

Collaboration

Summer 1989

Vol. XV No.4



"In the sunlit space where all is forever known"

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The expressed opinions of the authors are not necessarily those of the Sri Aurobindo Association or the editors.

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A one-year subscription is \$12; airmail outside the USA and North America is \$22. All foreign subscription must be paid with a US dollar draft on a New York bank or an International Money Order.

Larger contributions, all tax-deductible, are welcome for the work of the Association. In addition, contributions for Auroville and the Sri Aurobindo Ashram may be made through Sri Aurobindo Association, Inc.

Subscriptions should be sent to Sri Aurobindo Association, Inc., P.O. Box 372, High Falls, NY 12440.

Any editorial material should be sent to Jean Korstange, 8 Union St., Keene, NH 03431.

Printed in the United States of America.



Square Dancing at AUM

Photo by Verne Henshall

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Seeking the Sacred in AUM

By Jean Korstange

"Please do not use the sacred word AUM for the name of this meeting."

"AUM should be a time when we dedicate ourselves to creating our sense of the sacred as a group of Sri Aurobindo/Mother disciples."

These two statements from AUM 89 participants point out the focus of this annual meeting; the need for a sacred time to dedicate ourselves to the Yoga.

If as the first quote indicates, people who attend the meeting do not experience the "sacred", then as the second quote indicates we need to talk more about how we as a group can make this meeting fulfill our need for the sacred.

Most people in this country experience the collective Yoga as a special event, i.e., darshan or a bi-monthly study group. People attend AUM for many reasons; to socialize, to share something of their interests as a workshop presenter, to take a vacation from the demands of work, family and daily life in the U.S. and to gather as a collective in the Yoga in this country.

The format for structuring the meeting over the past 5 years has been for a small group of facilitators to meet and brainstorm the basic elements of AUM. Once place, date and time are determined, a registration form is sent out that invites people to send in a topic/workshop they want to discuss/lead at the meeting. There have always been a lot of individuals who want to present a lecture or lead a discussion on some aspect of the Yoga.

The solution for the facilitators has been to give everyone time by creating an agenda of large group meetings with one person or a team of presenters and 3 to 4 individual workshops to choose from in simultaneous small groups. Then at the beginning of the meeting the facilitators struggle to change the schedule so that anyone who did not pre-register a workshop can be accommodated, thus leaving everyone with the feeling that there isn't enough time.

If we make the next AUM a search for satisfying our need as a group to create the sacred, we would shape a radically different meeting. People would not be presenters. The group would gather, get to know each other through introductory activities and then meet in small groups to discuss the topics, activities and structure that would best facilitate the collective realization of the sacred.

AUM is a sacred sound. Those who christened the meeting aspired to create a sacred time for everyone in the Yoga in this country. Sadhaks here must set aside time for sadhana. Maybe holding the meeting on August 15th would aid our awareness of the collective spiritual need and aspiration.

If participants do not want to put the time and effort into a collective process for building our spiritual consciousness at the meeting, then we must trust the facilitators to structure a meeting that gives us time to get to know each other, renew or build personal relationships and nourish the growth of our collective consciousness.

Large group sessions with a talking head are not likely to meet everyone's needs at AUM. Nor can the business of organizations be carried out in a group where maybe only 10% of those attending are active in an organization. The meeting will break into small groups where people do what they need to do for themselves, if it is not structured to reflect the diversity of people attending.

AUM is for everyone in North America who is interested in the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and Mother. It welcomes others from Auroville, India or Europe who feel called to dip into this cultural and yogic experience. It is a time for us to commune in the sacred.

Anyone interested in working with next year's facilitators should contact Ron Jorgensen at 2020 Roosevelt Ave., Enumclaw, WA 98022, (206-825-3431). Ron and others in the Seattle area will facilitate the 1990 AUM.

Readers are also welcome to express their ideas for AUM through letters to the editors. Be a part of the whole process, offer your suggestions and time to create a sacred meeting.



Ron Jorgensen leading
Tai Chi at AUM

Photo by Verne Henshall

“I Felt So AUMley!” - Notes from the All-USA Meeting”

By Gordon Korstange

“Sometimes I feel like a secret agent. . .”

“We must become sacred agents for the Divine!!”

For most of us, our **yogic** life in the USA falls somewhere in between those two statements which seemed to pop out spontaneously the first night, July 2, of the **All U. S. A. Meeting**.

On the one hand, the reality that **our connection** to Sri Aurobindo and The Mother is a fragile, private thing, our secret identity, a presence that should make itself known to others through right action, not words. On the other hand, the urge to communicate (not proselytize) our experience of Their Yoga to the souls in the United States who, Robert McDermott told us, are thirsty for a spiritual source that satisfies.

For four days we seemed to bounce back and forth within the framework these two extremes provided, safe in the company of ourselves, no longer secret but not yet sacred.

The following notes are based on written comments by some 60 odd participants (out of over 100 who attended) in the final circle on July 4th. They responded to what they liked about AUM, what should be changed, and what the 1990 conference could be. Since we didn't ask people to write their names, the quotations are anonymous (except for the title quote which I must attribute to Toine from Auroville).

“Once again being reunited with others who are part of the effort.”

“Seeing, being with, communicating with, sharing with a wide variety of people who have or are developing the same ground that I am interested in.”

Reunion still provides a powerful **raison d'être** for many who drove up the long dirt driveway into the **Pathwork** Center. People who know each other from the Ashram, Auroville or American organizations can pick up conversations left off a year ago, 10 years ago or last week's phone call.

Newcomers suddenly find themselves no longer alone with a shelf of books or cradled by an intimate study group, but thrust among the full range of gabbing personas and observing **purushas** in the dining room. The opening night introduction, in which participants paired off, conversed for ten minutes, then introduced each other, broke some of the outer ice, and, at times, resonated with high purpose and drama. After that it was a matter of karmic connection - who happened to be sitting next to you - or will power. Reaching out to as many people as possible is still a major attraction of AUM, limited only by the extent of one's verbal burnout level.

Part of the attraction, as Robert McDermott told me, is to be able to freely use the special terminology of our group. Phrases like “psychic being,” words like “**Savitri**” and “Divine” have unique associations for people involved with Sri Aurobindo and The Mother. At AUM we don't have to worry about how someone will react if we simply say, “Mother,” not “Mira Alfassa.” At the same time we should recognize that “in” vocabulary can be a barrier. The next AUM should honor one person's request for a newcomers-to-the-Yoga workshop.

“The beauty and openness of the physical space - plenty of room for everything and everyone with no sense of cramping or congestion.”

One necessary component to the often intense personal involvement that goes on at an AUM is a natural space that soothes and absorbs some of our intense energy. Two years ago, in California, the redwoods accomplished that task. This year, in Phoenicia, New York, the steep, green hills and tumbling brook of the **Pathwork** Center provided the setting: tennis, basketball and swimming in a very cold pond, universally acknowledged excellent food; a beautiful structure for meditation; long walks to spacious meeting rooms; clear, 70 degree weather and a deer grazing outside one of the lecture halls. The only rub was the fierce bugs who left marks we would remember well after departure.



AUM 89 Group Photo

Photo by Verne Henshall

"I would hope to see new leaders step forth, Bob McDermotts who are currently involved with Aurobindo . . . "

"Talks by sadhaks, not instructors. . . . there are many Sri Aurobindo people who know the teaching, want to discuss it, process it, dig deeper into it ."

"Fewer ideas, more personal sharing."

This was the year of Spiritual Life at AUM - "Theory and Practice," as the title stated. It sometimes seemed to be Theory vs. Practice. From the moment Bob Minor, Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Kansas, author of *Sri Aurobindo, The Perfect and the Good*, self-styled sympathetic outsider, told the audience that they should read more of the *Life Divine* and less of *Savitri*, the reactions began.

On the first day, there were 15-minute talks that dealt with sharing the teaching by professors Minor, Robert McDermott, of Baruch College and editor of *The Essential Aurobindo*, and Jehangir Chubb, of Bombay University, Case Western and Temple Universities. Bob Minor spoke about a new turn to the East on American campuses, a general turning that was not necessarily spiri-

tual, and about how *bhakti* tends to dominate most religious/spiritual groups in the United States, including Aurobindonians. Dr. Chubb recalled having to always write Sri Aurobindo's name on the blackboard because if he did not, someone would be sure to pipe up with, "Hey, what's the name of that guy again?" at the end of the class.

Robert McDermott agreed with Bob Minor that the guru trade was over in academia. It was good, he said, that Sri Aurobindo and Mother hadn't become a guru phenomenon, but many people who should have come to the teaching did not. The yoga is difficult to summarize and didn't flower in an articulate way as something beyond religion. Yet, he went on, there are souls in their 20's who are open, thirsty and have had spiritual experiences. They also have a remarkable lack of discernment about affairs of the spirit, are ready to buy and try out every spiritual package on the market. The United States is on a great search, and Sri Aurobindo and Mother confront its most pressing problem - our relationship to material reality.

Afterwards, for over an hour, small groups discussed these issues and returned to the assembly with summaries of their talk. Many people had expressed the wish to assume responsibility and communicate more about the Yoga, "to speak from an inner place . . . to advance by

holding out a hand to someone else.” Some spoke of the need for an voice from the United States to express the experience of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. But for others action communicated more than words. “People notice something about you if you’re living it.”

