



NexUS

Newsletter for the USA Centers of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother

INSIDE:

- **Ram Dass on the Aravind Eye Institute**
- **Phantom India**
- **Confessions of a cranky seeker**
- **Quitting sex**
- **Satprem: Man and myth**
- **The utility of rationalistic materialism**

Double Issue
Winter 1994-95

The supramental is *not* grand, aloof, cold and austere; it is not something opposed to or inconsistent with a full vital and physical manifestation; on the contrary, it carries in it the only possibility of the full fullness of the vital force and the physical life on earth. ... I am concerned with the earth, not with worlds beyond for their own sake; it is a terrestrial realisation that I seek and not a flight to distant summits.

All other yogas regard this life as an illusion or a passing phase; the supramental yoga alone regards it as a thing created by the Divine for a progressive manifestation and takes the fulfilment of the life and the body for its object. The supramental is simply the Truth-Consciousness and what it brings in its descent is the full truth of life, the full truth of consciousness in Matter. One has indeed to rise to high summits to reach it, but the more one rises, the more one can bring down below. No doubt, life and body have not to remain the ignorant, imperfect, impotent things they are now; but why should a change to fuller life-power, fuller body-power be considered something aloof, cold and undesirable?

The utmost Ananda the body and life are now capable of is a brief excitement of the vital mind or the nerves or the cells which is limited, imperfect and soon passes: with the supramental change all the cells, nerves, vital forces, embodied mental forces can become filled with a thousandfold Ananda, capable of an intensity of bliss which passes description and which need not fade away. How aloof, repellent and undesirable! The supramental love means an intense union of soul with soul, mind with mind, life with life, and an entire flooding of the body consciousness with the physical experience of oneness, the presence of the Beloved in every part, in every cell of the body. Is that too something aloof and grand but undesirable?

—Sri Aurobindo, *Letters on Yoga*, p. 90

"All the action of man in life is a nexus of the presence of the soul and the workings of Nature, Purusha and Prakriti."—Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga*

Editorial	3
New letters on yoga	4
Current affairs	
Aravind Eye Hospital: Blending spirit and technology	Ram Dass 7
Dr. V on good eyesight, global solutions, and higher consciousness	Dr. G. Venkataswamy 8
Cohousing: Meeting the need for individuality and collectivity	Janis Coker 9
Status update on the American Institute for Evolutionary Research	10
Recent and ongoing activities	11
Upcoming events	12
Briefs	12
Center to center	
Boston Study Group dates back to 1960	13
Wisconsin center integrates business and spirituality	13
Chronicles and recollections	
Phantom India stays in the mind	Jon Carroll 14
Yoga with a sense of humor	Nirodbaran 15
Confessions of a cranky seeker	Gloria DeWolfe 16
Profiles	Vishnu Eschner, Surama Bloomquist 17
Salon	
Readers discuss "The one thing needed"	19
June Maher, Jim Hurley, Dakshina, Ronald Jorgensen Prapanna, Gordon Korstange, Prem Sobel, Constance, Bill Leon, Rod Hemsell	
Earth hour	
Quitting sex: Worth it or not? Lynda Lester 22
The poetry room	25
Gordon Korstange, Arvind R. Habbu, Agniprem, Leslie Levy, Routheni, Kelley Delaine Haerer	
Notes from the field	
When intensity overtakes integrality: A personal look at the man and myth called Satprem	Savitra 27
Flame song	John Robert Cornell 30
Essays	
Mantra, mythos, and the mystic hero's journey	Rod Hemsell 32
The fire within	Rand Hicks 34
Eight Sanskrit terms basic to the Integral Yoga sadhana	Arvind Jani 35
Publications	36

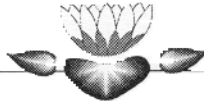
NexUS and *Collaboration* are published by the Sri Aurobindo Association, Inc. (SAA), a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization, 2288 Fulton St., Suite 310, Berkeley, CA 94704, (510) 848-1841. © 1995 SAA, Inc. All passages from the works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother are © Sri Aurobindo Ashram unless otherwise noted, and are used here with the kind permission of the Ashram. Passages taken from books published by the Ashram are also used with permission. Photographs of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother are © Sri Aurobindo Ashram. Printed in the U.S.A. on recycled paper. The opinions expressed in *NexUS/Collaboration* are not necessarily those of the editors or the SAA.

