

# Collaboration

SPRING 1987

Vol. XIII No. 3



# Table of Contents

<b>March 7, 1970..</b> .....	<b>2-3</b>
<i>by Gordon Kors tange</i>	
<b>Poems from Aurochs</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<i>by Kathrin and Nelly</i>	
<b>Seeking the Self</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<i>by Jeanne Kors tange</i>	
<b>About Books..</b> .....	<b>5-6</b>
<i>by Shraddhavan and Alan Combs</i>	
<b>The Mother on Dreams..</b> .....	<b>7-8</b>
<b>People</b> .....	<b>8-10</b>
<b>Center News</b> .....	<b>10-12</b>
<b>Invitation to AUM</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>Poetry</b> .....	<b>13</b>
<i>by Jean Finney and Jessie Roarke</i>	
<b>Sammy the Fruit Vendor</b> .....	<b>14-19</b>
<i>by Maggi Liddchi</i>	

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Larger contributions, all tax-deductible, are welcome for the work of the Center. In addition, contributions for Auroville and the Sri Aurobindo Ashram may be made through Matagiri Sri Aurobindo Center, Inc. Subscriptions should be sent to Matagiri Sri Aurobindo Center, Inc., P.O. Box 372, High Falls, NY 12440.

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Printed in the United States of America.

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# March 7, 1970

He sat, it seemed, for **eons** on the porch outside her room. He had been waiting already for years, then months, then those days since he was told he could go up to her on his birthday, sitting in his solid little block of a Peace Corps house, trying to concentrate on a name, a tiny face glimpsed above a railing; eyes that blinked at the brightness of the Bay of Bengal then swept silence over the sea of faces below. Too soon she returned into the mysterious inner world of which he knew nothing.

**Reclusiveness** held a fascination, especially for a restless American given somewhat to seclusion himself. That first year in India had been a reading binge, a trunk full of books devoured during the day's heat and night's boredom. Without the yoke of formal education he drifted from field to field, grazing indiscriminately. If he could not speak much Tamil, he could at least talk English with his books. Yet every night he would bike out into the bazaar on some useless errand, an excuse to lose himself in the noisy river of the marketplace. He thought often of Sri Aurobindo remaining in one room for years on end, sitting still for hours in the heat.

It was very hot in the veranda outside her room. He hadn't brought a cloth for the sweat. The crows were obnoxious as usual, louder and more present than the distant hum of the Ashram below. He wondered if the others waiting with him were as easily distracted. They seemed so sunk into themselves, silent and unconcerned about the more than two hours they had been there. It was two hours, wasn't it? He snuck a look at his watch. After eleven.

This was a test of course. Like the would-be Zen student who sits motionless in the snow for days trying to persuade the master to open his door. He wished ruefully that he could sit still for five minutes, but he was just a gangly North American wilting in the humidity. If only he could hunker down anywhere like any Tamilian, easing the body down over the flattened feet as if settling into an overstuffed chair; at home in waiting, unworried about whether a bus would come in two minutes or two hours. He lasted less than a minute, rocking back and forth on the balls of his feet, his mind a runaway express plunging through the dust of India.

He remembered the instructions given in clipped, hushed tones: "Go in front of her, kneel, and give her your flowers (rapidly wilting, he noticed). Then make pranam. She will be looking clearly at you. You should open yourself and let her look inside through your eyes. You may be staying for some time. Then she will give flowers and blessing packet."

Some time. . . the eyes! Back in Midwest USA people didn't look into each other's eyes. He knew from taking speech in college that "eye contact" was important, but its only purpose, it seemed, was to make the other person shift their glance. Man's superiority over the other animals is proved by the fact that not one of them, dog, cat, horse, can hold a human's gaze. But what about the wild ones staring at us from the shadows of the forest. . . the door opened.

Someone stepped outside and motioned them to come. He followed the others into the welcome dimness of an incense fragrant room. He looked eagerly around-saw paintings, statues, cases of **knicknacks**, books, carvings-a museum of a room. 'Another test,' he thought, 'to distract my already distracted thoughts.' What was strange was the combination of objects: exquisitely carved ivory and wood figures next to sea-shell necklaces, toy elephants, the kind of things found in tourist shops at Mahabalipuram.

They passed through that room and up a flight of stairs to the abode of the Mother. At the entrance, his guide repeated the instructions. Then another wait outside her door, straining to hear the muffled sounds within over the beating of his heart. The door swung open.

When asked later what her room had looked like, he couldn't remember. From the moment he found himself before her (kneeling or sitting cross-legged?) he was riveted by her eyes. They thrust upon him with a fierceness and intensity totally unexpected, as if she would hurtle through the ocular nerve deep into places he himself had never been. Bells clanged. Whistles shrieked. Drawbridges creaked up and soldiers rushed about. His castle was in an uproar...for how long? Thirty seconds? Two minutes?

Suddenly, without warning, she smiled and the walls dissolved. A wave of relief and joy rolled through his whole body as if a log jam had given way. She handed him a rose, a blessing packet. Somehow he was able to struggle to his feet, still held by the embrace of that smile. Then he was back through the door, down the stairway, and into the familiar pulse of the sun, the whisper of breeze. He knew he might never understand what had happened there in her room. He looked down at the rose, held its coolness against his cheek. He would think about it later.

Gordon Korstange



Mother in her chair.

Our next issue will focus on the *Bhagavat Gita* and Sri Aurobindo's interpretation of it. Since we know that many study groups read *Essays on the Gita* we invite our readers to respond with prose, poetry, and artwork to an aspect of the *Gita* which touches them. As always, we welcome any contribution.

Jeanne and Gordon

Jacqueline Swartz joins the staff of *Collaboration* as illustrator and artist. She lives in New York City and works as a computer programmer. Her development as an artist began in the Ashram in Pondicherry. We look forward to including her sketches and illustrations and hope that our readers enjoy her work.

Editors' Note: We present the following pieces from *Aurochs*, a magazine produced by the students of the Auroville School with the help of Johnny of Fertile.

### Midnight Jungle

Don't be afraid  
of the midnight jungle  
The prowling tigers  
are not aware of you,  
and the shadow  
will swallow your step.

What you hear  
are calls of beasts  
flitting by  
aiming for the  
distance

Don't be afraid  
of the jungle song,  
the rustle of leaves,  
the humming of bugs;  
you go unnoticed.

Step into the starlit clearing  
and look around  
the shadows are  
left behind you  
the tigers reduced  
to cats  
and the fierce claws  
of vampires  
and the zombie eyes  
are but birds  
and fireflies.

Kathrin

### Horses

(reflections from Kodaikanal School)

They gather as the night falls,  
Bodies sweat at touch,  
The day was hot and hard,  
The marshy land was wet.

The morning air was fresh,  
The grass must have been green.  
They filled their hungry stomachs,  
They sleep and now they dream.

I crouched among the trees,  
I saw them gallop by,  
I saw their tails swish  
To clear away the flies.

I wished that I could join them  
In that free and healthy day,  
But my body won't allow it,  
I cannot be as they.

I can only study  
In this dark and dingy room,  
Because I have a thinking mind  
I sacrifice my freedom.

Nelly

# Seeking The Self

by Jeanne Korstange

On the next few pages we are presenting two reviews of the book: *Sri Aurobindo and Jung: A Comparative Study In Yoga and Depth Psychology*, by Satya Prakash Singh. Our readers may wonder, why two reviews of the same book?

I thought that these two reviews reflected the problem of westerners relating to eastern spiritual thought. Shradhdhavan finds a comparison difficult to accept because Jung is a thinker and explorer of the psychological realm while Sri Aurobindo is a seer, like the **Vedic** Rishis, of the inner realms of experiences and “authoritatively” maps them out for us.

Alan Combs recognizes Jung’s mystical side as a significant contribution to Western psychology and concludes his review with an elaboration of this very aspect of Jung’s life and work.

Thus was I lead to read the book and reflect upon what I now think of as mystical or spiritual. Having lived seven years in Auroville and now seven years in the States, I wonder if my criteria for the spiritual has not fallen to a more mental level. Is Jung’s contribution to psychology a spiritual influence in **western** culture?

This past fall I saw the movie *A Matter of Heart*. It’s a good example of why the psychology of Jung is of such relevance to the search for the spiritual in the West. *A Matter of Heart* is Jung’s life and work narrated by his foremost disciple Marie Louise Von Franz. It is composed of interviews of Jung’s patients who later became analysts, biographical details, old film clips and photographs which document his life and work.

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a more mental level.*

The narrator describes Jung’s life-long process of becoming more and more in touch with his inner self. The film draws the viewer into Jung’s world and, for this viewer, into his inner world. I felt the presence of his inner self which Satya Prakash says that Jung perceived as follows:

... the supreme principle controlling human behaviour  
... the self is the center of totality of the inner reality. . .

Satya Prakash also states that Jung perceived the essential difference between the ego and the self:

Unless one understands the limitations of the ego and shifts the center of one’s personality from it to the self one would remain prone to conflicts and division of personality. . . Jung was convinced of the reality of the self as lying deep on the human psyche and manifesting itself in the form of a variety of symbols, including the so called **Mandalas**.

I think the film very clearly separates these two aspects of Jung. The ego and self are unveiled through the interviews of patients who later became analysts and Jung, who is meditatively at work on a sculpture in his garden. As the story of Jung’s life unfolded I entered more deeply into the heart of Jung’s search for the self. When the books containing Jung’s Mandala drawings are shown the narrative becomes more spiritual or mystical. Finally Jung’s dream of the world ending in nuclear

holocaust is told and the importance of his discoveries for westerners make their impact. It is here that the necessity for modern man to find the “self,” which Jung defined, is laid out. The message was quite clear. Unless modern man gets out of the ego he will continue on the path of self destruction.

Essentially the film told the audience that it is no longer possible to project ourselves through egoistic means or traditional religions or dogmas. It is imperative that we learn to integrate what is different from our ego into our being.

I found the same idea in this book on Sri Aurobindo and Jung. Satya Prakash states that the discovery of a collective unconscious integrates the human being into history and society. It allows individuals to integrate the spiritual forces into their own inner reality. By doing this we can become more tolerant and “enlarge the horizon of our being.”

The film urges us to seek that psychic center as a necessary balance for the forces which are represented in the individual. As Alan Combs so aptly puts it, “... the psychical center represents a center of balance of the entire person, one that stands between the surface (ego) consciousness and the larger realms behind it.”

Shradhdhavan points out that Jung can be a preparation for Westerners on their way to yoga, particularly his method of interpreting dreams. Disciples of Sri Aurobindo and Mother have been able to read Mother’s interpretation of dreams and the descriptions of her own experiences during her nights. She has recorded her nights’ work in the “Great Hotel”; the arrival on the shores of the Supramental world as she helps beings disembark from the supramental boat, and The Supreme Love manifesting through pulsations. These and other experiences take us into the reality of the supramental world.

The volumes of Mother’s *Collected Works* contain many talks on dreams and how important one’s nights are to accomplishing the day’s progress. Among Mother’s earliest writing is a talk to a group in Paris which she gave on March 25, 1912. “On Dreams” tells how to recover dreams upon waking and explains how important they are as a connection to the inner self. It follows the book reviews.

Sri Aurobindo also gives descriptions of his visions, interpretations of disciple’s dreams and discusses methods for attaining the ‘self.’