“I’d like more opportunity to have individuals share their journey - like Chitra’s film - and less emphasis on the authority figures. Some things we could bring with us as realized, thought-out presentations. And make some times to create the kind of trust that allows for the personal exchange of aspects of our inner journey.”

“I would change the hierarchical, patriarchal style of the conference. The essential s/he of this yoga is one of its powers. The essential s/he of the universe compels us, as we become more conscious, to represent that in our shared experiments and experiences.”

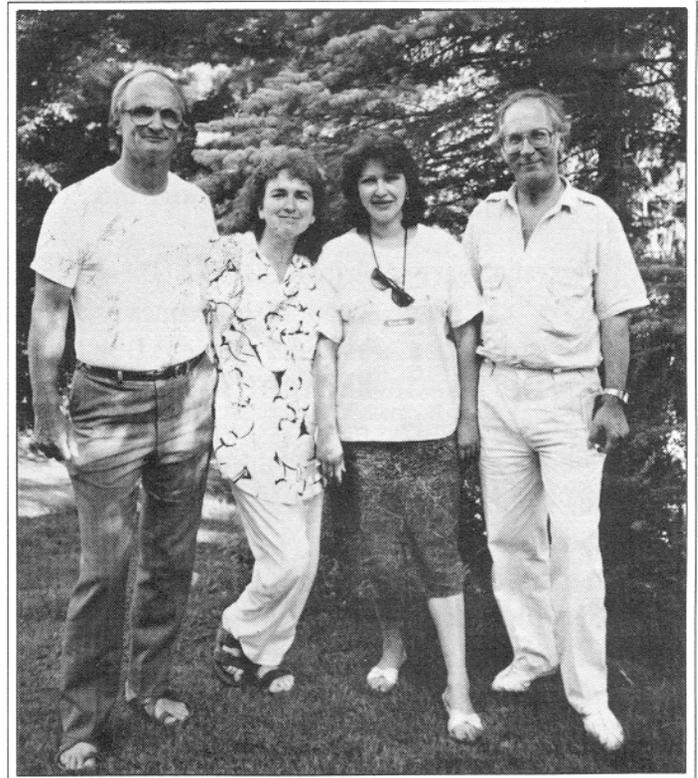
“There should be more participation and leadership by women. The men must open up space for the women and stop dominating the meeting.”

Drs. Chubb (“Integrality and Wholeness in the Spiritual Life”), Minor (“The Place of the Guru in Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga”), and McDermott (“The Yoga of Karma and Rebirth”) had more to say to AUMers during the time set aside for their lectures. Their styles ranged from the philosophical discourse of Dr. Chubb, concerning error as partial truth and the mind’s tendency to rest in certain positions, “exclusive affirmations,” to Bob Minor’s analysis of the Yoga as now dependent on the supermind as guru, a Yoga requiring a more difficult task and greater discernment of surrender, to Robert McDermott’s personal reflections on karma beginning with his awareness, after visiting Pondicherry, that Sri Aurobindo’s was more than academic dissertation material, a realization that started him on his own spiritual quest.

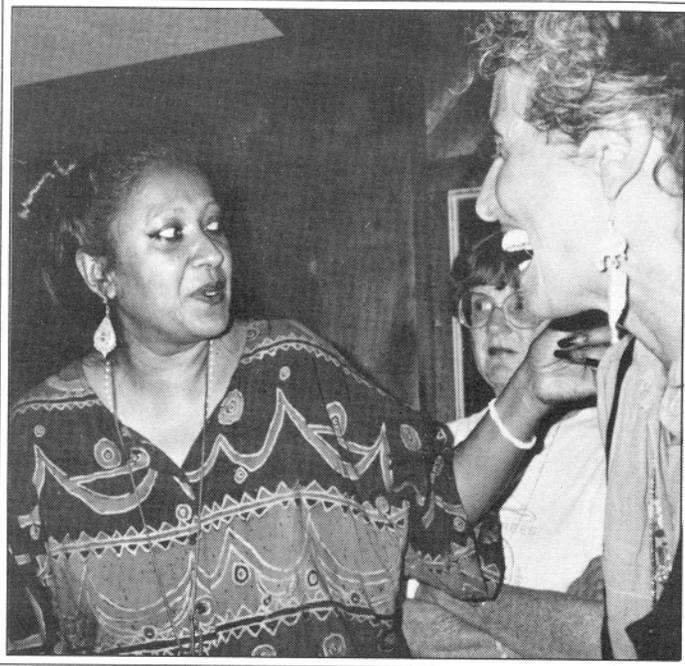
Reactions to these three were as varied as the participants. On the first night, when we tried to choose between *bhakti*, *karma*, and *jnana* yoga as the strongest influence upon why we came to the All-USA Meeting, the *jnana* group contained the smallest number of people.

While some welcomed the lectures and the issues they brought up, others wondered at the academic format and the lack of representation of women among the main presenters. Still others asked why there had to be “presentations” at all. They pointed to Chitra Neogy-Tezak’s video tape, *Woman-Self*, a very personal, evocative expression of her experience in America, as evidence that we don’t need to rely on “experts” to hold up a yogic mirror for us.

Perhaps this growing awareness of the talents and knowledge of the Yogic network would not have been so obvious without the “hierarchical structure” of presentation. At previous AUMs our primary focus has been on karmic, organizational yoga, and, to a lesser extent, bhakti and meditation, with much time spent simply on getting to know each other. What Chubb, Minor and, particularly, McDermott may have done is prod us to think about fusing our personal Yoga with the public Yoga, the philosophy and experience of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, in ways that can be presented to each other and the “thirsty souls” of the United States. I think we looked in the mirror and found out we aren’t kids anymore. The vision of an AUM began to surface in which the organization would grow naturally out of the presentations and needs of the participants.



L to R: Dhruva, Paula Murphy, Natasha Stepanova and Marcel Thevoz
Photo by Paula Murphy



L to R: Chitra Neogy-Tezak, June Maher & Joan Tomb
 Photo by Paula Murpij

"Workshops on Auras, creative concentration and African dance were new, valuable and enjoyable."

"More advance info about workshops - workshops for beginners."

"Workshops that provide and encourage individual sharing of how inner experience transcribes to outer."

"Focus on the group exclusively and focus on a very experiential time. Look at what we did in the supramental review. When we push ourselves (and are pushed) past our resistance, low self-esteem, self doubt, we discover the more essential, radiant, light-being. What an excitement to discover and share that in a yogic experience of AUM."

"I appreciated the healing energy and all the people willing to share and give of themselves."

The success and number of the workshops certainly contributed to this sense of empowerment. Simply to list some of them gives an idea of the diversity of choices available: "Tai Chi and The Mind of the Cells," (Ron Jorgensen); "Sri Aurobindo's Record of Yoga," (Peter Heehs); "Health and Healing in the Yoga," (Miriam Belov); "Savitri Village in Crestone, Colorado," (Seyril Schochen and Phillip Tabb); "Parenting in the Yoga,"

(Bill Moss); "Auras and the Integral Yoga," (Ariel Browne); "Dreams and Visions," (Wayne Bloomquist); "Auroville Information Center," (Joan Tomb and Eleanor Lovitt); "African Dance," (Elise Gold) and "Astrology as a Tool of Awareness," (Dhruva).

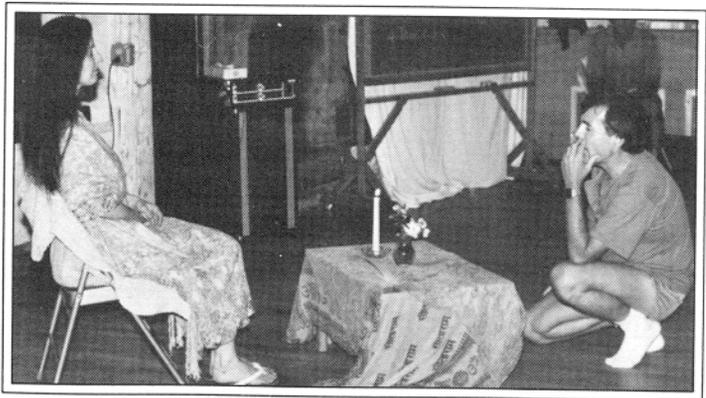
These workshops and other activities, the Saturday night square dance, video tapes, the morning chanting, meditation and *Savitri* reading soon created a sense of a temporary, functioning community. "Why don't we just stay and make an ashram," someone said, half-seriously.

On July 4th evening, instead of fireworks, we had the first performance of the Supramental Review. Two days before, after forming seemingly random groups, the participants were told that each group was to choose some words of Sri Aurobindo/Mothers', as few or many as they liked, and devise a creative expression of those words, i.e., a performance. During the intervening time, each group rehearsed, or so those of us who had thought up this exotic idea were hoping. When Monday night rolled around, no one knew quite what to expect.