Subscriptions and contributions: A one-year subscription to *NexUS/Collaboration* is \$20 (airmail outside the U.S.A., \$32). A patron subscription is \$40 or more for one year. Contributions, all tax-deductible, are welcome for the work of the SAA; contributions for Auroville and the Sri Aurobindo Ashram can also be made through the SAA. Send subscription payment and contributions to the SAA at the above address.

Submissions: This is the last issue of *NexUS*, which merges back into *Collaboration* as of next issue. *Collaboration* welcomes submissions. (Please include a line or two of biographical information so our readers may know something about you.) Address editorial material to Lynda Lester, Box 3204, Boulder, CO 80307-3204 (e-mail: lester@ncar.ucar.edu) or Gordon Korstange, P.O. Box 297, Saxtons River, VT 05154 (e-mail: VenuGo@aol.com). Send only copies of original works or photographs that we may keep, or enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you wish to have them returned. Pack photos and art in stiff cardboard and write "PHOTOS: DO NOT BEND" on the envelope; otherwise, the Post Office may fold the envelope and damage the submission. *Collaboration* cannot be held responsible for loss or damage of unsolicited material. Material may be edited for readability or space considerations in conformance with the *Chicago Manual of Style*. If the author has not already given blanket permission for editing, changes that involve more than minor copy editing will be approved with the author. We will assume that letters to the editor may be published, unless you indicate otherwise. Letters may be excerpted for space considerations.

Source material

The Mother: "No imaginings, no mystic atavism"	37
Sri Aurobindo: "The indispensable utility of rationalistic materialism"	37
Ongoing activities	38



EDITORIAL

From the SAA

In my first exposure to Integral Yoga in 1969 by Dr. Haridas Chaudhuri, I was introduced to a new concept—ascend and descent of consciousness-force. Over the years I have come to a better understanding of this in the yoga. But a method or “how to” in the yoga appears to be very perplexing to many people.

The guidelines laid down by Sri Aurobindo were necessarily general and open-ended. The sadhana itself reveals the process. The aspirant has to provide the necessary basis: quiet and calm, equanimity, sincerity, faith, aspiration, surrender, rejection of the ego.

And yet both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother refer to finding the “key” in the process of physical transformation. The sadhak evidently has something to discover. This yoga is an adventure in consciousness and we all have a significant part to play. There is also an indication that a collective can be invaluable to the process.

With this in mind, the Sri Aurobindo Association is preparing a conference and workshop in San Francisco on October 11–15 entitled “Cellular Evolution: Transformation of the Body.” The emphasis will be fourfold:

1. Can we facilitate the evolution in consciousness and what are other individuals/groups doing in this regard?
2. What can we learn from others and what can we teach them, if anything?
3. Is there a possibility of collaborating in the future work, i.e., can we form a collective?
4. Through common aspiration and coming together, can we (with the Divine Shakti) give birth to something new?

We will be announcing an interesting array of presenters within a few months. Many are already in place at this time.

Wayne Bloomquist

From the editor

There is in fact no special and exclusive form of supramental yoga,” Sri Aurobindo writes; “all ways can lead to the supermind, just as all ways can lead to the Divine.”

To paraphrase: this not a template yoga. Turnkey appli-

cations, portable practices, common routines do not exist; franchises are not available. “The technique of a world-changing yoga has to be as multiform, sinuous, patient, all-including as the world itself,” Sri Aurobindo says. “If it does not deal with all the difficulties or possibilities and carefully deal with each necessary element, has it any chance of success? And can a perfect technique which everybody can understand do that?”

(This is not to say Integral Yoga is vaporous, lacking a core of verifiable experience and knowledge; rather, that it has a user-defined interface.)

Here in America, cradle of individual freedom, we can appreciate Sri Aurobindo’s remark that “there are a thousand ways of approaching and realising the Divine” and that “each way has its own experiences which have their own truth and stand really on a basis one in essence but complex in aspects, common to all but not expressed in the same way by all.”