However, reading Sri Aurobindo’s *Savitri* may be the most direct method of seeking the self. And Satya Prakash has given us an excellent passage from *Savitri* which describes the realization of the self.

In the last chamber on a golden seat  
One sat whose shape no vision could define.  
Only one felt the world’s unattainable fount,  
A Power of which she was a straying Force.  
An invisible Beauty, goal of the world’s desire,  
A Sun of which all knowledge is a beam,  
A Greatness without whom no life could be.  
Thence all departed in silent self.  
And all became formless and pure and bare.  
Then through a tunnel dug in the last rock  
She came out where there shone a deathless sun.

A house was there all made of flame and light  
And crossing a wall of doorless living fire  
There suddenly she met her secret soul.

Editors’ Note: Shradhdhavan, a native of England, has lived in Auroville since 1969. Alan Combs is a professor of psychology at the University of North Carolina.

# About Books

**Sri Aurobindo and Jung: a Comparative Study in Yoga and Depth Psychology** by *Satya Prakash Singh*, Aligarh, Madhuchandas Publications, 1986, Rs. 125.

by *Shraddhavan*

It is encouraging to find a serious study of psychology which is written by a professor of Sanskrit. It is a sign that in India at least the age of the 'complete man of letters' is not over, and that not all scholars have yet been forced into narrow academic specializations.

Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961) wrote many rather inaccessible professional studies in the course of his long career as a pioneer in the Western study of psychology. He also wrote an extremely readable and fascinating autobiography, *Memories, Dreams and Reflections*, in which he relates the developments of his life and his work to moving contacts with another level of reality, which together with the other followers of Freud he labelled 'the unconscious.' These contacts came, for Jung, mostly through dreams, but also through waking vision and other spontaneous experiences. In the course of the 1920s he developed a serious difference of approach to Freud's, which led to an acrimonious split between the two. Freud accused his younger associate of dabbling with the 'occult' and becoming a mystic. Freud's view of the human unconscious as a sort of rubbish-basket containing **only** repressed sexual impulses became quite incompatible with Jung's experience of the unconscious as a treasure-house of knowledge and inspiration. For Freud, the only thing to be done with the unconscious was to call up out of it repressed material which was causing havoc with the normal lives and mentalities of his patients. And, indeed, by exposing repressed fantasies to the light of the conscious awareness he was able to help many back into a more balanced condition of control. Jung followed similar methods of exploration, but found in himself and in his patients that the unconscious formed a deep ocean of knowledge and imagery that went far beyond the scope of personal repression. If some troubling image tried to surface into the normal consciousness and was repeatedly refused, then problems could arise; but quite apart from this, the unconscious was an area of tremendous potency and value in itself, worthy of exploration and understanding. Jung's explorations and analyses of his findings over a period of **fifty** years form the system known as 'Depth Psychology.'

The fact that Jung gave a value to the unconscious in itself probably accounts not only for his split with Freud, but also for his present lack of total respectability in the academic world of Europe. His insights are a serious challenge to the supremacy of the rational mind. In the universities of Europe, the two deities are Freud and Marx, whose systems stand for the triumph of rationality over even personal instinct and **the** unpredictable course of human history. Jung, on the other hand, with his 'mystic' tendencies is **the** beacon light for all Westerners who feel impelled to search beyond the bright fields of pure reason. In my own development I remember that reading a posthumous collection of his writings entitled *Man and his Images* was extremely important in the preparation for coming to Sri Aurobindo. And even today I often find a 'Jungian' interpretation of my dreams the most satisfying one.

It is probably this unique importance of Jung for Western seekers which has prompted *Satya Prakash Singh* to attempt a systematic comparison of his psychological theories with the insights of Sri Aurobindo. His introduction gives a life-sketch of each of his subjects, and six chapters present a comparison of various central aspects of their thought under the headings: 'Collective Unconscious and the Subliminal'; 'Archetypes and Visionary Beings'; 'Consciousness, Ego and Self'; 'Structure and Dynamics of the Inner Reality'; 'Individuation and Transformation'; 'Active Imagi-

nation and Integral Yoga.' In each of these chapters the views of his two subjects are presented, often in their own words, and only at the end of each section does the author add his own comments and conclusions. The scrupulousness of his method allows the reader to come to his own conclusions, but the author often indicates that in his opinion Sri Aurobindo goes much further than Jung, and that his scheme is able to include and complete **that** of the Western seeker.

I found some of the parallels he draws rather far-fetched, or based on only superficial resemblances, while one of the oppositions he mentions-between Sri Aurobindo's reliance on subjective authority of inner 'subjective' experience. Jung's empiricism is really only a concession to the academic framework within which he had to function. Nevertheless, despite some minor shortcomings, this book will surely be of interest to Aurobindonians wishing to be better informed about the thought of Jung, or to Jungians wishing to have an introduction to the psychology of Sri **Aurobindo**.

For this reviewer, however, it is difficult to accept a comparison which treats the two men on the same level. Jung, though a thinker of great originality and significance for his own time and place, was nevertheless no more than a thinker. Though he drew on his own inner experiences in understanding those of others, in order to

*At certain points we can say  
'They have both seen the same thing';  
but the eyes of the one were still veiled  
with a fallible human consciousness-  
the other could see the whole, in  
all its detailed significances  
and complexities.*

communicate with his contemporaries he has categorized his insights into a system elaborated upon a set of theories. Some of these theories are more luminous than others. Jung has explored the fringes of a vast continent, and at some points penetrated deeper than at others. He was a pioneer without a chart, and we must be grateful to him for reporting his findings honestly and clearly-and usefully. Sri Aurobindo, on the other hand, speaks with authority. He has seen in detail, not only this one continent, but many others to which it is connected. At certain points we can say 'They have both seen the same thing'; but the eyes of the one were still veiled with a fallible human consciousness-the other could see the whole, in all its detailed significances and complexities. Really, there can be no comparison.

Nevertheless, as Dr. Singh says, 'the common conclusions' expressed by Sri Aurobindo and Jung are of interest-in that they show us what a sincere and highly developed Western mind, working mainly independently (he is reported to have deliberately avoided 'holy men' on a late visit to India) could discover and formulate of the vast realms of inner experience which Sri Aurobindo has authoritatively mapped out in such comprehensive detail. The book closes with an interesting quotation from Jung's autobiography, which seems worth re-quoting here:

"I want to be freed neither from human beings, nor from myself, nor from nature; for all these appear to me the greatest of miracles. Nature, the psyche, and life appear to me like divinity unfolded. . .and what more could I wish for?"

Reprinted from: Mother India, October 1986

by *Alan Combs*

The appearance of a book comparing the thought of Sri **Aurobindo** and Carl Jung is an event worthy of celebration. It is

doubtful that any other two individuals in the twentieth century have contributed as profoundly to our understanding of human nature as these. The fact that their thoughts share much in common is perhaps not to be unexpected. It is to their credit that such commonality was achieved. It is an unexpected bonus that this book serves also as a good introduction to both of them.

Overviews of Carl Jung's ideas, as well as of Sri Aurobindo's, are hard to come by. The reason for this is that neither of them wrote down an entirely fixed set of ideas in one place, something that one could call a model or a theory which was then systematically revised to keep abreast of further developments. Unlike Freud, who was ever concerned with maintaining and revising an explicit theory of the psyche-however frugal it may seem beside the vast and intricate images developed by Jung and Sri Aurobindo-both of the latter tended to write about particular topics at particular times, and rarely attempted to encompass the whole at once. This was especially true of Jung, who considered theory building a great waste of time, and addressed each particular matter of interest from whatever point of view his thinking had currently evolved to. The reader is put in the position of running along behind, picking up bits and pieces and attempting to update his understanding as best he can.

Sri Aurobindo's major works, such as *The Synthesis of Yoga, The Life Divine*, and *Savitri*, are massive and difficult to read. The *Letters* are much more approachable, but fragmentary, so again one is left with much of the work of synthesis falling upon oneself. Any adequate overview is to be welcomed, and Singh's introduction to both of these thinkers is more than adequate. It is apparent that he has spent much time with each of them. Topics are organized by chapter in a straight-forward fashion, with point by point conclusions at the end.

I found most interesting the discussions of Jung's ideas about the collective unconscious, archetypes, and individuation, as contrasted with comparable aspects of Sri Aurobindo's thought. Jung's concept of the collective unconscious as a vast and virtually limitless underpinning of the surface personality is unique in the West. Singh likens it to the *subliminal* of Sri Aurobindo. It differs, though, in lacking the dimension of vertical ascent characteristic of the latter. It is the source of archetypes. These may be thought of as themes, forms, or scripts which take on flesh in *specific* situations. An example is that of the wise old man. This motif is seen in myriad images of old men of wisdom found in myths, folk tales, art, drama, dreams, and visions throughout the world. The image may be projected onto a particular person such as one's grandfather, or one may identify with it and, as if possessed, take on the image as one's own.

Singh finds nothing strictly comparable to the concept of the archetype in Sri Aurobindo's psychology. The two realms of thought converge, however, in the arena of dreams and visions. Both Jung and Sri Aurobindo experienced more than a few visions, and dreams seem to have been among the principle guide posts in Jung's life and work. Sri Aurobindo's visions were often considered to be real. "It is quite possible to 'meet' Krishna, speak with him and hear his voice in an inner 'real' vision, quite as real as anything on the outer plane." Visionary beings, such as the Mother, are emanations of real beings. The Mother, e.g., is the Consciousness-Force which is the primary force of creation. Jung, on the other hand, was much more inclined to consider dreams and visions to be archetypal expressions of the collective unconscious. Sri Aurobindo did occasionally speak of symbolic expressions, e.g., in dreams, but these were not of major importance in his thought.

A central issue in both systems is the growth, centralizing, and unifying of the personality. Jung felt that this process, which he termed individuation, did not usually occur until midlife. Sri Aurobindo, in a similar vein, did not encourage the practice of integral yoga until one was fully mature and able to seriously commit oneself to the work. Jung's idea of individuation involves a shift of the center of gravity of the personality to a point midway between the

conscious and the unconscious, yielding a more intuitive and integrated stance toward life. In this process the ego must yield its position as sole captain of the ship of the personality. The movement toward individuation can be very powerful, controlling one's dreams, visions, and aspirations. If it is blocked by the ego, serious pathology is not far behind.

Jung's descriptions of individuation align strikingly with Sri Aurobindo's descriptions of the emergence of the psychic center. The latter, as well, represents a center of balance of the entire person, one that stands between the surface (ego) consciousness and the larger realms behind it. Both represent major developments in the direction of growth and transformation.

A number of other topics are discussed by Singh. These include the notions of psychological types in Jung and Sri Aurobindo, and methods of personal growth. The latter contrasts Jung's method of active imagination with the integral yoga. A good bit of very fascinating biographical material is also given for both Sri Aurobindo and Jung.