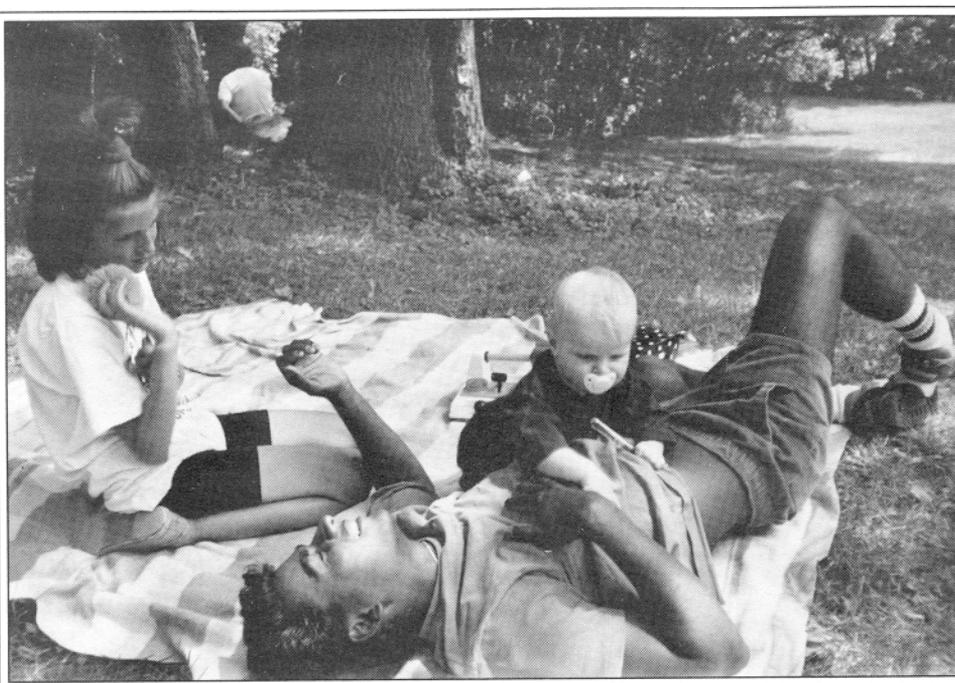
What we got was a wonderful collage of humor, movement, whimsy, and sincerity. One group created living sculptures with key, yogic words like *aspiration*.

Another group called all the audience onstage into an interconnected, silent tableau of oneness. There was music, drama and a TV commercial proclaiming that a box of ALL laundry detergent plus a *Life* magazine would EQUAL a container of delicious YOGURT. What has stayed with me, though, has been the image of my group reading a passage of *Savitri*, their faces shining with the wonderful seriousness and simple joy of performances in unself-conscious childhood.

When the Supramental Review had run out of skits, we wouldn't believe it; too surprised and delighted at our group efforts, we didn't want to go without one more performance.



Miriam Belov & Tom O'Brien in the Supramental Review
 Photo by Gordon Korstange



L to R: Jyoti Alexander, Mani & Sagi

Photo by Paula Murphy

hours. What was achieved, finally, was support for a new SAA board made up of members from around the country (see Paula Murphy's letter in this issue for more about this meeting).

Foundation for World Education president Rudy Phillips made more effective use of time by presenting a history of the organization, its present programs and the rationale behind how the money is spent. He then fielded questions from the floor, using the meeting effectively as a sounding board for comments from the broad spectrum of people who were present. At the close of the session everyone seemed satisfied and appreciative of the FWE.

"There was not enough time for already established working groups to interface with each other."

"More openness to empowering of people in groups, i.e. improving group process."

"Less critical statements - looks on the side more unilateral support of each other."

"Need better facilitation so that long winded, redundant speakers are cut off."

The Supramental Review aside, other group work at this year's AUM met with varying degrees of success. Although Monday was set aside for organizations and centers, the feeling surfaced that more time needed to be allocated for them, just as in last year's AUM in Boulder the opposite request, for more emphasis on the individual, was voiced. I believe that, as we put more trust in ourselves, as these conferences become true creations of the participants, both planned and spontaneous, a harmony between the group and individual will be achieved.

It means that organizations and study groups must present well planned workshops, requesting the amount of time they need well in advance and adjusting to the amount of time allocated in order to meet the needs of all participants. It seems to me that an organization cannot really hold a "business meeting" at AUM, as the Sri Aurobindo Association attempted to do. The issues raised, particularly that of the question of a national organization and vision, were too complex to be dealt with in two

Group dynamics will probably always be an issue at AUM. So many people are either new to each other or have not worked together before. But we need the practice. Group work presents us with time to relate to each other on the deeper Yogic level and to listen - to listen closely for the common sounds that can unite us.

"I liked the sense of maturity I felt among participants, people at ease with their karma."

Ultimately, the perfect weather, the delicious food, the sylvan setting and points of connection that twinkled on and off between us overcame the difficulties. Perhaps, one day, we will find it impossible to jam our organizational development, our individual spiritual lives, our meditation and our games into one 4-day span, and many small USA meetings will form to concentrate on one of those aspects of the work: to retreat, to organize, to study, to create—or AUM itself narrow its focus.

Yet, this is an integral Yoga in which all the strands of our lives must be bound up into an offering. The All-USA Meeting presents us with a yearly opportunity to work in a concentrated way together, to deal with the demons of diversity, and, ultimately, to know and accept each other a little bit more. We're making progress.

"What a nurturing, stimulating, open, responsive, active, artistic, silent, deep intense, joyful, embracing time it has been."

The Psychic Being: Selections from the Works of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother

Book Review by Jyoti Sobel
First Edition 1989,
Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press,
Pondicherry, India. 223 pp. \$9.95

In the spring of 1979 a group of teachers from the Sri Aurobindo International Center of Education came to seek advice from a brother sadhak. He had taught for 25 years in the school and was now doing research on yoga applied to modern problems of education. They were finding teaching increasingly difficult, they said. Discipline was a problem, initiating interest in learning for children more of a task. How did The Mother understand education? How can we teach according to this Yoga? The conversation soon turned to the psychic, its presence of potentiality in the child. "But where have The Mother and Sri Aurobindo spoken about the psychic?" they asked. And the reply was: "It is everywhere, scattered throughout their writings. But let us also, you and I, meditate every morning on the psychic, write down what has come in our meditation and share our findings."

This took place at a time when a compilation on the psychic being, begun two years earlier by a seeker living in the Ashram, was nearing completion. Before the year was over a 24-page booklet also landed on the sadhak's desk. It was published by the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, anonymous, undated and entitled: *The Psychic Being And Our Seeking For It: Selected Words from Sri Aurobindo and The Mother*.

Since then, independent compilations from the works of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother on the psychic being have seen the light of day. Some are still in manuscript form, including a

most recent one put together by Aurovilians.

In January of this year, ten years later, *The Psychic Being, Selections from the Works of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother*, has been published by the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publication Department. While it does not refer directly to previous works - and it need not do so - it continues this movement of seeking, of understanding and of making information about the psychic being more easily available. More importantly, it offers the general reader the first fundamental and comprehensive, though not exhaustive, overview of the subject.

The mind describes and explains. The psychic sees and understands.

The book's radiant white cover, depicting the psychic flame burning within a body cell surrounded by pink lotus petals, immediately attracts attention. Is not man also compared in the *Upanishads* to the lotus which grows out of the mud into the sunlight of Truth? Many are those who will surely recognize the symbolism, the timing and who, knowingly or unknowingly, have been waiting for this book.

From the wider perspective of the history of consciousness, such a quiet interest in the psychic seems no accident at a time when mankind increasingly aspires and labors for freedom, truer mutual understanding, progress and communication through dialogue and a growing awareness of what unity is all about. There is a pressing

need to be able to contact a Fourth Dimension beyond the first three levels of the physical, the vital (emotional) and the mental, - lest man forfeit his birthright and the earth-planet which gives him sustenance be destroyed. "Man does not live by bread alone". Today he is compelled by evolution itself to hear anew and obey the injunction of the past; that which was inscribed in pali script on the portals of Nalanda University in ancient India: "Atma Vidya" (Know Thy Self), in this case the psychic.

In the Integral Yoga of Transformation, the true self within, - the Jivatman, the soul, psychic being or *Chaitya Purusha* (the Person of the Heart in Sanskrit), - is the key to evolution and a divine life on earth. It is the bridge between Matter and Spirit, between our ending age, the Kali Yuga of Ignorance, and the promise of the future, the Satya Yuga of Golden Truth, because the psychic is the Divine in action within man, a "toiling spirit in a mortal shape."

This is "the Hour of God". It is not surprising to see the "traveller of the worlds" coming unto its own in a manner so characteristic of its nature. For as The Mother says: "The psychic is calm, quiet and luminous, understanding and generous, wide and progressive. Its constant effort is to understand and progress. The mind describes and explains. The psychic sees and understands."

Indeed, Sri Aurobindo and The Mother have spoken extensively about the soul and the psychic or psychic being throughout their writings and conversations. This book is an excellent comprehensive selec-

tion from their works which attempts to shed their light on the fundamental questions arising from such a vast and complex subject. How can we understand better the inner constitution of the human being?

How do the processes of inner growth, the afterlife, rebirth, sadhana or spiritual self-training etc. relate to the complex psychological structure of the man and his evolution? What is the difference between the soul and the psychic being or psychic individuality organized around the central being? The door to this understanding is the knowledge and experience of one's soul or psychic.

The book is well organized into six sections. The first five deal respectively with: the meaning and nature of the psychic being, its role, function and action, its growth and development, the relation of the psychic being to sadhana, its significance in afterlife and rebirth. The sixth one adds "more lights on the psychic being." A glossary, list of references, a selected bibliography and a very useful index complete the book.