NexUS/Collaboration is a forum for this type of freedom and diversity—and an anchor to the oneness supporting it. These pages are common ground for harmonizers and gadflies, householders and ascetics, traditionalists and iconoclasts; for those who say sadhana means scrubbing floors and those who say it means developing a mind of light—and/or a mind of the cells.

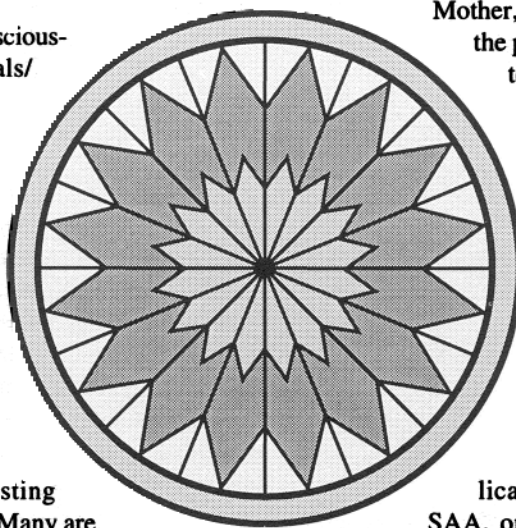
Here there will be many approaches to the yoga; cohesion will derive from the fact that we have all been touched in one way or another by the Divine (which we could define, per the Mother, as “all the knowledge we have to acquire, all the power we have to obtain, all the love we have to achieve, all the harmonious and progressive poise we must make manifest in light and joy, all the unknown and new splendors that are to be realized” . . .).

Our strategy is to avoid fundamentalism, dogmatism, and cookie-cutter religion (though we as humans make religions so easily—Ayn Rand’s followers made a religion of objectivist reasoning, and I wonder occasionally if some Satprem followers make a religion of no religion!).

The various points of view in this publication may not be those of the editors, the SAA, or the majority of readers. However, as Sri Aurobindo points out, nature uses thesis-antithesis-synthesis as a means for evolution. There are elegant, subtle patterns of order in chaos, and polarity can be the catalyst to larger resolution.

True integrity, we know, encompasses all points: the whole Truth can never be expressed in one letter, article, or issue. Not to worry; there will be many letters, articles, and issues. We evolve—from ignorance to knowledge, from knowledge to greater knowledge. That is the point, after all, of Being in the Becoming.

—Lynda Lester





NEW LETTERS ON YOGA

Mail-yoga, phone-yoga, fax-yoga?

I am writing because I belong to those who have noticed a growing corrupting "commercialization" of the spiritual effort, either for personal gain or more subconsciously for personal satisfaction and/or aggrandizement. Too many too quickly are glib about the supermind, they see our supramental auras and undertake "spiritually" pontificating positions . . . what is all this nonsense! Must we blow up every little event in life and make of it some astounding non-commonsensical extrasensory cosmic experience?

The density of matter and our day-to-day lives are a sufficiently rich mining ground for an intense applied *silent* personal sadhana that does not need discussion, nor networking, nor Internet addresses, spiritual counseling, healing, vibrations, visions, inaudible communications, etc. The damn Divine's very clearly in the everyday nitty-gritty of our lives, we don't have to hoodwink ourselves into miraculous states of consciousness to find the fellow or follow the lead of those who profess to be in the know.

If we are not profoundly and solidly grounded in ourselves, first by a work of formulation of our personalities through the development of the individual ego, followed perhaps over several lives by a more conscious and earnest and detailed capitulation thereof in favor of a deeper Presence, concomitantly with a just-as-earnest and applied stilling of each of our billion automatic subconsciously atavistic agitations, *one by one by one by one*, in order to arrive at some form of silence of the mind . . . if we are negligent in these areas, then it is easy to lose ourselves in the murkiness of a false "spirituality," because of lack of rigor, and leave the field wide open to miracle-mongers who each then justifiably foists his or her particular brand of Super-Mind on our Wonderfully Stupid Non-Discriminating Highnesses.

In our increasing modern-day consumerism, trivia and laziness are rampant in our minds, in our speech, in our lives. Is the next-generation washing machine from Westinghouse to give our soiled laundry a "supramental" wash, with a warm and cold cycle? Is the supermind to spawn the next-generation computer? Are speed in communication and exchange of views on the Internet going to replace our breathing, our loving, our seeking?