The only notable weakness of the book, to my mind, is an absence of a full appreciation for the fluidness of Jung's thought. Jung was professionally active till almost the very end of his long life, and his ideas were subject to constant change. As previously indicated, he unfortunately made virtually no effort to systematically update his earlier notions, many of which were deeply steeped in attempts to justify his ideas to a materialistic and Victorian scientific community. He must be read with considerable attention to the context of the time of writing as well as to the audience addressed in each instance. Moreover, while he was loath to abandon entirely his own Victorian outlook, he often left the door open for other possibilities. For instance, many important ideas were given to him by Philemon, a sort of spirit guide who first appeared in a dream, but later accompanied him often in waking life. In his own words, "Philemon represents a force that was not myself [read conscious **self**]. In my fantasies I held conversations with him and he said things which I had not consciously thought. For I observed clearly that it was he who spoke, not I. . . I walked up and down the garden with him, and to me he was what the Indians call a guru." Jung came to the latter conclusion after meeting a friend of Gandhi's who believed his own guru to be the historical Shankara himself, though, of course, not in the physical body. Even projections of archetypes were not always taken to be merely psychological in substance. In a letter to Pere Lachat, written in 1954, regarding the Christian concept of the Holy Spirit, Jung wrote, "To impute to my psychology the idea that the Holy Spirit is 'Only a projection of the human soul' is false. He is a transcendental fact which presents itself to us under the guise of an archetypal image. . ." Singh, unfortunately, overlooked the mystical Jung by making too literal a reading of some of his earlier scientific speculations. There is, in the book, an absence of empathy for Jung, an empathy which he easily extends to Sri Aurobindo, with whom he is very comfortable.

One other misstep is a confusion of Jung's use of the term *self*, the term for the archetype of individuation, with the Indian term *Self*, which of course is quite different. Such an error seems improbable from one who has studied Jung as well as Vedanta, but here it is. In fact, Aurobindo's psychic being seems to be the precise analog in integral yoga to Jung's self.

Singh quotes several of Jung's comments regarding the practice of yoga, most of which are rather disparaging. I think one must forgive Jung for his narrowness in this regard. High quality accounts of yoga were not generally available in the West until recently, and I personally suspect that Jung simply did not have an accurate understanding of it.

Despite these reservations, Singh's book is, in the balance, an excellent introduction to both Sri Aurobindo and Jung. It is very readable, and highly recommended to those interested in learning more about the ideas of both of these very remarkable men.

# The Mother On Dreams

25 March 1912

It is sometimes said that in a man's sleep his true nature is revealed.

Indeed, it often happens that the sensory being, which throughout the whole day has been subjected to the control of the active will, reacts all the more violently during the night when this constraint is no longer effective.

All the desires that have been repressed without being **dissolved**—and this dissociation can only be obtained after much sound and wide-ranging analysis—seek satisfaction while the will is dormant.

And since desires are true dynamic centres of formation, they tend to organize, within and around us, the combination of circumstances that is most favourable to their satisfaction.

In this way the fruit of many efforts made by our conscious thought during the day can be destroyed in a few hours at night.

We must therefore learn to know our dreams, and first of all to distinguish between them, for they are very varied in nature and quality. In the course of one night we may often have several dreams which belong to different categories, depending on the depth of our sleep.

As a general rule, each individual has a period of the night that is more favourable for dreams, during which his activity is more fertile, more intellectual, and the mental circumstances of the environment in which he moves are more interesting.

The great majority of dreams have no other value than that of a purely mechanical and uncontrolled activity of the physical brain, in which certain cells continue to function during sleep as generators of sensory images and impressions conforming to the pictures received from outside.

These dreams are nearly always caused by purely physical circumstances—state of health, digestion, position in bed, etc.

With a little self-observation and a few precautions, it is easy to avoid this type of dream, which is as useless as it is tiring, by eliminating its physical causes.

There are also other dreams which are nothing but futile manifestations of the erratic activities of certain mental faculties, which associate ideas, conversations and memories that come together at random.

Such dreams are already more significant, for these erratic activities reveal to us the confusion that prevails in our mental being as soon as it is no longer subject to the control of our will, and show us that this being is still not organized or ordered within us, that it is not mature enough to have an autonomous life.

Almost the same in form to these, but more important in their consequences, are the dreams which I mentioned just now, those which arise from the inner being seeking revenge when it is freed for a moment from the constraint that we impose upon it. These dreams often enable us to perceive tendencies, inclinations, impulses, desires of which we were not conscious so long as our will to realize our ideal kept them concealed in some obscure recess of our being.

Although there are dreams which we should contend with or transform, there are others which should on **the** contrary be cultivated as precious auxiliaries in our work within and around us.

There can be no doubt that from many points of view our **subconscious** knows more than our habitual consciousness.

Who has not had the experience of a metaphysical, moral or practical problem with which we grapple in vain in the evening, and whose solution, impossible to find then, appears clearly and accurately in **the** morning on waking?

The mental enquiry had been going on throughout the period of sleep and the internal faculties, freed from all material activity,

were able to concentrate solely on the subject of their interest.

To make this disparity more tangible to you, I shall give you an example, one among many, which has come to my knowledge.

Recently, a writer was preoccupied with a half-written chapter which he was unable to finish.

His mind, particularly interested in this work of composition, continued the chapter during the night, and the more it phrased and rephrased the ideas making up the various paragraphs, it became aware that these ideas were not expressed in the most rational order and that the paragraphs had to be rearranged.

All this work was transcribed in the consciousness of our writer in the following dream: He was in his study with several armchairs which he had just brought there and was arranging and rearranging them in the room, until he found the most suitable place for each one.

In the knowledge that certain people may have had of such inadequate transcriptions, we can **find** the origin of the popular beliefs, the "dream-books" which are the delight of so many simple souls.

But it is easy to understand that this clumsy transcription has a particular form for each individual; each one makes his own distortion.

Consequently, an excessive generalization of certain interpretations which may have been quite correct for **the** person applying them to his own case, merely gives rise to vulgar and foolish superstitions.

It is as if the writer we have just mentioned were to impart as a great secret to his friends and acquaintances that every time they saw themselves arranging armchairs in a dream, it was a sign that the next day they would at some moment reverse the order of the paragraphs in a book.

The cerebral transcription of the activities of the night is sometimes warped to such an extent that phenomena are perceived as the opposite of what they really are.

For example, when you have a bad thought against someone and when this bad thought, left to itself, gathers full force during **the** night, you dream that the person in question is beating you, is doing you some bad turn, or even wounding you or trying to kill you.

Moreover, as a general rule, we should take great intellectual precautions before interpreting a dream, and above all, we should review exhaustively all the subjective explanations before we assign to it **the** value of an objective reality.

However, especially in those who have unlearned the habit of always directing their thoughts towards themselves, there are cases where we can observe events outside ourselves, events which are not the reflection of our personal mental constructions. And if we know how to translate into intellectual language the more or less inadequate images into which the brain has translated these events, we can learn many things that our too limited physical faculties do not allow us to perceive.

Some people, by a special culture and training, are even able to become and remain conscious of the deeper activities of their inner being, independently of their own cerebral transcription, and thus to evoke them and know them in the waking state with the full range of their faculties.

You must not think that this can be in the least harmful to the depth of your sleep and the efficacy of a repose which is not only indispensable but beneficial. On the contrary, there are many people whose nights are more tiring than their days, for reasons which often elude them; they should become conscious of these reasons so that their will can begin to act on them and remove their effects, that is, to put a stop to these activities which in such cases are nearly always useless and even harmful.

If our night has enabled us to gain some new knowledge—the solution of a problem, a contact of our inner being with some centre of life or light, or even the accomplishment of some useful task—we



shall always wake up with a feeling of strength and well-being.

But how can we cultivate this field of action, how can we become conscious of our nocturnal activities?

We shall find the way to do so very broadly outlined in a passage from a book devoted to the study of our inner life:

“The same discipline of concentration which enable man not to remain a stranger to the inner activities’ of the waking state also provides him with a way to escape from his ignorance of the even richer activities of the various states of sleep.

“These activities usually leave behind them only a few rare and confused memories.

“However, it is noteworthy that a chance circumstance, an impression received, a word pronounced, is sometimes enough to bring suddenly back to the consciousness a whole long dream of which we had no recollection a moment before.

“We can infer from this simple fact that the conscious activity has taken only a very minor part in the phenomena of the sleeping state, since in the normal state of things they would have remained lost for ever in the subconscious memory.

“In this domain, the practice of concentration should therefore focus both on the special faculty of memory and on the participation of the consciousness in the activities of the sleeping state.

“Someone who wishes to recover the memory of a forgotten dream should first of all focus his attention on the vague impressions which the dream may have left behind it and in this way follow its indistinct trace as far as possible.

“This regular exercise will enable him to go further every day towards the obscure retreat of the subconscious where these forgotten phenomena of sleep take refuge, and thus trace out an easily followed path between these two domains of consciousness.

“One useful remark to be made from this point of view is that the absence of memories is very often due to the abruptness of the return to the waking consciousness. (The waking should not be too abrupt.)

“As a matter of fact, at that moment, the new activities breaking into the field of consciousness force out everything that is unfamiliar to them and add to the difficulty of the subsequent work of concentration needed to recall the things which have been expelled in this way. On the other hand, this work will be made easier whenever certain mental and even physical precautions are observed for a quiet transition from one state to another. (If possible, do not make any abrupt movements in bed at the time of waking.)

“However, this special training of the faculty of memory can only transform into conscious phenomena in the waking state the phenomena which have already been made conscious, even if only fleetingly, during sleep. For where there is no consciousness, there can be no memory.

“Consequently, in the second place, we must work to extend the participation of the consciousness to a greater number of activities in the sleeping state.

“The daily habit of reviewing with interest the various dreams of the night, whose traces will gradually become transformed into precise memories, as well as the habit of noting them down on waking, will be found most helpful from this point of view.

“By these habits, the mental faculties will be led to adapt their mechanism to phenomena of this kind and to exercise on them their attention, their curiosity and power of analysis.

“A kind of intellectualization of our dreams will then occur, with the double result of making the conscious activities intervene more and more closely in the play of the formerly disorganized activities of the sleeping state, and of progressively increasing their scope by making them more and more rational and instructive.

“Dreams will then take on the nature of precise visions and sometimes of revelations, and useful knowledge of a whole important order of things will be gained.”

# People

## Miriam Belov, New York City, New York

Miriam is teaching meditation and stress relaxation classes for the Metropolitan Museum staff in New York City. The classes have been well received and are showing good results. She continues her healing work as well.

**Shashikant Desai, Hoboken, NJ** announces that a Sri **Aurobindo** Study Group meets on the first Sunday of each month at 4 p.m. Anyone interested in participating in the reading, music, and meditation with this group should contact Shashikant at (201) 792-2774.

**Kevin Eggers** of Iowa City, Iowa, sends his Bright Blessings to everyone involved in the yoga in the U.S., Auroville, and the world. Since 1974, Kevin has felt the Mother and Sri **Aurobindo** to be the moving force in his life. He studied Sri Aurobindo’s work with a healing group and hopes to continue developing the great calmness which is needed to receive the Mother’s light. He would like to correspond with others in the yoga. You can write him at 108 Potomac, Iowa City, IA 52240.

## Jean Finney, Boston, Massachusetts

Jean recently finished her MA degree in Dance Therapy at Lesley College in Boston. For her final project she choreographed and performed the following program entitled “Stories and Dances from the East.”

“The Wayward Princess”

From **Idries Shah’s** “Tales of the Dervishes” and inspired by Gumar Folkdance from the deserts of Sind.

“Nangsa Obum”

From Tsultrim Allione’s “Women of Wisdom” and incorporating Tibetan dance steps.

“Savitri”

From Sri Aurobindo’s “Savitri” with movement and dance from Shalini Devi .