Because it is aimed at the general reader, a good deal of material has been left out "that would be of interest only to practitioners of Sri Aurobindo's yoga or to students of philosophy and philosophical psychology." Fortunately, for the seeker or aspirant, what it does give is a precious tool for discriminating between the nature and various levels of inner experience, particularly between vital (emotional) and true psychic and spiritual experiences. Sections I and V clarify the prevalent mixture of yogic and New Age ter-

minology. Current descriptions of "spiritual" or soul-experiences and their attending occult phenomena can be seen in the light and depth of Sri Aurobindo and Mother's vision, for instance the reports of channeling.

Yuga only the Divine can do the yoga." In peace and equality the various parts of the being are put gradually in their place and function according to their nature without obstructing the inner evolutive work.

Then concentration can be pure and allow one to detach oneself from the outer in order to plunge fully conscious into the inmost depths. Such an action of perseverance prepares the coming forward of the psychic who can then turn the whole nature to the Divine.

Anyone who has been in contact with his psychic will recognize the experience in the description given by The Mother: "In order to find the soul you must go in this way (gesture of going deep within) like this, draw back from the surface, withdraw deep within and enter, enter, enter, go down, down, down, into a very deep hole, silent, immobile, and there there's a kind of... something very warm, quiet, rich in substance and very still, very full, like a sweetness - that is the soul.

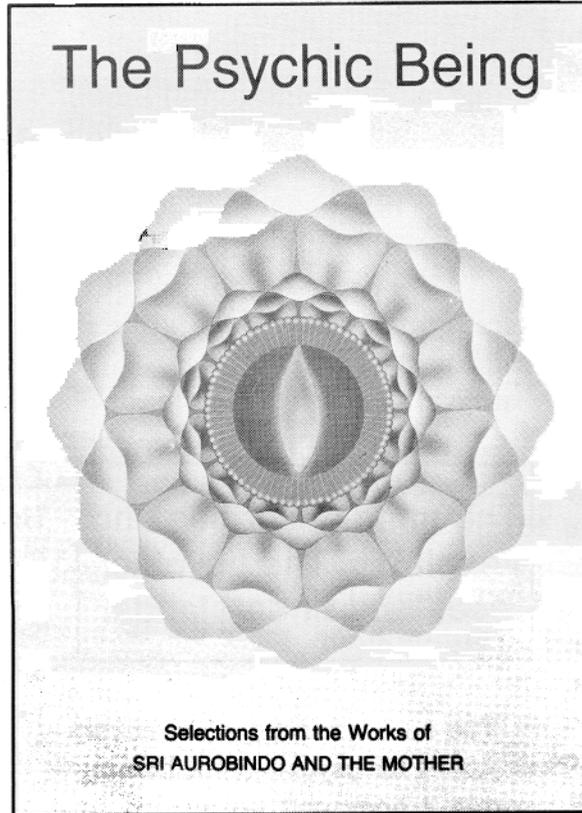
And if one is insistent and is conscious oneself, then there comes a kind of plenitude which gives the feeling of something complete that contains unfathomable depths in which, should one enter, one feels that many secrets would be revealed ... like the reflection in very peaceful waters of something that is eternal.

"And one no longer feels limited by time."

"One has the feeling of having always been and of being for eternity."

"That is when one has touched the core of the soul."

"And if the contact has been con-



Darshan (vision) of the Lord in the heart - the experience of the psychic - though rare nowadays, remains unmistakable and not by any means inaccessible. To reach one's psychic in the hidden depths of one's being requires steady efforts of concentration, self-development, aspiration, sincerity, perseverance in faith, and trust of surrender above all to the long and protracted process of purification. According to Sri Aurobindo and The Mother, purification is an indispensable step in sadhana. In fact it is the action of the Divine himself, of His Light and Force on human nature. As Ramakrishna once remarked, "In the age of the Kali

scious and complete enough, it liberates you from the bondage of outer form; you no longer feel that you live only because you have a body."

Only the psychic can fill the infinite emptiness within, the "hole in the heart" created like a bottomless pit by its own shadow, the desire-soul, because the psychic is by nature infinite. "The ego turns everything into suffering"; the psychic being is always happy and content, because it knows how to give itself without return or demand for the fruit of its work, in a harmony of peace and bliss. It lives in the joy of union, service and constant learning.

Still, the psychic realization comes as an act of Grace, whose wisdom and infinite compassion take no cognizance of human standards of personal worth, self-judged readiness or demands of impatience. "The psychic being works with perseverance and ardour for the union to be made an accomplished fact, but it never complains and knows how to wait for the hour of realisation to come," says The Mother. Grace acts at its hour, sooner or later, for "the Divine knows what He is doing" and the seeker will inevitably realize Him.

**Only the psychic
can fill the infinite
emptiness within,
the "hole in the heart"...**

The difficulties, pain and labour of the journey are part of the glory of working for The Divine. So will souls re embody again and again to "resume their place in the process of the Gods/until their work in cosmic time is done."

The Divine promise that we move inevitably back to the Source may

temper our ego-impatience, in such times as ours, when the pressure for change put upon the individual and the world seems often unbearable. In moments of great sweetness, love, compassion, gratitude and spontaneous, objectless happiness, when we feel something of the psychic behind the veil, we may by the same token catch a glimpse of the uniqueness of our species in nature: man only is endowed with a conscious soul and earth is the only place where consciousness can evolve.

As The Mother says:

"It is under the psychic influence that the Divine manifests in man and thus prepares the coming of superhumanity."

"The psychic is immortal and it is through the psychic that immortality can be manifested on earth."

"So the important thing now is to find one's psychic, unite with it and allow it to replace the ego, which will be compelled either to get converted or disappear."

Meanwhile, the psychic being's flamesong of aspiration and adoration can always be heard on the way and its guidance and power are there, if we care to give it silence enough for it to speak and time enough for it to act.

In the heart of the shadow
In the bosom of the silence
Burns the lamp that can never
be extinguished

The fire of an ardent aspiration:
To know Thee and totally
to live Thee."

New Year music message 1988.

As we heed the flame and listen to the "still small voice" within, we can begin to see and sense the manifestation of the psychic around us as well

as within us. Out of this precious little book, which provides numberless themes of meditation, emerges an ineffable image of the soul and its personality.

**Out of this precious little
book, which provides
numberless themes
of meditation, emerges
an ineffable image of the
soul and its personality.**

This is when, of course, one wishes for a Volume II to follow, that would point out doorways to the "Supreme Discovery," to the paradoxes of the psychic being's vulnerability, power of surrender, of beauty amidst ugliness, of innocence amidst violence and of discrimination in the *sahaja* (experience) of total acceptance, as it manifests in everyday life and relates to the environment.

For instance, what did Sri Aurobindo and The Mother say about flowers and their messages, "the manifestation of the psychic in the vegetable kingdom"? About sweetness, the honey of human relationships? About the psychic inner knowledge of the Guru who has taken responsibility for the aspiring souls venturing in the progressive battle of the world to lead God back in multiplicity to Himself? About the joy and trust of surrender of the disciple? About a mother's love of compassion for the growing soul entrusted to her in the perils of a world in travail? Is not this sweetness seen in the eyes of innocence and wonder of little children? In the unexpected kindness shown by human being to another? In the delight of companionship when one knows there will be

love and sympathy when **things go wrong**? Is it not that out of strength and goodness comes forth sweetness, out of sweetness comes forth Truth and Delight?

The psychic being is the Divine Mother's child, the rose which can bloom in the desert, the Truth of the human being. It has the unshakable faith of love that man is a being of transition, in constant becoming. It knows everything is in movement towards its own unique perfection, and that nothing is impossible to the Divine. There lies the secret, there is the key of its power for transformation.

Once, a disciple asked **The Mother**: *But the key you mention, this key which [scientists] do not have, isn't it precisely the soul? A power of the soul, to change Matter and to work physical wonders too? Doesn't the soul have this power?*

The Mother's reply was: "It has this power and exercises it constantly, but the human consciousness is not aware of it; and the big difference is that it is becoming aware. But it is becoming aware of something that is always there and which others deny because they cannot see it."

That it is "always there" for us to experience is in itself the supreme Divine gift, the ineffable miracle of certitude, at work veiled or unveiled, before which one bows in wordless gratitude. In our dark hours, we can turn to the soul, the worker of delight in the fields of God. We can contemplate with a smile the Presence of Love, Sweetness, Beauty, Truth and Power, which we carry everywhere in the body's temple.

"What value have [then] our impulses and our desires, our anguish and our violence, our sufferings and our struggles, all these inner vicissi-

But since she knows the toil of mind and life

As a mother feels and shares her children's lives,
She puts forth a small portion of herself,
A being no bigger than the thumb of man

Into a hidden region of the heart
To face the pang and to forget the bliss,

To share the suffering and endure earth's wounds
And **labour** mid the **labour** of the stars.

This in us laughs and weeps, suffers the stroke,

Exults in victory, struggles for the crown:

Identified with the mind and body and life,

It takes on itself their anguish and defeat,

Bleeds with Fate's whips and hangs **upon** the cross,

Yet is the unwounded and immortal self

Supporting the actor in the human scene.

Through this she sends us her glory and her powers,

Pushes to wisdom's heights, through misery's gulfs;

She gives us strength to do our daily task
And sympathy that partakes of others' grief

And the little strength we have to help our race,

We who must fill the role of the universe
Acting itself out in a slight human shape

And on our shoulders carry the struggling world.

This is in us the godhead small and marred;

In this human portion of divinity
She seats the greatness of the Soul in Time

To uplift from light to light,
from power to power,

Till on a heavenly peak it stands,
a king.