Our individuality is an inalienable natural fact, regardless of any illusion of externally imposed connectedness: no one else can live for us, realize for us, in our depths where the real action is. If we have the good sense to grow conscious of, observe and allow our minutely vigilant aspiring energies to polarize us in their immobily honed intensities, we might still get somewhere. By the exponential amplification of our reflexively and ignorantly extroverted random ejaculations, the Internet, a broadcasting tool, if anything, becomes an amorphous

Food for thought

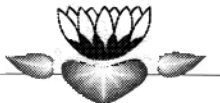
Perhaps more than in any other [scientific] field, current developments in the neurosciences—so far-reaching they are collectively labeled "the neuroscience revolution"—point clearly in religious directions. Interdisciplinary communication is now taking place at an astronomical rate between scientists in molecular genetics, immunology, endocrinology, neurology, and psychiatry. The subject of their discussions is nothing less than the biology of consciousness, which in turn is raising new questions about the philosophy of mind. . . .

In short, no one seems to remember the guiding pronouncements of the past 100 years, beginning with Nietzsche, who proclaimed that God is dead. Marx followed by announcing that religion was the opiate of the masses and Freud finished by establishing in the name of science that religion was nothing more than the redirection of repressed sexual impulses toward more socially acceptable ends. A recent spate of highbrow tee shirts and bumper stickers summarily dismisses the entire century of philosophic controversy on the subject by proclaiming instead, "Nietzsche is dead."—from "Desperately Seeking Spirituality," *Psychology Today*, Nov./Dec. '94

cauldron of seething confusion, where everybody has a view and therefore a "truth," where everyone penetrates at his peril if he lacks discrimination, and at even greater risk if he deludes himself that he can make a difference in that bedlam.

As a material communicative tool, I bet the Internet is extremely powerful, but let's keep it in its proper perspective of usage . . . the content of metaphysical conversation in cyberspace is the pullulation of fractionated mental dogma. Just another medium, like the mail, the telephone, the fax. So why not then also apotheosize these activities into mail-yoga, phone-yoga, and fax-yoga on par with cyber-yoga? And those without a cyber-yoga computer to access the Internet, like most Third World populations and many even in the U.S.A. and Europe . . . well, too bad for them that the Divine prefers the technologically advanced—the Missing-Link-to-Be between the human and the supramental, the new age cyber-yogi who pays his monthly dues to the Forces of Evolutionary Nature at the rate of \$9.95 per month on America Online, \$8.95 on some other service, in keeping with the free market practices of the Creator.

The connectedness of a mind in synchronous agitation with others, however statistically numerous, cannot be substituted for the transcendent experience of cosmic harmony in the vast



silence of an infinite Presence, beyond all time and space, beyond the \$2.95-per-hour cyberspace propagandizing.

Witness the discourse of the AT&T executive in "The new electronic commons" [NexUS, Fall '94]: Robert Lucky makes no bones about the day-to-day utility of sharing human experience, there's not a shred of any "spiritual" overtone in his concept of the Internet's application and use. It's a good tool for communication in regard to the practical aspects of man's external life, that's all. That he has chosen to get enthused by this is quite another matter of consciousness.

Let us leave aside this casual excitement and get down to the business of *becoming*, as opposed to that of *doing*, something that we *do* only too well in extroverted America, not to mention in all the other ignorant nations of the word. The connectedness of the Internet is the connectedness of television and as invasive: how different is one from the other, except in terms of just-as-extroverted interactiveness? My e-mail software has not forced on me any experience of psychic or cosmic consciousness, or founded in me the universal compassion that is the immediate and direct result of the simultaneous vision of the Divine in all things and in no-things.