**Charles Letovsky** is a member of a small community called Rhombics in **Waltham, Ma**. They work in the areas of health and manufacture their own wooden geometric teaching toys and tools. Their recent research has been in the field of algae cultivation in relation to farming or gardening communities. Charles is interested in receiving more information about the algae project in Auroville. He would like to make contact with people. His address is: Attn: C. Letovsky, Rhombics, 241 Crescent St., **Waltham, MA 02154**.

**Rohit Mehta** will be on a speaking tour in the U.S. this summer. He is the author of many books on yoga and has lectured on philosophy, psychology, yoga, and meditation in Asia, Africa, the U.S., and Europe.

He will be accompanied by his wife Shridevi Mehta who is a classical North Indian singer. She gives musical discourses on the teaching of the mystics.

They will be in the Northeast in July to lecture on the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo. If you would like more information contact Dwivedi and Sri at 11 Elmira St., Hicksville, NY 11801. (516) 931-0729.

Rohit Mehta’s book *The Dialogues with Death* and others are available from the Matagiri High Falls office.

**Joe Spanier, Boulder, Co** has recently undergone successful surgery and we send him our love and wishes for the best of health in this coming Spring.





George Nakashima lighting the candle on the Altar to Peace at its dedication at the Cathedral of Saint John the Divine, December 1987.

### George Nakashima, New Hope, Pennsylvania

Plans are underway to build a second Altar to Peace that will be placed in Nagasaki, Japan. The mayor of Nagasaki is open to the idea and very moved by the project. Nakashima will go to Japan at the end of April to meet with officials to finalize plans. This will be the first peace monument to Nagasaki from the United States.

In April the Metropolitan Museum in New York City will open the Japanese Gallery. Nakashima was involved in designing the furniture for the reception room of this gallery.

### Seyril Schochen, Baca Grande, Colorado.

This summer Seyril will be in her new residence in Baca Grande. Her proposals for the Boulder College summer Residential Program at Baca Grande have been accepted. During these summer sessions, which take place June 19th through July 25th and August 3rd through 28th, she will present the following seminar and workshop:

**Savitri Seminar:** An intensive study and exploration of Sri Aurobindo's odyssey of the spirit through the readings of his epic poem *Savitri*. The objective of this seminar will be the experiencing of the planes of being from the unconscious to the supraconscious.

**Creating the Future Poetry:** A workshop which experiments with modes of evoking a poetry born direct from the spirit. Through meditation and the readings from metaphysical and seer poets of East and West we will open ourselves to the reception and creation of mantric poetry.

### Dee DeCew, Auroville, India.

The following are extracts from Dee's *Auroville Communicator*, her newsletter on Village Action.

1 January 1987:

I am at Isai Ambalam in Kottakarai right now. Today we are receiving 17 ladies, one from each block of South Arcot District, to stay here for 45 days and learn social forestry from Auroville. The government funds it and Village Action, together with Binky and Narayanaraj, conducts it. It's an experiment to see how effective such a program is, not only in educating the actual trainees, but in stimulating the environmental awareness side of our village outreach program.

In Village Action I think the biggest new development is due to the Trickle Up Program. It quite changes the flavour of our work, as up 'til now we have only worked with large groups in the villages, whereas now our attention is turned to individuals and small groups. It's quite a challenge, on one hand it is excellent to stimulate individual initiative, which this program definitely does, but on the other hand it's a tremendous amount of work to receive all the eager applications, evaluate them, choose the best and disappoint the unacceptable, and then follow up . . .

7 January 1987

Sunday the Isai Ambalam compound filled with glistening brown bodies—a volleyball tournament among all the teams from the villages around: 16 in all. Two years ago there were only 6 to be found. Of the 16, seven are teams formed by people working together in Auroville, independent of their village of origin. All day wasn't long enough, finals are next Sunday. Out of the evaluation session held after the first day came a great

# Center News

## *Sri Aurobindo Study Group Tucson, AZ*

The Sri Aurobindo Study Group has changed considerably since our last report. The original organizer, Dave Hutchinson, moved away last December, reducing the group's number to three.

The group organized a lecture on December 27th featuring Gene Maslow, (a devotee of Sri Aurobindo for about 20 years) who was visiting from Laguna Beach, CA. There were two motives behind the lecture: 1) To introduce people to the work and vision of Sri Aurobindo and 2) Hopefully pique the interest of some of the audience members enough so that they would attend one of our meetings and perhaps join the group. At that point it was important for the group to recruit new members as one of the three remaining members was not sure they wanted to continue with the group.

The lecture did not succeed in attracting any new members. We then decided that it might be appropriate to slightly alter the focus of the group in the interest of gaining some new members. We chose to study the *Gita* in hopes that it would have a wider appeal. It worked. Through personal contacts we've managed to get 5 and possibly 6 people together. Our first meeting was auspiciously held February 21st (the Mother's birthday). We've chosen "The Message of the Gita" edited by Anilbaran since it offers the *Gita* supplemented by excerpts from Sri Aurobindo's "Essays on the Gita." It is our hope that by the time we have worked through this work that the new members will be interested sufficiently in Sri Aurobindo to want to continue with the group when we move to working directly with Sri Aurobindo's works.

Steve Streeter

## *Integral Yoga Study Group San Francisco, CA*

East Bay study group, focused on the vision and Integral Yoga of the Mystic poet Sri Aurobindo, will begin a study of the *Bhagavad Gita* in January of 1987. Our eighteen bi-weekly meetings will include readings, discussion, and meditation.

We welcome interested individuals to join our group. For information call (415) 235-6602 or (408) 732-9491.

"The *Gita* . . . is a gate opening on the whole world of spiritual truth and experience and the view it gives us embraces all the provinces of that supreme region. It maps out, but it does not cut up or build walls or hedges to confine our vision."

*Sri Aurobindo*

Paul Molinari

## *Mirambika Research Center for Integral Education New Delhi, India*

Mirambika announces its program of courses for educators. They are offering an alternative program for training teachers and researchers in the field of education. The courses are ten months, beginning July 1987 and ending in May 1988. The medium of instruction is English, The general content of the seminars is graduate level. If you would like to receive more information about this program write to Mirambika, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Sri Aurobindo Marg, New Delhi, India 110016.

idea: Let's choose the very best players from all the 16 teams and make up one super Auroville team to send to all the district meets! The energetic young men are now at work on that one.

The Social Forestry Training goes along very well. The ladies are interested and serious students, making their teachers, Binky and Narayanaraj, very happy. All the Village Action staff are learning about forestry as well and the Isai Ambalam folks have found that many of their guests are excellent singers and dancers, so the evenings are reverberating to music.

The environmental work is taking us farther afield as within our borders all is already planted and green. We begin to see our neighbours' fields as the next frontier for greening and as they begin to request assistance we write projects including funds for bunding their fields. Many Aurovilian greenworkers are going to distant sites as consultants in tree planting projects sponsored by other voluntary agencies. And many people and groups come to Auroville to be inspired and get technical know-how on reforestation.

The challenge of village poverty also brings our minds up against "outside". . . What would it mean if Auroville grew up in the midst of rural slums? Isn't there a socio-economic equivalent of bunding whereby we could reverse the tendency of cities to draw off the "goods" from the countryside, leaving it dry and poor? Shouldn't Auroville's prosperity enrich the area also?

1 February 1987

An interesting thing happened since I wrote you last. When preparing that number, I had written a long passage on the need for Auroville to look after the "unending education" of its workers. Then I'd edited it out, feeling it was an internal problem. . . and lo and behold, before the moon could change from a fat sliver to a lopsided disk, the Auroville Health Centre was asking our collaboration to take up a long-sleeping project for regular worker health check-ups (with a potentiality for a more comprehensive worker-benefit program to follow). And then, another Aurovilian has contacted us to set up an after-work school for the labourers of his area. So, I feel quite optimistic about Auroville tackling that problem from the inside.

At Isai Ambalam School, also, things are going along well. We took the kids to an exhibition of paintings in Pondy by Aurovilian artist Mayaura. Lucky us, we arrived at the gallery when we were the only visitors and Vitthal explained Mayaura's exquisite symbolic paintings while Ethiraj translated. Then we asked each child to sit before his favourite painting and draw a picture of his own. Then they sang a few songs and tramped off home (a crowded bus-ride after dosas and bajji). It's 'season' right now in Auroville, so our singing and dancing kids have had lots of enthusiastic audiences. Thanks to donations collected in America and here, the kids are soon to be in nice fresh dresses-and I can hear the tailor stitching speedily away on them right now.

On the 14th (Valentine's Day) the first batch of Social Forestry trainees completed their course. We celebrated a fine graduation ceremony. We feel very happy with the experience. The trainees cried when they left, the trainers felt proud of their good performance on first try, the government officers were glad to see the scheme carried out so sincerely and the village action staff had learned a lot about environment. So, next batch comes on February 24th. We're looking forward to it.



**Standing:** (from left to right) P.K. Ramchandar, David Mithcell, Arun Misra, Scott Kownslar, Vinod Chandola, Sumant Acharya, Manjit Misra, Kate Walker, Wolfram Verlaan, Marsha Hanes, Jay Hanes.  
**Seated:** Kiron Senapati, holding his daughter, Janaki Pani, her sister Jayanti, Lekha Senapati, Rand Hicks (in the chair), Bob Bates, Jatinder Palta, Diane Morrow, Barbara Thomas, Rozanne James.

**Integral Knowledge Study Center**  
**Sri Aurobindo Circle**  
**221 Clematis Street**  
**Pensacola, FL 32503**  
**(904) 433-3435**

13th March 1987

My dear Friends—

Since *Collaboration* will need to accomodate many groups within limited space, we'll keep the description of our purpose and activities short. The Center has been in existence since late 1979, when a visit by M.P. Pandit and Vasanti Rao brought together into a collective endeavor of study, meditation, and inner growth a number of seekers in the area. It has quietly but steadily developed since then. Beyond the local work of the Center, we have facilitated and coordinated contacts among other individuals and groups with kindred aspirations, helping to widen a sunny network.

The center of the Center, though, is the study group which continues to meet on Sunday evenings. From the extensive literature published by the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, large books and small have served as the focus for these meetings. We're currently working in *Letters on Yoga*.

We've described it more fully elsewhere, but the facilitation of the evening's study prior to the group meditation rotates weekly among our friends.

Independent of the weekly study, seminars have been offered on other nights covering a number of associated themes. Among these have been public talks and workshops on "Gurus, Guides, and Going Your Own Way," "Towards a New Society," "Sri Aurobindo and the Emerging New Consciousness," "The Ancient Wisdom of India," "Towards a Music of the Soul," and lengthy studies of the *Gita*, etc. Significant films dealing with the growth of consciousness are occasionally viewed.

Instruction in meditation and private counselling have also been available through the Center without charge. Publishing activities have included two books, a small semi-annual newsletter (sent without charge to those interested), and the

occasional article. We have also aided materially in the publication of related books of interest in India.

Since 1982, the Center has been a tax-exempt, non-profit corporation. Many send contributions to the Ashram through us and many others regularly contribute to the Center's ongoing work in America.

On August 15, 1983, Sri Aurobindo's Relics were inaugurated in the U.S. at the Center. It marked the first time that the Relics—which the Mother described as "precious"—had ever left India for another country. For many of us in America the event held profound significance, underscoring our nation's promise and responsibility, and the Relics continue to uplift, widen, and offer many-dimensional direction to the entire spectrum of work assumed by us here. The impact has been unmistakable. Our gratitude to M.P. Pandit, Champaklal, and the Trustees is continually renewed for their support in securing this blessing for America.