In body weak, in its heart an invincible might,

It climbs stumbling, held up by an unseen hand,

A toiling spirit in a mortal shape.

Sri Aurobindo
Savitri, Book VII, Canto V

tudes unduly dramatized by our unruly imagination - what value do they have before this great, this sublime and divine love bending over us from the innermost depths of our being, bearing with our weaknesses, rectifying our errors, healing our wounds, bathing our whole being with its regenerating streams?

For the inner godhead never imposes itself, she neither demands nor threatens; she offers and gives herself, conceals and forgets herself in the heart of all things; she never accuses, she neither judges nor curses nor condemns, but works unceasingly to perfect without constraint, to mend without reproach, to encourage without impatience, to enrich each one with all the wealth he can receive; she is the mother whose love bears fruit and nourishes, guards and protects, counsels and consoles; because she understands everything, she can endure everything, excuse and pardon everything, hope and prepare for everything; bearing everything within herself, she owns nothing that does not belong to all, and because she reigns over all, she is the servant of all; that is why all, great and small, who want to be kings with her and gods in her, become, like her, not despots but servitors among their brethren.**

Such is the soul in man.

***The Mother. Centenary Edition, Vol. 2,404 1**

The Psychic Being: Selections from the Works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother is available from the Sri Aurobindo Association
P.O. Box 372
High Falls, NY 12440
914-687-9222
\$9.95 plus \$2 P&H

Excerpts from *The Psychic Being*

At a certain stage in the Yoga when the mind is sufficiently quieted and no longer supports itself at every step on the sufficiency of its mental certitudes, when the vital has been steadied and subdued and is no longer constantly insistent on its own rash will, demand and desire, when the physical has been sufficiently altered not to bury altogether the inner flame under the mass of its outwardness, obscurity or inertia, an inmost being hidden within and felt only in its rare influences is able to come forward and illumine the rest and take up the lead of the Sadhana. Its character is a one-pointed orientation towards the Divine or the Highest, one-pointed and yet plastic in action and movement; it does not create a rigidity of direction like the one-pointed intellect or a bigotry of the regnant idea or impulse like the one-pointed vital force; it is at every moment and with a supple sureness that it points the way to the Truth, automatically distinguishes the right step from the false, extricates the divine or Godward movement from the clinging mixture of the undivine. Its action is like a searchlight showing up all that has to be changed in the nature; it has in it a flame of will insistent on perfection, on an alchemic transmutation of all the inner and outer existence. It sees the divine essence everywhere but rejects the mere mask and the disguising figure. It insists on Truth, on will and strength and mastery, on Joy and Love and Beauty, but on a Truth of abiding Knowledge that surpasses the mere practical momentary truth of the Ignorance, on an inward joy and not on mere vital pleasure, - for it prefers

rather a purifying suffering and sorrow to degrading satisfactions, - on love winged upward and not tied to the stake of egoistic craving or with its feet sunk in the mire, on beauty restored to its priesthood of interpretation of the Eternal, on strength and will and mastery as instruments not of the ego but of the Spirit. Its will is for the divinisation of life, the expression through it of a higher Truth, its dedication to the Divine and the Eternal.

Sri Aurobindo
P. 33-34

The soul takes birth each time, and each time a mind, life and body are formed out of the materials of universal nature according to the soul's past evolution and its need for the future.

When the body is dissolved, the vital goes into the vital plane and remains there for a time, but after a time the vital sheath disappears. The last to dissolve is the mental sheath. Finally the soul or psychic being retires into the psychic world to rest there till a new birth is close.

This is the general course for ordinarily developed human beings. There are variations according to the nature of the individual and his development. For example, if the mental is strongly developed, then the mental being can remain; so also can the vital, provided they are organized by and centred around the true psychic being; they share the immortality of the psychic.

The soul gathers the essential elements of its experiences in life and makes that its basis of growth in the

evolution; when it returns to birth it takes up with its mental, vital, physical sheaths so much of its Karma as is useful to it in the new life for further experience.

It is really for the vital part of the being that *shraddha* [faith] and rites are done - to help the being to get rid of the vital vibrations which still attach it to the earth or to the vital worlds, so that it may pass quickly to its rest in the psychic peace.

Sri Aurobindo
P. 127

Only when one is consciously identified with one's divine origin, can one in truth speak of a memory of past lives. Sri Aurobindo speaks of the progressive manifestation of the Spirit in the forms in which he dwells. When one reaches the summit of this manifestation, one has a vision that plunges down upon the way traversed and one remembers.

But this memory is not a thing of the mental kind. ... In fact, what remains of past lives are not beautiful pictures in which you appear as a mighty lord in a castle or a victorious general at the head of an army - that is only romance. What remains is the memory of those instants when the psychic being emerged from the depths of your being and revealed itself to you - that is to say, the memory of those instants when you were wholly conscious. That growth of consciousness is progressively effectuated in the course of evolution, and the memory of past lives is generally limited to the critical moments of evolution, to the decisive turns that marked the progress of your consciousness.

The Mother
P. 152-153

Have We Changed? Interview with Jacque Swartz

By Clifford Gibson

(Editors' Note: This interview continues the series from the Spring 89 issue of *Collaboration*.)

Clifford (C): You said that after the Mother left her body things had changed so much. How did they change?

Jacque (J): It was just different when Mother was at the Ashram. There was no other place to be as close to Her as you could be. I mean, just to sit at Samadhi. You were there then. And I'd know that She was there right up above you. And to look forward to seeing Her four times a year. And to know that you could go to Her room on your birthday. There was no other place. But when She left that wasn't true anymore. You'd go to Samadhi and know that Her body was there, but it's very different from knowing that She's right upstairs.

I just kind of hung out at Samadhi, and I felt like if I could just have a cot there and have them bring me my meals—

I've only been back once since I left in '78 and that was in '86 and... well, the dining room was so different... and the bus-loads of tourists and that kind of thing. I couldn't believe what had happened. I just kind of hung out at Samadhi, and I felt like if I could just have a cot there and have them bring me my meals—I mean like that was the same, but

that...that really was the only thing that was the same.

I liked Auroville better than before because people were more comfortable, but I thought that's the way it should be. Everybody before was so into suffering and bragging about the number of times they had worms and the kinds of worms they had and, how sick they'd been. I thought it was wonderful that people were living more comfortably.

C: So, when you went to the Ashram in 1972 did you assume, like I did, that there would be some fundamental transformation in the being. I

thought I would become Supramentalized. How about when you began?

J: It was so gradual, because when I went to the Ashram I knew nothing about it and was so skeptical about everything. I'd see these people going to Samadhi and bowing down and I just thought, 'God, what kind of a cult am I in? What kind of weird thing is this? What am I doing here?'

But, on the other hand, it was like the molecules in the air were so perfect that I kept staying day after day, not knowing what I was doing. And I thought, 'Well, as long as I'm here and I don't seem to be leaving, I might as well try to find out what this

whole thing is about.' So I started reading, and I had read a lot of stuff before and people seemed to have partial answers, but everything I read in Sri Aurobindo was like...He really knows. He really Knows - with a capital 'K'.

But I still couldn't get into it all. And then, I guess it was when I saw Mother that IT happened, although I still had my doubts.



Jacque Swartz

Photo by Gordon Korstange

C: Did you have some aspiration that you were going to be utterly transformed?

J: No. But I thought Mother would. When I saw Her, when I went into the room, I saw Her like gold and almost transparent. And I felt She was going to be Supramentalized while I was in the room. Like She had a only a few cells in Her body to go. She was that close.

C: When Mother left her body did you feel like She didn't make it?

J: Not like She didn't make it, but it was a let down for me because I wanted Her with me in the Ashram. I wasn't surprised that She didn't make it because, you know, I just wasn't

sure that the world was ready for it .
.. as hard as She tried. But I never felt like it would happen to me.

C: Ahight, well it doesn't have to be 'Supramentalize' your body, but in the beginning did you have the idea that in some fundamental way you were going to be transformed?

J: I felt like, yes, life would be easy from now on. There would be no more problems.

C: And how do you feel now?

J: I wish that would happen.

C: You still are hoping for the same thing you were hoping for in the beginning?

J: It's not like I'm hoping for it, but I'm sorry that it didn't happen. I mean, life.. .life's problems go on.

C: I assume, but I may be wrong, that most of us go through periods of depression or doubt and I'm curious, do you have a device that gets you through those black periods, or do you just wait them out?

J: I don't have a device. I keep looking for one. I never doubt the Divine, **or** Mother and Sri Aurobindo, but I doubt my ability to just be a good devotee. When I was living in the Ashram I didn't go through depressions because it was like the aspiration was just always there, always foremost. And you know I'd wake up in the middle of the night, and I would be thinking of Mother. And now I don't have that connection, that constant connection.

C: **So**, how do you try to keep that connection?

J: I don't have a method for doing that. As often as I can I think of Them, and. .I don't ask anything of Them like, 'Please help me get through this.' But I just try to feel gratitude that I know about Them, that I have found Them. I mean, I am so grateful that I know about Them.

That I have found Them. There are

.. it was like the molecules in the air were so perfect that I kept staying day after day, not knowing what I was doing.

SO few of us in this world, really, that have that. It's such an incredible grace.

C: When you get home at the end of work, do you have anything that's kind of like touching home base?