[David] Hutchinson's article on the spiritualizing influence of the Internet [NexUS, Fall 1994] is a perfect example of the malady of trivializing deeper experiences because of a far too easy access to information (through the written word) on their most external manifestations, etc., that gives the casual self-described "cyber-seeker" instantaneous devices for self-delusion and hyperbolic metaphor. Indeed, this but doubly emphasizes the need to cleave to serious seeking by the yardstick of solid inner experience and patient authentication thereof and to the discrimination developed therefrom. In one of his writings included under the title *The Hour of God*, Sri Aurobindo asks whether immortality is a plaything to be given as a reward to a child, and concludes by stating that "the dread Law of the Way is there and none can abrogate it." When Mother Kali in Her Grace gets a hold of you, you shed all romantic notions of spirituality . . . fast.

For us "Aurobindonians," (am afraid to call myself one as am not yet absolutely sure of being worthy of that appellation), the utility of the Internet is the same as for the normal human being, to seek references, other information, like everyone else, and perhaps also to accelerate our otherwise

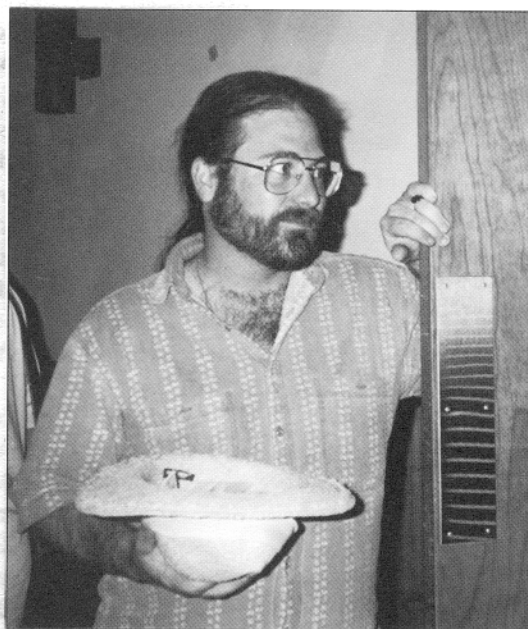
laggardly epistolary correspondence. Just because I grew up in the Ashram under Mother's direct supervision and guidance, and now possess a computer and a modem, can I consider myself to be in the vanguard of human evolution . . . or be a promising candidate for the cyberspatial Missing Link . . . by what standard can such a postulate be verified?

Therefore, among the primary uses I can think of for our general community of disciples of Mother and the Master, could be practical communication as to whether anyone is traveling to India to carry with them or bring back some useful thing, ask for a particular reference that one may have forgotten or not possess access to anymore, keep in touch with our friends, update oneself on the availability of books, diaries, incense, calendars, and such other mundane stuff. Any objections to being practical?

—Arvind R. Habbu, Kansas City, Missouri

The central issue

These comments were posted to Aurodiscuss, an online discussion group on Sri Aurobindo's Synthesis of Yoga taking place via the Internet (see p. 11). This posting was part of an ongoing study of Chapter V, "The Ascent of the Sacrifice—I: The Works of Knowledge—The Psychic Being."



Prapanna helps collect donations for the Aravind Eye Hospital (see p. 7) at the All USA Meeting, July 1994.

It seems to me that the central issue is, how do we do the yoga in the world? What would be the nature of, and what are the requisite elements of, an increasingly sincere and conscious sacrifice of our being(s) to the Divine. How do we sanctify (make sacred) our life and being?

Sri Aurobindo points out that though none of the solutions to the questions he raises and then considers (on pp. 125–128), "can be anything but provisional until the supramental Truth-Consciousness is reached," there is one solution which he discusses on p. 129, the solution we all know about: the "opening of a now nine-tenths concealed inmost soul or psychic being that is already there but not commonly active within us. That is the inner light we must liberate; for the light of this inmost soul is our one sure illumination so long as we walk still amidst the siege of the Ignorance

and the Truth-Consciousness has not taken up the entire control of our Godward endeavor."

But the central question here is, how do we open up this inner



Call for papers

The editors would like to follow up on the points raised by Prapanna and Constance in a future issue of *Collaboration*. We are accepting submissions on "Practice: Moments from daily life." Tell us how you apply the methods of yoga in situations you encounter from day to day. How do you translate the yoga into living action? What can you share with others about yoga in the workplace, yoga under fire, urban yoga, experiences mundane and extraordinary, consciousness in the body, or other aspects of applied spirituality?

