyone interested should contact Anie Nunnally at the address above or Mrs. Lola Lesser, 140 West End Ave., New

York, NY 10023; telephone 212-799-3185 for details about the next scheduled meeting.

- A brief review of *Mother's Flowers and Their Messages* appears in the June 1981 issue of *New Age Journal*. The review was written by Karen Schultz.

- Tom Noonan of the *Center for East-West Studies*, 605 McAndrew Road, Ojai, CA 93023 (telephone 805-646-2181) has sent us information on the center and its recently acquired bookshop. All the principal members of the center are sadhaks of Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga.

From their brochure: "The Center arose from the aspiration of the individual members to find a true understanding of the world's spiritual traditions. It is felt that like at all other critical junctures of human evolution, a new Truth is attempting to manifest and make itself felt upon earth. This new Truth is not something limited by the past—it is not the sum of the past or even the sum of the best of the past—it is something entirely new. To prepare ourselves for this transformation we aspire as a collectivity to perfect the instruments of our being through study, contemplation, meditation and selfless work. The Center currently operates on a nonprofit basis.

"Classes meet for two hours on Thursday evenings at 7:30 p.m."

Among the courses offered this past winter were Soul Culture in the Upanishads, The Soul in Modern Spirituality, Sri Aurobindo and the Evolution of the Soul, Introduction to the Veda, and others. Classes are conducted by Tom Noonan, Seabury Gould and others.

- A *spiritual community* based on the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother is being formed in inland Northern California. Interested persons or families will need to construct homes and be able to experience community life in its primitive stages. Please write to Ms. Andal Mira Tomas, P.O. Box 8, Middletown, CA 95461.

- The London center has reorganized, under the name *Sri Aurobindo Trust*, and is publishing a newsletter. Their address is the same (82 Bell St., London NW 1, England; telephone 01-258-3656). The new directors are D. Shah and Marguerite Smithwhite.

Center activities have included the visit of M. P. Pandit and Vasanti from the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, in February; a talk by David Davies on the special influence of the Mother on the world, for the April 24 Darshan; a visit by Rohit Mehta, one of India's most renowned lecturers and writers, who has written and spoken extensively about Sri Aurobindo and the

Mother.

From their March newsletter: "A very exciting project has been started and is taking place with about 150 primary children, aged 4 to 11, in a London school. It started as an idea to discover whether simple meditation on Peace would have any effect on the creativity of children of this age. The results have been astonishing. The paintings of these young children, done immediately after meditation, using Ashram New Year music, are abstract, quite unlike typical children's art, and full of beautiful and unexpected symbolism. The most significant fact that has emerged from this experiment with children from a deprived area is that in spite of a negative environment there is beauty and knowledge within every child. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have told us categorically that all knowledge is there in the psychic being. The project will continue with the same children over the next 4 years, thus giving a wonderful opportunity to assess the effect of meditation on creativity, attitudes, behaviours, socialisation, etc."

• We have received the following letter from the *Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Delhi Branch* (Sri Aurobindo Marg, New Delhi 110016, India):

"We wish to build closer links between this Ashram and Sri Aurobindo/Auroville centres throughout the world with a view to greater collaboration on any issues of mutual interest and concern.

"Since this is our first contact, here is a brief outline of Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Delhi Branch's history, present activities and future plans.

"The Ashram was inaugurated on 12 February 1956 with the blessings of the Mother. It is the only branch of the Ashram outside Pondicherry. It has a Himalayan annex at Ban-Nivas, Nainital, where international youth camps and other activities are held.

"Since 1956 the Ashram has expanded with a steady stream of Sadhaks from India and other countries giving their energies for its flowering.

"Now the Ashram has a meditation hall, which can comfortably seat 300 people, library and reading room, printing press, book sales department, dairy, dispensary, kitchen, bakery, laundry, a hostel for children, a centre for infants, guest rooms and dining hall.

"Attached to it is the Mother's International School, which opened in 1957, wherein 1,700 boys and girls study, 120 of whom live in the children's hostel located in the Ashram premises. There is a particular emphasis on physical education at the school. The school grounds have sufficient space for many varied sporting activities.

"The focal point of the Ashram grounds

on the Mahasamadhi Lawn is the shrine wherein the relics of Sri Aurobindo were installed in 1957.