J: Pictures of Them. That helps. And reading. The best thing for me is **The Synthesis of Yoga**. A couple of years ago I started a group in New York that met every other week to read the **The Synthesis of Yoga**. And I kept that up for about a year and a half and then dropped it. Just because that's the book that I really like, and I thought to read it together and to study it.

I am so grateful that I know about Them. That I have found Them. There are so few of us in this world, really, that have that.

C: Is that something you do on a regular basis?

J: **The** group still does that once a month.

C: I'm talking about yourself. You do that every day?

J: **No**, not every day, at all. I don't meditate everyday. I would like to,

but I don't discipline myself to do it. I say, "I'm too tired, I'll do it **tomorrow**." **And every year my New Year's** resolution is to get back into the daily discipline of it and every year I break it.

C: This is a difficult question to answer, probably, and it may come off as kind of a wisecrack, but, are you making progress?

J: Spiritual Progress?

C: Yes.

J: Probably not. I mean, I don't know. I don't know how you measure it. I try to live a good life, but I don't know what it is to make spiritual progress. My faith is as strong or stronger than it's ever been, but as for myself, I can't say I'm making progress. I can't say I'm not, because I don't know how that's measured.

C: My main interest in these interviews is getting at what you just said. You said your faith is just as strong now as it has ever been, and I want to know what makes it possible for people to keep their faith. I mean, you're living alone, you're spending most of your waking hours at your job, working with people who don't give you any reinforcement as far as your yoga is concerned. And when you go home, you have your pictures of Mother and Sri Aurobindo, which probably help a lot, but other than that- how do you manage to keep your faith?

J: I mean...it's just there. For me once it's there, it never goes away. It's there, that's all. And it's not like I have to work to keep it. I mean it's like being a woman-I don't have to work to keep from becoming a man. It's that fundamental.

C: I seem to be the only one who doesn't feel that way.

J: Really

C: I'm always.. .I always

Letters

fear losing it. I'm always desperate that I'm going to somehow lose it.

J: For a long time, when I went to the Ashram, that happened. You know, it was like my intellectual and my emotional understandings were very different. But now that's not true. I don't think anything would ever happen to my faith. How can I say that? But that's the way I feel. My discipline, my self-discipline, has changed, but my faith hasn't.

I don't think anything would ever happen to my faith . . . My discipline, my self-discipline, has changed, but my faith hasn't.

C: What do you mean your discipline has changed—the fact that you don't do a meditation everyday?

J: Right, right. And I don't... They're not constantly foremost in my mind anymore like they used to be, but if I wake up at night Mother isn't on my mind. Probably some kind of bad dream, or something. But the faith hasn't changed.

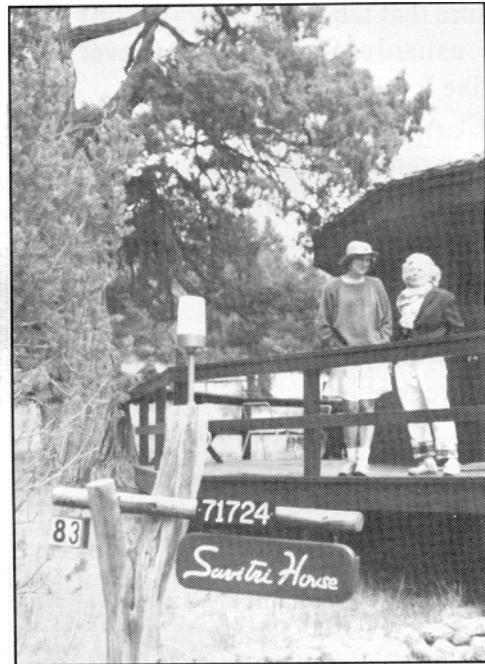
Dear Editors,

It has been a grace to have you visit Baca and become familiar with the 61.18 acres on Baca Bluffs, Crestone, Colorado donated to the Sri Aurobindo Learning Center (SALC) by Dr. Maurice Strong and his wife Hanne Strong, president of SALC's board of directors.

This year SALC has initiated development of Savitri Village, a solar village community for 12 permanent residents on the donated land. Savitri Village is dedicated to cultural, educational, scientific, agricultural, ecological, health and healing research for a living/learning collective based on Sri Aurobindo/Mother's Yoga for transformation.

Working closely with Auroville, Savitri Village will welcome people to participate in the programs developed by its residents and a network of teachers from around the world. The Village will provide facilities for programs such as a New Consciousness theater, solar technology, organic food-producing greenhouse, Vedic and modern spiritual literature of India, exchange students, courses in *The Agenda*, Sanskrit and *Savitri*, etc.

The land is the first gift towards the realization of SALC's goals. The architectural plan awaits the beginning of Savitri Village's material manifestation. A time-landscape for its evolution in the next one to five year period will be constructed. Coordination with the Planned Unit Development process, Saguache County, and the Water and Sanitation Dept. must be worked out to move the conceptual onto the land. SALC has been fortunate in securing the planning services of The VES



Jean Korstange and Seyril Schochen

ICA Group of solar architects headed by Phillip Tabb for Savitri Village. Phillip presented the project to participants at AUM in Phoenixia.

SALC's Savitri Village intends to evolve as a land-based, residential solar community with those who choose to become members of the permanent community being major contributors to the Village. However, because SALC is incorporated as a publicly supported non-profit charitable and educational organization, SALC's tax-exempt status is coming up for review and reassessment by the IRS in December 1989. SALC needs a broad spectrum of public supporters on the books for the upcoming reassessment. **Small donations, whatever you feel able to contribute, will help in the development of Savitri Village and the maintenance of SALC's tax status.** Make your checks to: SALC and send your tax deductible contribution to: **Savitri House, P.O. Box 80, Crestone, CO 81131.**

Finally, because Savitri Village

aspires to become a community of sadhaks in Sri Aurobindo/Mother's Yoga of Transformation in the United States, SALC would like to open a dialogue on living the Collective Yoga in this country. This discussion could be carried on through *Collaboration*. With the editors' gracious consent, I invite readers to begin by expressing their ideas on how a collective should be formed around the goal to further Mother's Agenda for the Supramental Manifestation on earth. Written as articles or letters to *Collaboration* for publication, your ideas will be a support for the manifestation of just such a collectivity.

At the Service of Truth and Love,
Seyril

Dear Editors,

A great deal of forethought and preparation, including an article in *Collaboration*, many meetings and years of history, preceded the Sri Aurobindo Association meeting held at AUM 89 to discuss the future of that organization. The meeting began with information sharing and the presentation of a plan which had been developed by interested parties. The information shared was necessarily condensed and abbreviated. Much of the inner workings which led to the current situation were not mentioned. The plan for the future which was presented was an attempt at a solution to problems faced by the board and members of the organization. A comment made during the meeting brought out an important distinction: "If the purpose of this meeting is to decide on the structure, role and future of SAA, that is one thing. If the purpose is to create a common vision of the network needed

by all of us here, that is something else, and totally different."

It was intended that after the informational part of the meeting we would break into small groups so each person would have a chance to speak and exchange ideas. Then a representative from each group would report to the group as a whole the main ideas that had emerged in his/her group. This process would have allowed for more in-depth discussions, encouraged input from those who don't usually speak in large groups and provided a way for the group as a whole to benefit from the input of all participants. Unfortunately, this process did not take place, even though requests were made to follow through with this plan.

**We are called by Mother
to do a collective yoga.
I believe that a more
conscious, egalitarian
group process must
facilitate our collective yoga
than the one I witnessed
at this meeting.**

I do not totally understand the forces that undermined this process. One thing which occurred and took the majority of time, was the long list of individuals who wished to speak immediately and in front of the whole group. The tension level was quite high at this time, and I wonder how much we truly listened to each other. Many people spoke with great emotion. As we went from speaker to speaker there was a lack of cohesion and purpose. Due to my own personal level of frustration I left before the meeting ended and moved on to the next scheduled activity, African

Dance. I was not alone in this early departure. Others also expressed feelings of frustration, lack of input and powerlessness to influence this process.

**I believe that if we
listen, truly listen,
to each other
a common vision
will emerge and be
inspired by Her
vision.**

Afterwards it was said that consensus had been reached and it had been unanimously agreed that a new SAA board should be formed. It is my opinion that words such as "consensus" or "unanimous" are inappropriate in this case. We are called by Mother to do a collective yoga. I believe that a more conscious, egalitarian group process must facilitate our collective yoga than the one I witnessed at this meeting.

One way to get a clearer sense of what we, nationally, are seeking for would be to have a collective "visioning," a session in which dreams, hopes, aspirations are expressed without interruption, censorship or reaction. I believe that if we listen, truly listen, to each other a common vision will emerge and be inspired by Her vision. On the basis of that vision such questions as whether a national organization should have a tax exempt status on religious grounds could be decided. However, until our vision is clear we are bound to get lost and confused trying to solve the most fundamental issues.

At the Service of Truth,

Paula Murphy

Center News

Cultural Integration Fellowship
360 Cumberland
San Francisco, CA 94114
415-626-2442

East-West Cultural Center
12329 Marshall Street
Culver City, CA 90230
213-390-9083

The Cultural Integration Fellowship paid homage to **Dr. Haridas Chaudhuri**, founder/president of The Fellowship and The California Institute of Integral Studies, by observing the 14th anniversary of his passing on June 18, 1989.

The ceremony opened with a brief talk by **Dr. Chittaranjan Goswami**, who spoke about hearing **Dr. Chaudhuri** some forty years ago when he was giving a discourse on *Sri Aurobindo's Life Divine* at the Sri Aurobindo Study Center in Calcutta. Goswami had been particularly impressed by Chaudhuri's intellectual vivacity and joyous personality.