We welcome your submissions. Deadline: July 1, 1995.

light? And how, once we have opened up to it, do we remain open exclusively to that influence when all the pressures of the world keep trying to crowd in? How many of us have experienced the coming to the front of the psychic being only to see it recede into the background because some part of the nature (almost always the unregenerated vital) wants to respond more to the impure forces of the world, rather than to the divine Force which is pressing down from above or manifesting from within?

On pp. 141–142, Sri Aurobindo makes it clear, as he does in so many other writings, that we must recognize "... two categories of movements, those that are either moved by the true soul or aid towards its liberation and rule in the nature and those that are turned to the satisfaction of the unpurified vital nature." Then after pointing out that self-denial and the ethical works of altruism, philanthropy, humanitarianism really do not in and of themselves belong to or arise exclusively out of the psychic movement, he gives us several paragraphs in which he beautifully describes the nature of the inner psychic movement. "It is the very nature of the soul or psychic being to turn towards the Divine Truth as the sunflower to the sun; it accepts and clings to all that is divine or progressing towards divinity and draws back from all that is a perversion or a denial of it, from all that is false and undivine . . ." (p. 144)

So, to get back to practicalities, I would like to learn what the participants in our lively group do each day to bring forth this incredibly lovely presence in themselves while living in the midst of the world?

In this chapter Sri Aurobindo profoundly points us in a certain direction (one peculiar to each of us). I think we would all benefit if we could share such day-to-day aspects of the yoga and learn from each other some pointers of how we can translate Sri Aurobindo's teaching into living action.

—Prapanna, Lodi, California

A day in the life

I would like to suggest a possible theme for a future edition of *Collaboration*: Practice.

One weekend in November I spent some time with Michael Murphy and George Leonard in a workshop on the future evolution of human nature. There was a lot of respect given to Sri Aurobindo and he was the acknowledged inspiration for their system of ITP (integral transformative practice). But their idea of practice is little more than exercise and meditation. They had no real insight into the nature and methods of Sri Aurobindo's yoga.

I am wondering . . . how does each of us apply in practice the methods of our yoga from moment to moment in every situation—both mundane and extraordinary—that we encounter day to day? How does the average day proceed in the life of a sadhak from the point of view of practice?

Beyond intellectual exegesis, beyond preaching, beyond quoting—how is the yoga actually practiced?

—Constance, Santa Cruz, California

More feedback on NexUS

We are pleased to send you a copy of our monthly publication *Ahana*.

We have come across your newsletter and find it very informative and inspiring. We wonder if you can put us on your regular mailing list so that we can exchange our publications on a reciprocal basis.

—B.R. Bajaj, Sri Aurobindo Society, New Delhi

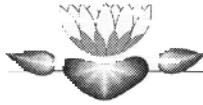
I've enjoyed looking at *NexUS*, and am all admiration for the crisp look the journal presents. It seems to me an advance, and each issue represents an enormous amount of work . . . Congratulations on its success.

—Rand Hicks, Pensacola, Florida

The most recent issue of *NexUS* is another "winner," I believe. I really enjoy the mix of articles that range from excerpts from the Mother and Sri Aurobindo to remind us of the gift of their presence in our lives, to shared views like Sally's on being in California, and here and there nuggets of humor. Bravo and thanks. I've said it in person and now it's official—in writing! Also I like that the publication comes in a polished format.

—June Maher, Aptos, California

Illustration credit: All circle art in this issue was created by Lisa Rachlin using the computer application Aldus Freehand.



CURRENT AFFAIRS

Aravind Eye Hospital: Blending spirit and technology

by Ram Dass

For the past 20 years, Dr. G. Venkataswamy, a devotee since the 1950s of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, with the collaboration of his family, has been instrumental in the creation and development of the huge Aravind Eye Hospital complex in Madurai, Tamil Nadu, India. This hospital, one of the largest eye hospitals in the world, is a model of efficiency, modern technology, cleanliness, and selfless service. Its sterling reputation has brought to it honor from the World Health Organization, and medical and hospital management centers around the world who send their students and personnel to Aravind for training.