Throughout the year the presence of the Relics draws aspirants here from around the States, many naturally finding the observance of the Fifteenth the easiest to negotiate. We hope it's clear that although the Relics have been housed in Pensacola, they are meant for all of America's seekers who find them meaningful.

It may seem from what has been said so far that the Center is a very extroverted place, but in fact as a group we prefer to keep a low profile. The inner work on ourselves—directed towards the individual and collective discovery of the soul—has the primary place and more friends learn about us by word of mouth than through public notices or newspaper articles that have occasionally seen print in recent years. Depending upon the activity, we number usually between six and twenty.

It might be useful to note that Pensacola is a city of about 75,000 in northwest Florida, situated on the so-called "Miracle Strip." The climate in the summer is remindful of Pondicherry, industrial development is limited, and the pristine white beaches are a compelling attraction during the balmy months. We welcome inquiries and visitors both.

Yours affectionately,  
**Rand Hicks**  
 Director

**Wilmo t Center**  
**PO Box 2, Wilmot, WI 53192**  
**(414) 877-9396**

Residence Facilities and Center building located at 33719 116th St., Twin Lakes, WI 53181.

Wilmot Center is a small group of people dedicated to the work of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. The Center maintains an extensive library of Sri Aurobindo literature as well as other classical Indian texts. Visitors wishing to attend Darshan meditations or to join us for study circles are welcome to contact us at any time. The Center is working on establishing an **alternative** school for young children along the lines suggested by the work of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Individuals interested in the school project are welcome to contact us as work has just started. The Center also supports the running of several businesses, including one which acts as the U.S. agent for Auroshikha Incense. The profits of Auroshikha go to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram through the Harpagon Workshop Trust, thereby providing needed support to the Ashram in **Pondicherry**. In addition, the Center has sponsored the publication of a number of books by Sri M.P. Pandit, Secretary of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. Other activities of the Center include running a distribution company featuring alternative health and body care products, herbs, and Ayurvedic literature and products.

I hope that this listing is helpful and we look forward to being a local resource for people in the upper **midwest** who have interest to meet on occasion.

Santosh Krinsky

### ***Ma tagiri Sri Aurobindo Center*** ***High Falls, NY***

Mother's birthday was celebrated at Matagiri, Mt. Tremper on February 2 1st. A large group attended, including Robert McDermott, **Jayant Patel**, **Jothi** and Linda Sobel, S. Vijayarangan, Dwivedi and Sri, Jack and Mary Alexander, and Navaja Llope. After a morning meditation and reading by Eric Hughes, a meeting was held to discuss the future of Matagiri, Mt. Tremper, and the High Falls Center. The group agreed to begin to work toward making Mt. Tremper once again the center of the book and incense business, as well as a possible home for the Foundation For World Education. It is hoped to develop the property so that additional residences may be constructed and most importantly, a new structure for meditation that would fulfill the various needs of devotees.

Committees were formed to investigate aspects of land use, fundraising, and organization. They will report back at the next meeting at Matagiri Mt. Tremper on April 25. Anyone interested in this work should **contact** the High Falls Center.

Gordon Korstange

### ***Auroville International News- USA***

AVI continues to function with a small volunteer board and a part-time paid staff person. We are the only group in the U.S. whose purpose and mission are solely centered upon the creation of Auroville. **AVI's** fortunes are linked directly with the scope and progress of Auroville's development.

The board, finding that the present possibilities for work are

not sufficient to support a large organization or to hold the interest and participation of a large number of people, has moved now into a phase of more intimate, closed **meeting**—where the members are learning to work well together in a consensus decision making process. The smaller meetings allow the board to stay better grounded in the details of the work at hand. The rethinking of **AVI's** structure will continue through the AUM meeting in July, when we hope to receive many creative suggestions concerning the future course of Auroville work in the U.S.

Some of the present projects confronting the AVI are: 1) preparation for the AUM conference in July, 2) providing high school and college education outside of Auroville for Auroville children, 3) raising \$3000 for a computer plotter for **Auroville** planning, 4) repayment of the land debt, 5) fundraising for Village Action projects, 6) developing an accessible library of both historical and current photos and slides.

Constance

## **An Invitation to AUM 1987**

Please join us for the *combined* AUM and Auroville **International** meeting, a kindling of the collective spirit under the aspiring California redwoods, ten minutes' drive from the Pacific Ocean.

**The Place:** Monte **Toyon** Conference Ground, Aptos, California. There is a large dining room, dormitories with two or four beds, open spaces for volleyball, and trails into the woods for hiking.

**The Dates:** Noon, Tuesday, July 21st to 4 p.m. Friday, July 24th. 1987.

**Transportation:** The AUM site is 1 hour from the San Jose airport and 2 hours from San Francisco. AVI-USA is hoping to rent a van to act as a shuttle from the airports. Those of you driving will be sent maps to show the exact location.

**Cost:** \$150 per person includes room and board (4 days, 3 nights).

**Reservations, Deposits, and Information:** *Reserve your place now* with your \$75 per person deposit. If you can pay the full amount in advance, it would be of significant help since AVI has to place a deposit with Monte **Toyon**. If your plans change, deposits will be refundable until June 30th. The balance will be due at registration. If you cannot attend, your **tax-deductible** donation payable to AVI-USA is needed and appreciated.

Contact the AVI office as soon as possible at the following address to reserve your place and to receive a more detailed mailing. Your suggestions for the schedule and program are welcome and encouraged.

•AVI-USA•P.O. Box 162489•

•SACRAMENTO, CA 95816•(916) 452-4013•



# Poetry

## Sri Aurobindo

In the eye of the mind He sits unmoving, gazing across forever.

I never met Him, but He's always there.

He is the fixed star when I wander, the sure way to go. He is the eye of the arrow, the face in the water, the tower on the plain, and the single Point in trackless space.

He is the cliff face from which I see the universes spin and the dim nervous stir of man within. He is the strong grass, the summer slope against which I lean and let my mindsmoke spiral into an infinity of opalescent dream.

He is the backbone of everything, the ridge on which the whole world runs. The light in Him is like the sun on mountain snow. Eagles glide behind His eyes and the earth burns within His heart.

The white flames of His mind feed us; like slow incense or some winddrenched perfume His words teach us to breathe again.

Planted in eternity, His roots run under time and space. He is the one sure thing in my heart and the only landscape I will ever need.

I am a climbing woman and He is my sacred Place. He is the twilight air and the falling waters; He is the forest thinking and the skyhawk's wing. He is dawn and leaf, moon and shadow, seadrift and sleep.

All the jewel seasons of the soul are His, the diamond edge of winter and the sapphire curve of spring; the topaz trance of summer and the amethyst breath of fall.

He is all the voices of the mind and all the more that I can ever be. He is more myself than me, the circle of stillness and all that I can ever say, all the pearl-touched rapture that my heart can pray.

He is the going and the way, the rock of ever and the river of now.

The singer and the circling song, the symbol and the dancing bones, the silence and the stone, are He.

He is the summit and the silver hill, the birth of music and of morning laughter, the only melody I hum and the sole beat of my single drum.

I am a young cypress on His ascending side, and He is all I need ever need to grow.

*Jean Finney  
Fall 1986*

## EGERIA

By the dark spring in the close glade, the forest  
Lone in its silence to true hearts apportioned,  
Is the stark maiden of god-favored grandeur,  
Poised with majesty and calm-fervent visage.

Of the world-throne is the tenure uncertain;  
Nobility is on trial of its life.  
With the tall port and the beard whitely gleaming  
Treads in his secret paths the astute monarch.

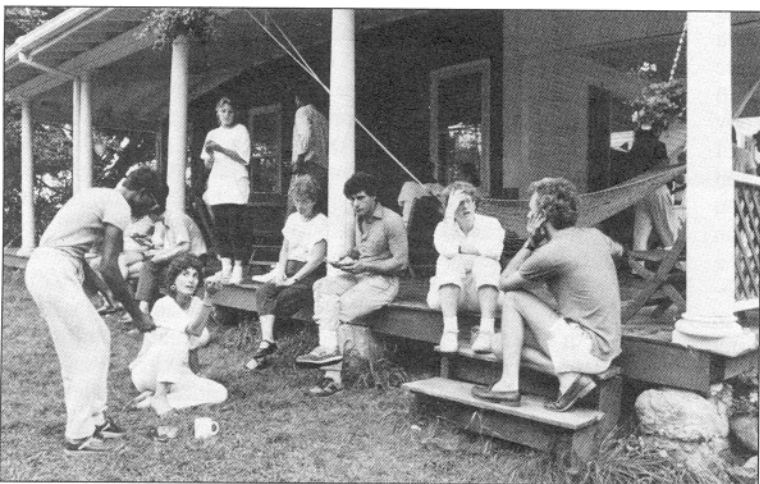
What is said, deep in the night, shuns the record;  
Wisdom and knowledge alone grace the seeker  
Who assumes burdens the mass quails confronting,  
Stable in the pressure of unfolding years.

In the full robes of the life-song appointed  
Stand the immaculacies of light-rousing,  
That the fire surge in the cool drink ascendant;  
Secreted still from profane snooping's lather,

What is brought forth to the secret occasion  
Beggars the keenest hold of thought-valor,  
That the world's birth be the whole range of substance,  
Couched for the harmony of Truth-sharing.

The poem is in one of Sri Aurobindo's new meters. It is based on the minor ionic foot, U U — —, which has had little use as yet in English. With the exception, in fact, of John Masefield's "Sea Fever" (in a different meter overall), I can think of no other instance; and should be glad to have one called to my attention. Sri Aurobindo's exemplary poem is "Renewal"—a touching on the way the soul remembers and keeps continuity. Egeria was a nymph who imparted wisdom and lore to the Roman king Numa Pompilius.

*Jesse Roarke*



*L-R: K.K. Sudaramurthy,  
Fenou Walton, Regon Mitchell,  
Ardus Hansen, Larry Nagel,  
June Mahor and Jack Alexander  
at AUM 86.*

# Sammy The Fruit Vendor

by Maggi Lidchi

There are several tens of thousands of Indians living in South Africa (I can't for the moment recall the exact number) but the only one that Toby Miller had seen at anything like close range was the Gujarati vegetable seller who came around to the house with his horse-drawn cart. He wore a white overall coat and brown fedora hat so that he was associated in Toby's mind, for lack of a racial class, with her dentist and George Raft. It was thus difficult for her to find a suitable mode of address. She was instinctively averse to the generic term Sammy by which he was known to Evelyn, their African servant, as well as to her mother who would say, "When the Sammy comes, Evelyn, ask him for two dozen artichokes," or when speaking to him directly, "Sammy, have you got some nice fresh lettuce?" and the Indian, not seeming to resent this form of address, would say removing his low fedora to reveal mild eyes and oiled hair, "We are having specially fresh lettuce today, Madam." He was polite and would go to considerable trouble to take the bit out of his horse's mouth so that Toby could feed him two or three of the smallest, sweetest carrots.

It was not until she was nine that she saw an Indian woman at all and that there was any other sort of slot in her mind for an Indian in which Sammy in any case did not fit.