"The Ashram grounds are dominated throughout by trees, each with its own special spiritual significance, standing as strong living examples of the Divine and our aspiration. Plants and flowers bedeck the Mahasamadhi Lawn, a glowing chorus of colour and silent, vibrant harmony.

"In this inspired atmosphere the overflowing stream of guests from outside India and visitors from Delhi and children from the school come, go, flow together and grow.

"Every evening but Sunday, when meditation is in the morning, all the Sadhaks and hostel children join together for meditation, singing devotional songs interspersed with periods of silence.

"Other activities of the Ashram include daily asana classes and the Matri Kala Mandir (Mother's Temple of Fine Arts), which encourages and promotes training in Indian dance, drama and music.

"This July [1981] an Integral Teacher Training College is being started in order to reorient the teaching in Sri Aurobindo schools and centres in India along the lines originally laid down by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. The "Free Progress System" of education for children from 3 to 5 years is also being started in July in the new school Mirambika (a Sanskrit name meaning "Mother Mira"). Admission is open to Indians and also those outside India.

"We very much welcome your news and views and especially any publication of yours. Visitors to the Ashram are most welcome, especially those who come to share in the activities and to offer new ideas, particularly concerning education."

Further information on any aspect of the Ashram or school may be obtained by writing directly to the Ashram.

• A new book by Satprem, *La Mental des Cellules* (The Mind of the Cells) has been issued by Robert Laffont of Paris. The work is a concentrated presentation of the Mother's exploration of the cellular consciousness and "mind of the cell" in her search for the key to physical transformation, with numerous passages from *Mother's Agenda*. At present the book is available only in French, but there are hopes for an English translation in the not too distant future.

• *Gli Amici d'Auroville* (The Friends of Auroville) (Via Rio d'Orzo, 8, 41056 Savignano s/P (MO), Italy) is in the process of translating into Italian the *Auroville Review*. People interested in receiving it when it is ready or who can help them by providing material or photographs of

Auroville are requested to get in touch with them directly.

• Some new centers have come to our notice:

Global View, Willow Gold Farm, Rte. 3, Spring Green, WI 53588, U.S.A., involved with the distribution of Auroville (and other) handcrafts.

Aurovive, 92 rue des Eaux Vives, 1207 Geneva, Switzerland a group of people living together, and operating the Boutique d'Auroville.

Auroville International—Great Britain, 26A Ferme Park Road, Finsbury Park, London N. 4, England.

NEWS OF MATAGIRI

Matagiri offers courses in philosophy, Sanskrit, and Hindi. Those interested should write or call Gopal at Matagiri, (914) 679-8322.

Matagiri's staff has been reduced by departures over the past year, so the work has been reorganized and in some cases curtailed. Our supporters and readers are asked to bear with us if letters are slow to be answered. Joining us to help with the work is Larry Seidlitz from Wisconsin, who came in August. Tom O'Brien, who lived at Matagiri for two years, moved to nearby Woodstock in June.

Among the visitors to Matagiri over the last few months have been Narad and Mary Helen of the Matrimandir Gardens nursery in Auroville; Piero and Gloria of the Matrimandir staff; Mariano Salemmé of the Rome center; Param and Milana Bainbridge, once associated with the California Institute of Asian Studies and now directing their own center, The Metanoia Association in Whitewater, Calif.; Maryse Don from the South of France; Sally Zilber from San Francisco; Muriel Spanier of Sri Aurobindo's Action Center, Boulder, Colo.; Fred Garel of the New York Ethical Culture Society; Gordon McCormick and friends, who are establishing a health and physical fitness spa, The Next Step, in the area; Dr. Amiya Chakravarty from the State University of New York at New Paltz; Lalita Stewart from the Center of Light in Mass. with Dr. Perumal Das, a teacher formerly with Unesco; Lola Lesser and Anie Nunnally from New York.

The Agenda in America: Funds are needed for the English publication of *Mother's Agenda* in the United States. We urge anyone who feels the importance of the Agenda to help in any way he can. Donations may be sent to Matagiri Sri Aurobindo Center, Inc., Mt. Tremper, NY 12457 or to Institute for Evolutionary Research, 200 Park Ave., Suite 303E New York, NY 10166. Both organizations are tax exempt.