The remembrance was followed by a recital of two forms of Indian classical dance, Bharata Natyam and Kathak, performed by **Udaysankar Sengupta** and **Rann Shinar** respectively. The wonderful demonstrations by Rann and subtle emotive expressions of Uday kept the audience spellbound. **Josephine Cole**, a former student of **Dr. Chaudhuri**, conducted the ceremony that was followed by a vegetarian lunch.

The next special event was the celebration of **Sri Aurobindo's** birthday on the 13th of August. **Dr. Goswami** talked about the wonderful relationship between **Sri Aurobindo** and **Mother** that reminds us of the eternal consorts **Shiva** and **Parvati**.

Wayne Bloomquist spoke about **Sri Aurobindo's** yoga and spiritual experiences in Alipore jail. **Bina Chaudhuri** talked about **Sri Aurobindo's** comprehensive global view and her experience of rock solid peace in the Pondicherry Ashram. **Shila Goswami** led devotional songs.



Dr. Chittaranjan Goswami

The program was conducted by **Josephine Cole**.

Dr. Goswami will give a six-week seminar at C.I.F. on **Sri Aurobindo's** *Synthesis of Yoga* beginning Sunday, August 20, thru September 24, from 1 to 2:30 p.m. There will also be a meditation group led by **Dr. Goswami** on the 3rd Saturday of each month. Those interested in further information may call 415-752-6855 or 415-626-2442.

The East-West Center, A Sri Aurobindo Center, began publication of a newsletter on August 15, 1989. Members of the Center publish brief writings on a variety of subjects, according to the present inspiration of each contributor. "The writings show what is happening at the Center, but more importantly, each article is offered as a contribution to our mutual spiritual growth in the light of **Sri Aurobindo** and **Mother's** vision." Here is an extract from this new journal.

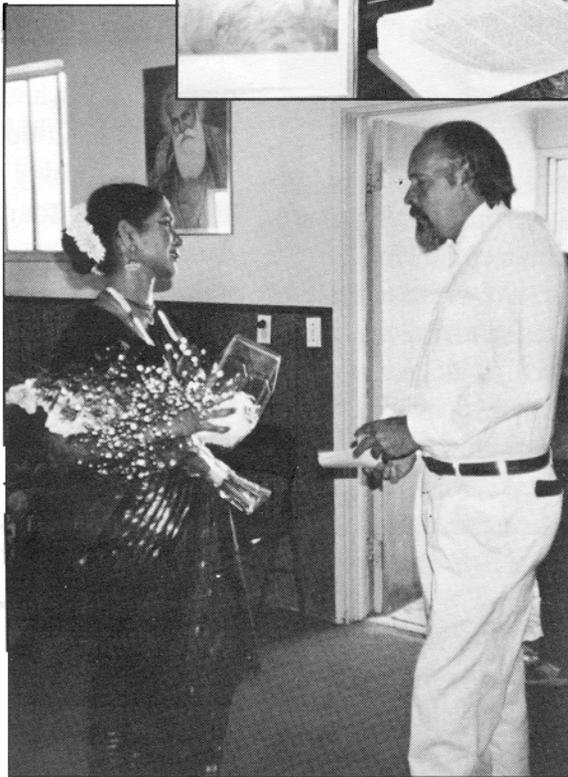
"I am writing as a new-comer to the Integral Yoga and I'd like to say "Hello!" to those of you already involved in the Yoga, to the world and to myself, because discovering **Sri Aurobindo** and **Mother** is an admittance to a world and a self on a scale that one never dreamed existed. Their work is such a beautiful embodiment of life to its very fullest that it is incomprehensible. Being thus faced with such an expansive yet personal approach to spirituality, I am at once uplifted and humbled; comforted and staggered. It is wonderful, at last, to have the feeling of coming home, but also surprising to discover a vast and complex system not based on rules, morals or ethics (I come from a Catholic background) but on truth, aspiration and purity of being. Needless to say, I am exalted to find the Great Adventure before me with **Sri Aurobindo** and **Mother** as my friends." *Anonymous*

Center News

Auroville International U.S.A.
P.O. Box 162489
'O' Street, Suite 13
Sacramento, CA 95816

"Towards the Future" was a day long program on August 13th, rich in information, inspiration and beauty, celebrating Sri Aurobindo and Auroville.

This event was initiated by Jyoti and Prem Sobel for AVI-USA before they left for Pondicherry. The program was organized with the Bay Area Sri Aurobindo study groups and the Indian community to pay tribute to Sri Aurobindo and recognition of Indian Independence Day.



Photos By June Maher

Top: Paul Molinari & Tejas Hemsell

Bottom: Mythali Kumar & Rod Hemsell

Devotional songs by Sara, Asim and Anju Mukherjee of the Bay Area Prabasi Association opened the day long event.

Mangala Devi of Badarikashrama welcomed everyone.

The Indian Deputy Consul General in San Francisco, Pradeep Khanna, acknowledged Sri Aurobindo's work for independence in his opening statements.

Kirti Hemsell talked about Sri Aurobindo's life and vision.

Mythili Kumar presented an emotive performance of Bharata Natyam based on Sri Aurobindo's poetry.

Paul Molinari put together a large scale graphic presentation with text and photos.

Rod Hemsell showed videos and gave a slideshow talk on Auroville.

Jim Hurley and Stan Potts installed videos and the sound system for the event.

Lynn Crawford took up the responsibility for coordinating the publicity and organizational details.

Arvind Kumar, publisher and editor of "India Currents" supported the event through his interest in putting Mother, Sri Aurobindo and Auroville before the "India Currents" readership.

(Some of the information in this article has been taken from a write up by Lynn Crawford in "India Currents", August 1989.)

Center News

**Sri Aurobindo Ashram -
Delhi Branch
Sri Aurobindo Marg
New Delhi India 110016
Tel: 669225, 667863**

**Sri Aurobindo Learning Center
Baca
P.O. Box 80
Crestone, CO 81131**

The Delhi Ashram announced that Sri Aurobindo's Relics were enshrined at Nainital on May 29, 1989. This date is exactly 88 years after Sri Aurobindo's arrival in Nainital on May 29, 1901 with his wife Mrinalini Devi and his sister Sarojini Devi, soon after his marriage. He came on a holiday with the Maharaja of Gaekwad and stayed at the Brookhill Estate, presently an Uttar Pradesh Government Guest House.

A week of activities, from May 25 to June 1, was planned to welcome the relics to Van Niwas, the Himalayan Centre of Sri Aurobindo Ashram - Delhi Branch. Those attending were treated to readings of Sri Aurobindo's and Mother's works, lectures, talks, daily meditation in the morning and evening, Bhajans, videos on the lives of Sri Aurobindo and Mother and Huta's paintings of *Savitri*. The program included a two-day seminar on "The Message of Sri Aurobindo".



Seyril Schochen placing earth from Matrimandir at Savitri Village Breaking Ground Ceremony, Baca.

Photo By Edgar Neogy-Tezak

Savitri Village... at Baca... 15th August 'The Right Place at the Rite Time'

By Chitra Neogy-Tezak

BACA...where mountains speak, stones energize and the land stands rugged and powerful...watching carefully those who step on Her.

BACA...magic meadows, silver lakes and sacred streams. An aura of mystery and calm, a gentle/strong emanation from this place in space.

These were some of the reflections that passed through me as we arrived at Baca on the 12th of August 1989...to be part of the Breaking Ground Ceremony held at Savitri Village on the 15th of August. After being greeted by Seyril Schochen with comfrey leaves from her organic garden at Savitri House, whose octagonal shape and age-old tree grace the landscape, we were escorted to our gracious lodgings at

one of the town houses on the grounds of Colorado College at Baca.

That evening we all gathered around for a soup and salad at the Bistro as we exchanged happy reunions while being bathed in the warm colors of a stunning sunset which reflected its orange light on the peaks of the mountain range. As dusk set in we strolled up to Savitri House to share a welcome with all who had come to celebrate the great day ahead of us.

The 13th morning ...met by subtle colors on the mountain range and an inner vastness blending harmoniously with that of the outer. After breakfast, the morning was spent walking through magical forests and sacred grounds, used for rituals and worship by the Native American Indians. Eve-

rything resounded of the mystery, quiet and power left behind by them for all to be part of if one cared to. One walked through the forests carefully, almost afraid of disturbing even the position of a stone which seemed to be part of a definite plan. Leaving the forest...one felt a sense of being touched... of never being the same again.

The latter part of the day was involved with viewing documentaries of the Festival of India in America 1985-86 and cultural travelogues on various destinations in India. The program ended with *Woman-Self*, a film produced by Kalki 2000...a saga of a woman pushed by creative intensities to travel through her life struggles and situations, towards a process of growth and self-structuring...written, directed and performed by me. The environment was perfect, the ambiance supportive, the people involved, concentrated and moved. The evening concluded with animated exchanges, leaving one just a little bit wholer, just a little bit better, just a little bit stronger.

The 14th...the day before the day. A quiet excitement. An eager anticipation. Our group, led by Phillip Tabb and Mario Santonastaso gathered at the base where the land for Savitri Village begins. We then walked up a roughly marked out path, the aim, in silence and quiet surrender, to be led to the potent area for the Breaking Ground Ceremony to take place. People scattered naturally and as we walked up quietly, Seyril talked about some significant experiences that had happened in her life.