She was on holiday, in Durban, where there are even more Indians than in Johannesburg. She was walking along the Marine Parade with her father and mother when a roomy old Pakard pulled up beside them. Out of it came a beautiful young woman in a diaphanous red sari sparkling silver in the sub-tropical sun. As the woman placed her delicate foot on the pavement Toby thought she had never seen such an exquisite sandal nor such a perfectly coloured foot. The mauve satin petticoat fell above it in a heavy frill. Toby was assailed by a strange and fascinating perfume at the same time as she saw that the young woman had the most perfect face she had ever seen, doe-shaped eyes under feathery brows and the straightest nose. She moved a little closer to the car to disassociate herself from her father who was making a stupid joke about the Marx Brothers' party in a ship cabin. The car released an older woman with a magnificent bun. Then two more young women with half a dozen children ranging between two and fifteen years. Each one was more doe-eyed and beautiful than the last. From the front of the car came three men in lounge suits and three more beautiful little boys. To Toby it seemed not at all strange or amusing that such a large party emerged from the car. She would not have been surprised if this enchanting parade of humanity had appeared out of a match box or rather the jewel box on her mother's dressing table. In fact, they hardly seemed human and Toby, despite her nine years, would not have been surprised to be told that they belonged to another order of beings; certainly she did not associate them with the Sammy in his George Raft hat and white surgical coat. The sea breeze carried the smell of sweet hair oil. From the mouths of the women came the fragrance of scented seeds and there were still other perfumes, all totally new and curiously poignant to Toby so that it became almost painful to draw a breath. The harmony of the light sari drapes falling over the heavy frills, the abundance and the texture of the smooth coil of the hair were overwhelming, so were the glow of the skin, the tinkle and twinkle of gold bangles on slim brown arms, the red dye on a palm turned up to touch a bell-shaped earring. The party moved in co-ordinated silence towards the sea and after gazing out at it they turned once again in silence and started walking with measured, unhurried and swaying steps so that the drapes moved softly and the jewellery tinkled. Perhaps it was the silence that spoke to Toby more than anything. Whatever it was, she observed their progress away from her with a metaphysical pang.

"Can't we turn around?" She asked her parents.



Illustrations by Jacqueline Swartz

"We'll be late for tea," said her father. She watched them until they seemed to vanish in the sea and then she hurried to catch up with her parents.

This party of Indians both made and ruined her holiday. No longer could she enjoy the sand and sea and sky with the same abandon. And she was dissatisfied with herself and her parents. She asked her mother for oil for her hair and when refused she applied her suntan oil. Her brown hair lay in wads about her skull and fell to her shoulders in rats tails. She had to wash it hurriedly in the bathroom. She lay in the sun for hours to acquire the colour of a gleaming brown seed. Her nose peeled, her shoulders blistered. She drew circles around her eyes with her mother's eyebrow pencil and draped a sheet about herself. Even through half-closed eyes the effect was unsatisfactory.

One evening, as she sat on the terrace of the hotel, she saw another party of Indians walking past. She thought she would die of happiness... or of nostalgia. The days and nights were now filled with such moments of yearning while in her mind's eye flashed a nose ring, the soft drapes of silk and muslin, the red-dotted design on a pale palm.

How could she ever go back to school again where the children were as pink and white as pigs? How could she ever do anything again, anything that she had done before the magic moment?

But of course she did. She appeared to do everything much as before except that she could not concentrate. Her place in the class fell from first, to third and then to fifth, and stayed there. She dropped her hobbies of stamps and match-box collecting and stopped making presents on her fretsaw treadle machine. She went on riding and skating because the feeling of dissatisfaction went away when she was on top of a horse or on the ice but otherwise her life, after the Durban holiday, was marked by dissatisfaction. It was marred. It was flawed. She got through school quite comfortably and went to university. She even put her name down for a social for which she was paired off with a red-faced engineering student. She was ashamed of her lack of interest which bordered on disgust, because he was a nice boy. She put her name down for another social hoping for a better partner. This time she got a dynamic



yellow-haired, tanned architectural student, and though he made her laugh and danced well and she was much envied by her sister arts students, she went to bed even more dispirited and uninterested than after the first social. What was the matter with her, she wondered.

“You never bring anybody home,” said her mother, a way of reminding her that she had no friends. As though she weren’t aware of that. She was pleasant to people and she liked many of the students and some of the lecturers but none well enough to want to have them invade the privacy of her home. What made her mother impatient was that she liked to talk to the plumber and the men who delivered the milk and the vet. She could speak to them a good twenty minutes about nothing at all. And her favourite was Sammy. Not that she for a moment saw him as having anything to do with the unforgettable swirl of pink, mauve, orange and red colours and the perfumes and jewellery, and the gold dark skins and perfumed hair. Sammy smelt rather pleasantly of celery and parsley which filled the big baskets in his cart and a tiny bit of his horse. He was a comfortable household person. They spoke a lot about the intelligence of his horse whose name was Ranjit. She never asked Sammy himself what his name was but simply avoided calling him Sammy. Ranjit was an ex-race horse. He had never won a single race. A failure they said. But Sammy thought Ranjit was too intelligent to want to win races. He was so intelligent that Sammy hardly had to guide him on his rounds. Ranjit knew all the houses and all the servants and when people took too long choosing their vegetables he would paw the ground and snort, rolling his eyes and frightening the lingerers and pressers of tomatoes and paw-paws. But he never did anything like that in front of the houses where he had friends who patted him and were aware of his presence. Yes, **Toby** liked speaking to Sammy. She learnt that he had six children and she learnt all their names and that Sammy wanted to make school teachers and doctors of them, even the girls. He didn’t want them to sell vegetables from a horse cart which was what **Toby** thought she herself might be happy doing, **clopping** along with baskets full of fragrant mangoes and peaches and amber apricots in summer, and grannysmith apples when it got cold, to say nothing of the carrots and potatoes and the pointed

ladies fingers and bulbous leeks and iridescently purple brinjals.

At the age of eighteen **Toby** started reading occult literature and at that point her chats with Sammy got briefer and briefer. They had exhausted the subject of Ranjit and though **Toby** would never have admitted it there was a space spreading between them, because of her mother’s assumption that it had always existed, and that she was in any case getting much too old to run into the street to feed Ranjit carrots when he clip-clapped to a halt at their gate. **Toby** told herself nothing had changed. At first. Afterwards it became obvious to her that she need not feel ashamed of not being able to speak to anybody who knew nothing about mysteries of other planes which were more and more occupying her attention.

**Toby** bought her first book seemingly by accident. She wandered into a **bookshop** one day on her way to the bus stop and while she was idly looking through the shelves she found herself nose to nose with the section on occultism. She was about to walk past when she saw a paperback entitled, *The Egyptian Book of the Dead*. She was not interested in Egypt and she was not interested in death. Why then did she buy the book? She could not have answered though she assured her exasperated mother that it was an exceedingly interesting book.

“What’s it about then?”

“It’s about how to guide the soul of the dead person in the other world.”

“Which dead person?”

“How should I know which dead person?”

“Then isn’t it a waste of time, dear?”

“You won’t think it’s a waste of time when you’re dying!” Upon which **Toby**’s mother burst into tears. **Toby** would have liked to comfort her. She hadn’t meant anything like that. Her mother seemed to think, as she sat sobbing and bewildered in her chair, that her daughter was waiting for her to die to be able to practice her Egyptian mumbo-jumbo on her. **Toby**, equally bewildered at the turn things had taken, would have liked to explain that it wasn’t that, but what was it then? She understood so little of the book herself that she was afraid to launch into an expose. She stood before her mother, frustrated. Then, as the tears increased, desperate.

Her life and what she was doing were becoming increasingly inexplicable not only to others but also to herself. When she asked herself why she was reading a book on the dead she could not explain. It was certainly not her intention of making a career of helping souls into other worlds. But pursue the book she must. She never got past the first three chapters but she carried it everywhere with her. The cream-coloured cover became brownish and thumb marked, the title all but illegible. One day, as she was leaving an English tutorial, Piet **Maritz**, a thin **spectacled** boy and the brains of the class, stopped her and said in his high, confident tone in which she had heard so many pertinent comments delivered and questions asked, “That looks jolly interesting. I wonder if you would lend it to me when you’ve finished with it.”

**Toby** knew she would never be finished with it but terrified that he would ask her what it was about, she thrust it at him muttering, “Of course, of course. Keep it as long as you like. Excuse me, my next lecture’s right down on the other side in one of the temporary huts,” and she fled.

She went to the tea room and had **three** cream cakes and two cups of coffee in an effort to dispel her gloom. What if Piet wanted to discuss the book with her. He must have seen her carrying it around since the beginning of **the** term, three months at least. What if he tackled her, wanted to discuss the rites with her. Piet **Maritz** had a terrifying clarity of mind that worked with absolute syllogistic precision. She avoided the classes which he attended for two weeks and only crept back because she was afraid of not being allowed to write her exams if she missed any more tutorials. As she hurried out so directly behind the English tutor’s floating black gown that it



flapped lightly against her shin, Piet **Maritz** clapped up with her. God!

But he only said, "I hope you don't mind. I passed your book on to Gary Macandrew."

That was all? Thank God. But she was suddenly consumed by a devouring need to know what he had thought of it. Before she could decide whether to ask or not he said, "I must admit I couldn't make head or tail of it myself. I've always maintained though that the world of sense started with the Greeks. It's no good going further back. And as for travelling East. . ." He dismissed the whole venture with a wave of the wrist.

**Toby** was both furious and relieved, relieved because if Piet **Maritz** could make nothing of the book why should she, and yet furious because he had dismissed it like that with a flick of that thin wrist, as though a fly had settled on his hand. Who did he think he was and who'd asked him to read it anyhow and who was he to pass it on to anybody he liked? She vented her feelings by saying with all the dignity she could muster.

"I don't think I know this Macandrew but I hope he won't take it forever. I mean I'd like to have the book back."

Everybody knew Macandrew for his enthusiastic stutter which did not prevent him from waving his hand in the philosophy lectures everytime the Professor asked a question. This small intense stooped boy came and sat at her table in the tea room one day and in a happy flow from which his stutter had disappeared he told her how much he had loved the book. He had read it to the end and **Toby** sensed he would not examine her on its contents. They missed their next lecture and by the time they parted they had agreed to exchange more books. **Toby**, who had no others, hurried back to the bookshop and bought a collection of books by various Swamis, Yogis, Sadhus and liberated souls. Once again she stayed away from her classes in order to race through her books. To her delight she found these texts both more intelligible and of greater practical application than the **Book of the Dead**.

When she returned to her classes she was sorry not to find Gary Macandrew there and she asked a number of students if they had seen him. He finally turned up beaming and told her that he had been **practising** some of the rites advocated in the book she had lent him. He had also been fasting, he admitted, something which his spiritual guide had advised him to do.

Fasting! **Toby** looked at his hollow cheeks and dilated eyes and knew that this was what she wanted to do. And what was more she wanted to have somebody advise her to do it. Apart from anything else she had tried all sorts of diets to whittle down her chunkiness and none of them had worked. Gary, on the other hand, was noticeably thinner. But what really set her **aquiver** were the words "spiritual guide." She'd never thought of anything like that. Why had she never thought of anything like that? For the first time she saw Gary in an entirely new light. He had the one thing that she wanted all this time without knowing it. She did not know Gary well enough to ask him outright about his guide or whether he would allow her to meet him, but she decided that as soon as they knew each other better she would. So well and so quickly did they get to know each other that they were soon having tea and cream cakes together every day and on the fourth day they promised each other that if one of them died the other would practice the **rites** for the dead for the other. **Toby** found it so difficult to think of herself as dead that she quickly ordered another cream cake. Once this pact was made it seemed quite obvious that they were on sufficiently intimate terms for **Toby** to bring up the subject of the guide.

"He is in India," said Gary.

"India!" **Toby's** head spun.

"But he'll be coming back. If you like, in the meantime I can take you to his house where some of us meditate every evening."

It was thus that **Toby** at the age of eighteen went for the very first time in her life to Fordsburg, the Indian quarter of Johannesburg.

She and Gary ran for and just caught a rattling horse of a tram one morning. It took them past the Indian market where crates of fruits and vegetables were being loaded and unloaded. Near a big ugly building which Gary told her was the school for Indians they got off the tram.

"This is the Indian quarter," said Gary, leading her to a side street.

**Toby** took a quick look around and then kept her eyes resolutely front, trying to concentrate on the pavement just beyond her feet. What a fool she was. Tears rose to her eyes. Ever since Gary had told her that his guide's house was in the Indian quarter she had thought. . . what had she thought? She realized only now that she had thought she was going to India, to a land of enchantment, the **Taj Mahal** by moonlight, to droves of women with silken-brown skins, with arms like slender, buffed branches. My God. The houses. Little slum houses, one attached to the other. No gardens. Not a patch of green or a tree anywhere. Not a window flower on any of the ledges. Little shabby gray houses, with corrugated iron roofs, some of them. The streets empty but for a few little children with big eyes. But suddenly she saw something on the skyline shining with beauty: a minaret, the archetypal image which her soul had been garnering.

"That's a mosque," said Gary scornfully. "Mohomedans. They don't have a clue. Fanatics. Worse than Christians and a hundred times more violent."

"But it's beautiful." A wave of rebellion arose in **Toby**.

"Beautiful. That's not what it's all about **Toby**." **Toby** resented this. What was it about then? They passed a dreadful red brick school, a cinema with a tiled facade. This dreadful narrow street.

"What is it about then?"

"In here. You'll see," said Gary pointing to some region between his heart and his solar plexus, the place at which **Toby** usually identified hunger pangs. She wished they were eating cream cakes and drinking coffee. She began to fear the adventure. She had been stupid.

"Here we are," said Gary and rang a bell.

**Toby** found herself before an ugly dark green door, a particularly muddy green, and the window shutters were painted a particularly muddy and bumpy brown as though camouflaged to resemble some gloomy forest. The door opened. There was a whisper of material, a glimpse of diaphanous red over an orange tilled petticoat. **Toby** caught her breath, not remembering exactly, but recalling in the very cells of her being an old, old moment. The half of a fat woman appeared at the side of the door, the face peering out, and a hand hurriedly drawing the sari over the head and half the face in modesty. When she saw Gary she smiled broadly. The sari fell back a little. You could see she had been very pretty once if ever she had been slender.

"Come in Mr. Gary," she said. "So you have brought your lady friend!"

Lady friend indeed! And what a terrible way of speaking the woman had. Half Afrikaans, half something else. But before **Toby** could disapprove entirely her nostrils were assailed by a perfume which stilled her mind, which stunned it. From the red plush **coloured** table in the middle of the room smoke ascended, smoke from black incense sticks with magenta stems and glowing red tips. **Toby** had never seen them before but she knew exactly what they were and she knew she had never smelt anything so near her soul before. It was as though the fragrance had been specially prepared for her, by her, to till a deep need. And now, as she looked around, two warring parts of her being were brought into play. Through the smoke she saw with a shock that this area, which looked like a living room had a lime-green refrigerator against a turquoise blue wall. On top of the refrigerator sat a liquorice all-sorts kind of vase with dusty artificial flowers in it. A refrigerator in the living room. Something groaned, protested, and told her that a guide who knew

better than this no guide, that she must flee, but she knew she would not. The perfume curling soft and white and cutting through her view of the refrigerator kept her nailed to her position. On the walls were pictures of the Indian Gods. These too she had never seen before but she needed not to be told that the beautiful dark young man in the oleograph with the sickle moon caught in the dark topknot of his hair and the hooded serpent hovering behind him was a god. Ditto for the carefree young flute player of the blue skin who wore a pagoda on his head and posed with one leg crossed before the other. And the chubby child and the woman with the eight arms riding a tiger. Yes, with some part of her she **recognised** them all. They had placed beside them photos of Gandhi and Nehru. Why was everything such a mixture here?

She took her seat against the wall beside Gary while the woman hurried into the kitchen. **Toby** tried to ignore the things she didn't like and to concentrate on the things which pleased, nay, which enchanted her. Soon from the kitchen where the fat woman's sari could be seen moving to and fro another odour came to add itself to that of the incense. And this time **Toby** did not know what it was at all. But it tickled and teased her nostrils, her taste buds, her inner memory.

Soon the woman came out bearing in each hand a thick mug of steaming liquid and the fragrance was borne towards her. Tea? **Toby** accepted her cup and slowly sipped it. Spiced tea. A sigh of satisfaction escaped her. How her taste buds asserted to all this. Her reservations slipped away with the smoke of the incense. Something told her she was home. She avoided the linoleum floor. She quickly looked into the steaming brown lake in her cup. The tea warmed her and filled her and above all lingered on her palate and nostrils in a way that no mortal food had ever done and the word 'home' kept on coming to her; home, home, home. But who could possibly have chosen anything like this linoleum? Some terrible chocolate colour chequered with bottle green and some pale turdish colour. It swam before her as squares and rectangles will if you look at them long enough. She was distracted by a slurping noise beside her. She turned and stared in astonishment. Gary was drinking tea out of his saucer, purposefully, it almost seemed, making the most horrible noises.

"Gary, what on earth are you doing?" she asked irritably.

"I'm drinking tea," said Gary comfortably.

"I must say I don't think I've ever seen anybody drink like that."

"I dare say you haven't. You probably haven't even read about it." And Gary carefully poured more tea into his saucer. "Anyhow, if you stick around here you'll see plenty of people doing it. Supping. Half the pleasure's in the supping." Gary drank. He slurped.

"Ah, come on **Toby**, try it man." There was something very disarming about the way he said this. "You'll never want to drink it any other way. I'll swear. The masala really creeps up your nostrils like this. It penetrates your brain. You suddenly think more clearly. Everything looks better, feels better." Gary slurped again and rolled his eyes beatifically.

She carefully poured tea from the thick mug into her saucer. "Down the hatch," she said and sipped, heard a small slurping noise, rolled the tea around on her tongue and swallowed. She couldn't say whether it tasted better or went to her brain but she was suddenly glad to be sitting drinking tea from her saucer with Gary. Some infinitesimal but significant hurdle had been taken. The fat woman stood before them, her face wreathed in smiles. Her sari had fallen back from her head and she seemed to have completely forgotten the need for modesty.

"Your tea is jolly good," said **Toby** enthusiastically. The woman had disappeared into the kitchen. They could hear her clattering with plates. She soon came back bearing two small plates, one for **Toby**, one for Gary.

"This sweet, this hot."

The small fried things which the woman had pointed out as hot warmed **Toby** to the ends of her finger tips and toes. She had never had food whose taste reached so far. The sweetmeats tasted of rose petals. The hot and the sweet combined in her to make her feel complete. She wanted more tea to wash it all down with. As though reading her thought the woman was already gathering up her cup. There was more tea and more dishes of hot and sweet morsels. And then other people started coming into the room.

And what an assortment. First came three burly young Afrikaners from the railway, who, Gary said had come to scoff and stayed to worship. Afrikaners in an Indian house! And worship whom? Then came a loony looking woman with lots of frizzy hair. A woman pilot whispered to Gary after he had introduced her. A grey haired doctor, a policeman (again an Afrikaner). Indian **neighbours** began to drift in. Men in open necked nylon shirts and suit trousers. Women with saris modestly pulled over their mouths, enhancing the beauty of their eyes. Children came in from school, threw their satchels down and began racing around in the next room on tricycles. Suddenly a little bell rang, clear and sweet.

"**Puja**," said Gary.

"Pu-what?"

"Come and see." They went into the room where the children were riding around in a frenzy and women were walking through with piles of linen. In one corner the plush curtains had been drawn back on their rail and a tiny temple, the size of a shower, was disclosed. A boy of fourteen was waving a tray of little lights before three shelves crammed with pictures of Indian deities, a crucified Christ, a **spectacled** man atop a horse, the Buddha, the Prime Minister of South Africa.

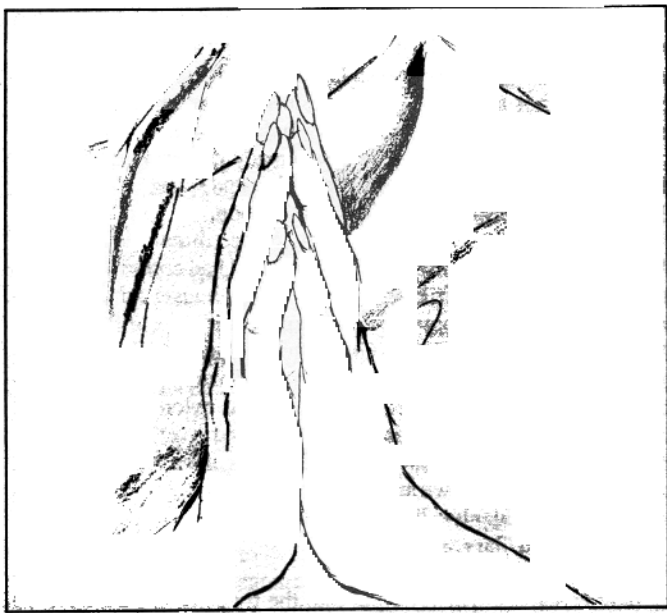
"That's Babaji's son."

"Who is Babaji?"

"Our guide." They went and stood behind the boy and after five minutes of intoning what must have been prayers in a sweet voice the boy smeared the deities with ash from his tray, stuck rose petals between their eyes and turned to the people who had drifted in from the next room. He took the tray around. People smeared ash on their own forehead and cupping the lights loosely with their hands, drew hands back to faces, touched eyes, forehead, hearts. When it was **Toby's** turn she hesitated, threw a glance at Gary, deeply absorbed beside her, and put her hands gingerly forward. Something happened as her palms felt the warmth of the flames. Quicker than sound or light, the warmth travelled through her body and while her hands still hovered over the tray, spread behind her eyes, between her eyes and expanded her heart. Then, without warning, it exploded into a flame within her and shrivelled up what remained of her resistance.

From then on **Toby** took no notice of the plush and the lime-green refrigerator and the artificial flowers and the linoleum. Every evening she came for the meditation. Whenever the little bell rang it called her to stand behind Prakash while he chanted prayers in his pure high voice. And she took the light or the power or whatever it was that she took from flames and pressed it to her eyes, her forehead, her heart. The experience of the first evening was never repeated with the same intensity but it didn't matter because it wouldn't be right to say that she had undergone conversion-something had stayed with her, something had ceded and received a grace. And now she was eager to embrace all the accoutrements of her new faith. . . if it was that. She was careful not to give whatever it was that had happened a name.