I was inspired to relate my first meeting with the Mother when I was nine years old. Something I hold very precious and hardly ever verbalize. But now it just flowed out, I

spoke without reserve. The enormity of that first encounter, the vibrant memory of every aspect of the moment as though her hand were still on my head...leading me to where I stood right then. We all paused for a moment, looked around us and then Seyril said that we had better find the rest of the group in order to determine the spot. At that moment we looked at each other, looked down at the ground where a stone slab lay perfectly placed and in unison said, "This is it." The others naturally wandered in ...a harmonious acknowledgement... and we all began clearing the space, placing stones around the center point, bordering



Dr. Saroj S. Mathur, Hanne Strong and Eddie Bos in foreground
Photo by Edgar Neogy-Tezak

the main stone with dried acorns and forming the symbol of Sri Aurobindo at the very center. It all just fell into place and the reverence and respect from all around merged with that of the land. A feeling of clarity and oneness seemed to resound in the air.

This accomplished, we wandered back to the base of the bluff and drove back for a much needed lunch. An inspiring talk by Marcel Thevoz followed. Dr. Mathur, from the Indian Embassy in Washington, D.C. was also greeted that afternoon. An organic supper, prepared by caring hands...

And then the eve of the 15th of August was dedicated to Mother. Her taped voice reading from Sri Aurobindo's "The Mother", initiated the evening. The harp and flute followed, readings from Savitri, songs written and sung by Sky and an intimate viewing of *Woman-Self*. A silence, a peace and an enveloping calm embraced the room. The evening ended and I had a strong sense of being in the right place and an absolute awareness of the presence... Mother's night.

15th of August...Sri Aurobindo's birthday, the Independence Day of India. Dawn broke across the mountains...a warm luster of color and light...a day of all days...the symbol dawn. A feeling of a new, a special day. The time was set for 10 a.m. When all were gathered we walked up the path to the chosen spot and formed a circle. Introductions were given by Seyril after which she placed the red earth from the base of the western pillar of the

Matrimandir...dedicated to Mahasaraswati. She then placed the symbols of Mother and Sri Aurobindo on the stone while incense was lit all around the sacred center. As we all held hands in a circle standing on a land alive and vibrant; 'Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Aurobindaye' was chanted in unison.

It was as if nature herself echoed our dedications. A moment of silence and then a ritual of the land performed by an American Indian couple. Songs were sung and the gods were asked for their blessings from all directions. The peace pipe

was lit and each one of us took in the smoke as an invocation to the Gods and to seal all bonds between those who stood there. There was a brief talk by Dr. Mathur about solar villages in India and the many possibilities of relating the work between India and the U.S.A. *Savitri* was read to soft sounds of bells and the wind. A moment was captured and all the future made alive.

The presence was awesome...silently we walked down the path feeling that a step had been made, a mountain crossed, a quiet surrender on the Sunlit Path...August 15th, 1989. The dawn of a community in the West, dedicated to the work of Mother and Sri Aurobindo...Savitri Village at Baca.



Photo By Dominic Darr

Group Photo from AVI Meeting in Holland

Auroville International 1989 Meeting

By Paula Murphy

From many points in Europe, the U.S., Brazil and India we converged upon Hoogersmelde, Holland on June 23 thru 25 for the annual AVI meeting. The setting was a Dutch farm converted into a rustic conference center. Some of us stayed in rooms in the main building while others camped out in tents or campers. The food was lovingly and deliciously prepared by members of AVI-Netherlands. Much of our sense of community developed as we ate our meals at large picnic tables in the garden, or during long evening walks in the forest surrounding the farm.

The meeting began with a meditation as we sat in a circle in the pine-panelled main room. Pictures of Mother and Auroville greeted our eyes and helped us to focus on and connect with our *raison d'être* - Auroville, Mother's dream. AVI's role of financial support of Auroville was

reviewed and the expanding role of providing an international network for the exchange of ideas, materials and people was discussed. The feeling was expressed that the international aspect of Auroville's development is critical and will be key to its future.

Reports from all the centers present were heard, and I will touch on the highlights. There was such diversity! Some centers are just forming, others re-forming and still others expanding and maturing. All are points of initial contact to the ideas of Mother, Sri Aurobindo and Auroville. Some centers focus on fund raising, others do not. But all agreed that the consciousness around fundraising is more important than the amounts raised. Books, brochures, incense, candles, videos and newsletters play a role in many centers. Others rely more on personal

contacts and group meditations. All of the centers provide an opportunity for members to work for Auroville.

An interesting discussion occurred over the question of the proper use of modern channels of communication, TV, newspapers, etc. On the one side these channels were seen as corrupt and corrupting. On the other side, they were seen as important means of communication to the world about Auroville and a powerful instrument needing to be turned to the Divine. It was agreed that all information released for the general public should "carry the conviction of an Aurovilian."

The French report was of special interest because the group which had previously been identified with Auroville in Paris has changed its focus to the *Agenda* only and is no longer involved with Auroville. A new group has formed under the name

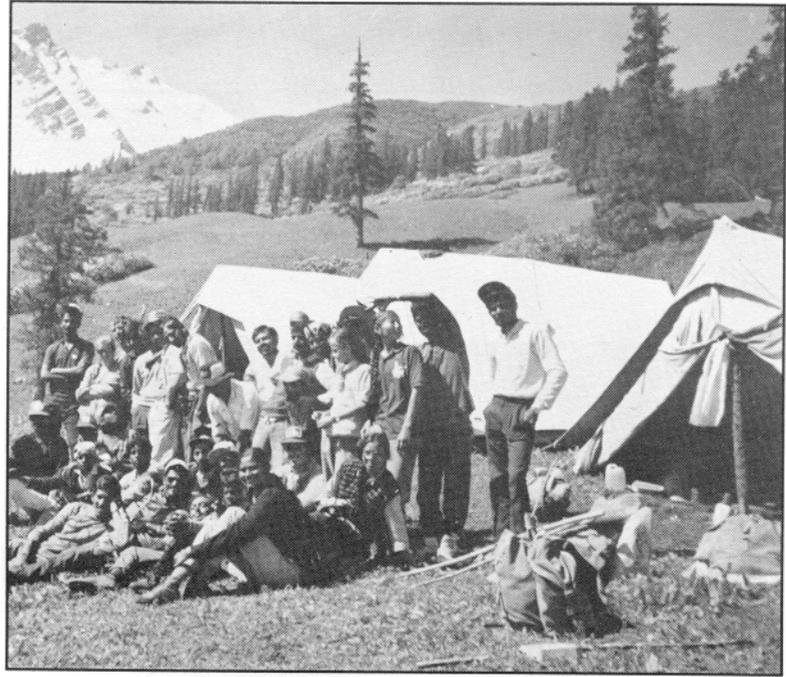
People

AVI-France and will continue the work. Because of these difficulties the French were unable to host the AVI 89 meeting as planned. They will, however, be hosting AVI 90 in the south of France. C'est bien!

Ways in which the AVI network could be strengthened were discussed. An idea that was enthusiastically received was to create a list of international members willing to host other members and Aurovilians on their travels. Exchange of newsletters or videos presenting various centers was proposed. Regional conferences were suggested which would focus on specific aspects of Auroville's work.

A report on fundraising was given by Guy from the Center for Scientific Research in Auroville. This report was based on a fundraising workshop presented by Vijay Rangan in Auroville earlier this year. Vijay's work was jointly sponsored by AVI-USA and Merriam Hill Center. The major points were: (1) the development of prosperity consciousness, including a sense of abundance, right use of money, clarification of need, and not only receiving but giving money; (2) Information on projects which is specific, accurate and up-to-date, including videos, brochures, etc.; and (3) Actual fundraising, grass-roots as well as foundation grants. Thanks to the work of Vijay, "Abundance", a group in Auroville was formed to assist Aurovilians with the fundraising process.

As our meeting drew to a close we all felt the time had been too short and some of the farewells in the driveway took longer than an afternoon tea break. We were like the rose that has bloomed and whose petals are dispersed by the wind to the corners of the earth.



Auroville Himalayan Trekkers

Raju from Aspiration recently wrote to tell us about the Auroville High School students' trip to the Himalayas. They went over the school's May - June vacation. It was the first time for many of them to experience walking in the snow and to have it snow while they were hiking. Sounds like there was bitter cold, a lot of sliding, joking, singing and dancing.

Kamala, Dhanalakshmi and **Amudha** from Auroville will arrive in the U.S.A. in September for a 6 week educational program and stay at the Sirius Community in Shutesbury, MA. If you would like to call and say hello or send a card here's their address: C/O Sirius Community, Baker Road, Shutesbury, MA 01072. Tel: 413-259-1251

Natasha Stepanova from the Soviet Union was happy to be with us at the AUM and meet so many loving and devoted people. She will carry back home the message of love and openness of the real people of the future, true citizens of the world that she found here. About the meeting she commented: "There is a feeling of anxiety; can't do so many things at a time. Freedom of choice is such a difficult thing, if only there was more time!"

And for the future she wrote, "I hope next time there will be a chance to meet more like-minded people from the Soviet Union and share the experience with them. You'll discover that you speak one common language with them even if they are not fluent in English."

Love,
Natasha

The truth is neither
in separation nor
in uniformity -

The truth is in unity
manifesting through diversity.