From Lakshmi, Babaji's wife, she learnt to cook chapattis and dhal, **bhajis**, fried spiced cabbage, ladies fingers, brinjal in three different ways, crushed peanuts mixed with lovely seeds and spices and rolled in great elephant's ears leaves. She learnt how to make ten different kinds of sweets and amid much laughter and good **humour** several of Babaji's young lady disciples taught her to pleat a sari around herself and draped it Gujarati fashion with the



border hanging down in front instead of over the back. She herself would not have chosen the mauve nylon with a gold stripe. It stuck out from her like a bonbon wrapping. For a moment she shut her eyes in front of the mirror and tried to wipe out the image of her disconcerted face. Should western women wear saris she asked herself.

“You are looking wunnerful.”

“Like a Gujarati girl only.” Admiring and delighted cries made her want to take another look. Perhaps she had been wrong? She opened her eyes and now her image struck her with even more dismay. She wasn’t standing right, her legs were apart. She looked like an over grown schoolgirl with red cheeks and the braids which the women had insisted went with the sari. Since she was unmarried they decided a bun would not be quite suitable and they had as a finishing touch secured her plaits with ribbons.

They clapped their hands, put their hands to their mouths and laughed. They were so delighted that Toby decided to be a good sport. She clapped her hands, too, and simulated delight while her heart lay as heavy as a load of chapattis within her. The next day she went to an Indian shop and bought two pretty silk saris, one Nile-green and one mauve, white and two different colours of blue. She twisted her hair into a bun, rubbed some tan coloured cream into her skin and liked the result.

She left these saris with Lakshmiben and changed into them in the tiny bathroom lavatory in the backyard as soon as she came for meditation. Somehow the saris and blouses always smelt of coconut. Toby knew that all the Indians used coconut oil on their hair but she could not get rid of the notion that Lakshmiben kept them in a drawer with coconut fudge. She had other strange notions. One was that they never used toilet paper. It turned out to be true like many of the others. But after the first shock each new need for adaptation became a challenge to Toby.

After only a few weeks Toby had mastered enough of the life style of Fordsburg to feel at home in Babaji’s house. She sat on the floor, ate with her right hand, wiped her nose on the edge of her sari and even managed a polite belch after meals.

“You’re doing all right,” said Gary. But she knew somehow there were still corners of her that had to be cleaned out, small resistances. One by one they became eroded in her great application to be able to receive what was at hand. In redoubled efforts to throw off her past Toby found she was carrying her new life into her

mother’s home. She sat cross-legged on her chair at the table. It really had become the natural position for her. Her legs felt as though they were dangling otherwise.

“What do you mean dangling?” her mother asked.

“Dangling, heavy.”

“But they touch the floor. You’ve got long legs.”

“Well, it may be psychological but that’s how they feel.” Her mother accepted this with barely contained irritation and her father good naturedly knocked at this temple to indicate his belief in her madness. But where they both drew the line was when she absent-mindedly spat some tangerine pips on to the carpet at dinner one evening.

“Get up and pick those up at once,” said her mother in a trembling voice. Her father threw his napkin down in exasperation.

Startled, Toby looked around as though waking from a dream. She had been envisaging her meeting with Babaji. Sometimes she saw him as recognising her as his chief disciple and saying to those assembled in the meditation room, ‘This is she whom I have been waiting for.’ Tonight she had envisaged the possibility of his spurning her and saying to Gary, ‘This one is not worthy to lace my shoes. Why have you brought her?’ In her anxiety she had forgotten where she was and spat her pips out as though on to the linoleum of Lakshmiben’s kitchen.

“What’s the matter with you?” asked her father. “Are you feeling all right?” Toby gave the Indian head movement for yes.

“Yes or No?”

“Yes.”

“Then why do you shake your head?” They thought she should see a psychiatrist.

“He wouldn’t understand,” said Toby. “There’s nothing wrong with me.”

“To tell you the truth,” said her father, “we’ve stopped understanding you, too.”

“I know,” said Toby sadly. She knew this was a good thing, that she couldn’t have one foot in each world but she loved her father and she couldn’t help feeling heavy hearted at his disappointment. Such feelings of attachment would of course disappear when Babaji gave her his blessings. Gary had told her, “The moment I saw Babaji I knew he was my only father. All my other relationships melted into insignificance. If he had told me to jump into the fire I would have jumped into the fire.”

“If he had told you to throw your father into the fire?”

Gary looked puzzled and then said hastily, “Of course.”

“But your father’s dead, Gary.”

“That’s true. Still. Look Toby I like you better than anybody else I know except Babaji. But if he told me . . .”

Toby looked at him glumly. She found this beautiful but chilling. She knew that only when she met Babaji would all these reservations vanish. She burnt with a great ardour to become liberated, free from all her human weaknesses.

“It’s horrible being torn like this all the time,” she confided in Gary. “I feel so small and unworthy.”

And always he gave her the same answer. All would be well when she met Babaji.

Finally a letter came which Prakash read out to the assembled disciples after meditation. Babaji would be sailing from Bombay in one week.

Now Toby found it difficult to eat and sleep. She wanted to be ready. She must be ready.

“Relax,” said Gary. “Just be calm inside.”

Toby strained at being calm inside. She began to meditate on Babaji’s photo, a bare-chested Indian in a white dhoti, sitting cross-legged on a tiger skin. Around his head shone a halo of light. And she did get the strange feeling, which Gary said was a very good sign, that she had known this being for a very long time.

"It'll make everything easier for you," said Gary, "easier for you to surrender. Surrender to the Guru is everything."

"But Gary, if he asks me something. . . you know something that goes against my deepest convictions?"

"If, when he has looked into your soul, you have any convictions left, I'd be very surprised."

"But how will I know?"

"Of course you'll know. You'll know as soon as you meet him. Look, your mind is going round and round. But when you see him, if he is your guide you'll know, and you won't have any more doubts or questions. You'll know who he is."

"Who is he?"

"He's an incarnation," said Gary in a whisper which managed to be both fierce and casual. He was getting angry with her.

"What? Like. . .?"

"Yes like. . . **that's** what every Westerner says. Like Christ. Yes, a Divine Incarnation."

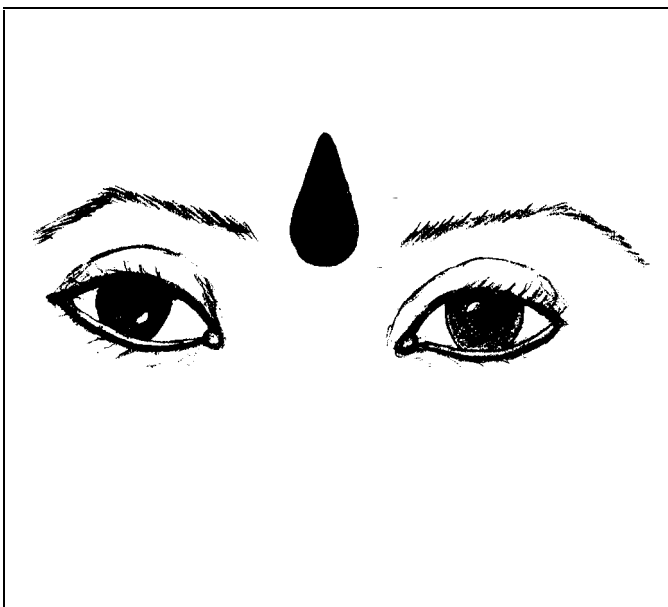
She thought Gary rather magnificent in his anger and his certainty of events though a whole new crop of questions had now mushroomed. She wished she could keep quiet as he wanted her to but there was one last question.

"And if I don't **recognise** him?" she said in a low strangled voice.

"Well, then I suppose you'd better go home and marry an engineer." That was hateful of him. She had confided in him about the socials and how she had hated them and he knew that she had no more home, that she had cut herself off. In fact, it was Gary she wanted to marry. She realized it as soon as he made that remark about the engineer. And surely, he must want the same thing. They were always together. Between lectures, after lectures, for lunch, cinemas, concerts, and they came here on the tram, always by Gary's wish. He had even bought her a sari and what was more to the point a petticoat and blouse piece. Perhaps he was waiting to see whether she would recognize Babaji as her guide. Perhaps he was going to ask Babaji for permission to marry her. He said he did nothing without his permission.

**Toby** grew miserable. She ate little and slept less.

At last the day was at hand. On the eve of Babaji's arrival and her meeting with him, **Toby** went to bed. She hardly expected to have a good night and was not surprised to wake up after half an hour to find a shaft of light shining through the ceiling. She sat up. It stopped just short of the floor and did not seem to fall on any



surface. She got up and examined it. Did it come from the window? Of course. It came from the ceiling. She put her hand out into it and was not illumined. Was it a sign from Babaji? It must be. Gary and the other disciples said that he often sent signs. But if a sign, was it a good one? Light was always good. Or was it, if it had no power to illumine? There was nothing she could do about it, so she went back to bed. Again she fell asleep.

She dreamt that she had Gary on a pyre and Babaji beside her was giving her instructions as to how to immolate him. The rite was very complicated and she was not altogether willing. She comforted herself with the thought that she would do what she had once promised. She would look up the rites in her **Book of the Dead**. She struck the match but when the moment came to set Gary's big toe alight he kicked and lunged. He sat up from the pyre, his face a mask of terror and before **Toby** could ask him in her terror whether he hadn't surrendered to Babaji's wish she fainted.

**Toby** woke up drenched in sweat. She missed her first two lectures and couldn't find Gary. She had to take the tram out to Fordsburg alone, her hands trembling and with a terrible feeling in the pit of her stomach. When she rang the door of the guide's house she thought she would faint like in the dream. For a moment she thought she was back in the dream and then the door was flung open. There was merriment and the smell of spiced tea and sweets. Everybody was smiling and or laughing, bustling around with a plate. Gary came up to her and hissed.

"He's in the temple, praying. Where you've been? Get into your sari. He said I could bring you in when you came." **Toby** got herself into her sari, the white one Gary had bought her. She knotted her hair into a bun and looked at her dreadfully pale face in the mirror. There was something wrong with the sari. She couldn't get it right. She took it off three times. At last it slipped down her nerveless finger and fell on to the newly sprinkled floor. She dragged the damp thing around herself aware that the pleats were completely uneven and that the hem was at least three inches shorter in the front than at the back. Gary peered at her, said that she had taken ages and then seeing the pallor of her face dragged her by the hand towards the bedroom in which the temple was. They left their shoes at the door. The plush curtains were closed. Gary knelt down and stuck his head in at the side where the curtains parted. **Toby** could see his toes wiggling nervously as he whispered. She heard another voice whispering and then Gary whispered some more. This time his heels knocked together, slowly, desperately. His bottom in brown corduroy stuck into the air. Then he crawled out backwards.

"You can go in," he hissed to **Toby**. She dropped to her knees and tried to crawl in where Gary had stuck his head in. But there was no opening. She grappled with musty red plush. To her right thin brown hands parted the curtains for her. She bumped forward some more on her knees and found herself kneeling before an Indian who had turned away from the altar to look at her.

Her heart was pounding. Her thoughts which had been racing around uselessly suddenly fell into a pit. This was not the man in the photo with the light around his head. He wore navy blue **woollen** pants and a nylon shirt open at the neck. But yes, yes? Gary was right. She felt a great joy invade her. Her heart expanded. She could feel herself on the edge of surrender like on the bank of a river into which she must throw herself.

Babaji turned to face her, smiling. She knew him. "Sammy" she breathed. She was invaded with relief. She put herself into the hands of the Sammy who had sold her mother vegetables during all those years.

OM Sri Aurobindo Mira

Open my mind, my heart, my life  
to your Light, your Love your Power.. In all  
things may I see the Divine

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