Anyone visiting Aravind becomes aware very quickly of the devotion and compassion of the staff and the extraordinary energy and inner light which they bring to their work. Dr. V, as Dr. Venkataswamy is affectionately called, is quick to point out that the spirit which imbues the entire undertaking is a manifestation of higher mind. His daily study of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's prescriptions for bringing the higher spiritual energy and guidance down to the physical plane, as far as he is concerned, has guided his hand in creating the blueprint for this world-famous institution.

The staff of Aravind, along with teaching and research duties and providing a broad range of eye services, perform over 50,000 sight-saving cataract surgeries a year, 60% of which are free of charge for poor village people. In the midst of the hospital busyness is a meditation room in which the relics of Sri Aurobindo are placed. Here there are portraits of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother as a reminder of the path of Grace. It is in this much-used quiet center of the hospital that the staff finds continuous daily spiritual nurturance.

Recently, the Lions Clubs International, which has had a long interest in helping to prevent and cure blindness, granted over a million dollars to Aravind for the purpose of creating an International Community Ophthalmology Institute. This Institute will provide a training facility for the staffs of national eye programs, hospitals, and medical schools from around the world. By bringing medical teams from other parts of India as well as from developing countries everywhere to Aravind to experience the way in which the staff serves fellow human beings, the institute thus becomes a vehicle through which the Aravind spirit can radiate outward throughout the world.

Dr. V has long been convinced that through Sri Aurobindo's supramental transformation of the body, mind, and vital, it is not only possible but timely to alleviate preventable and curable blind-

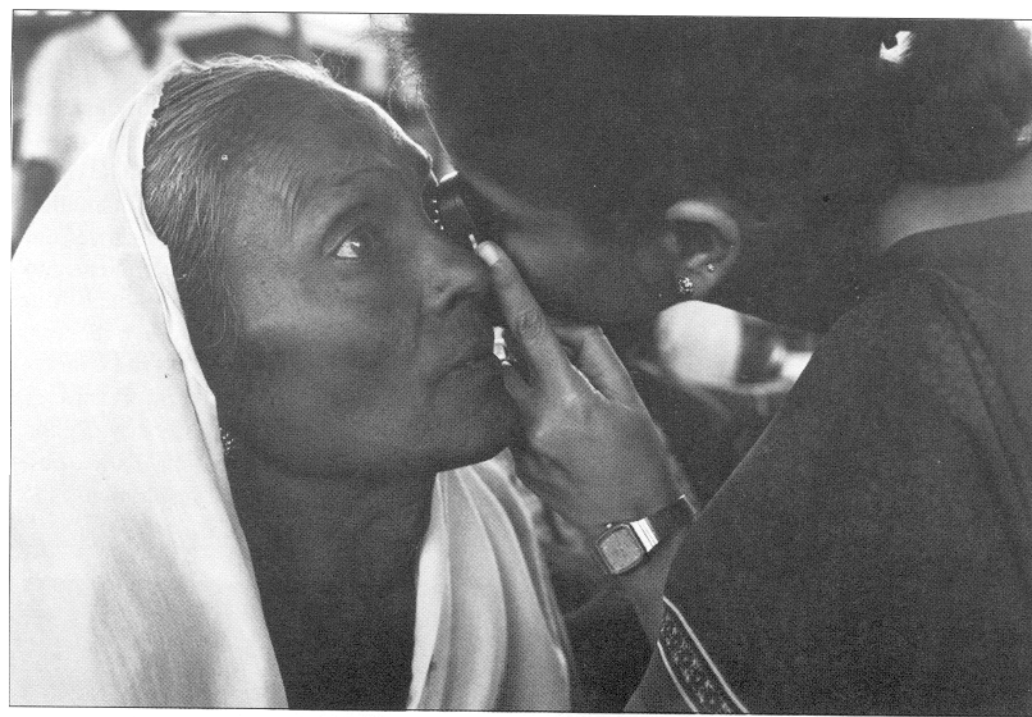
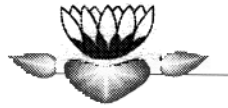
ness for all humankind. The rate at which this is actually happening, augurs well for Dr. V's belief.

Of course there are many challenges ahead. While it is possible to convey surgical and management skills rapidly in short training programs, it is as yet an unknown as to how easily transmitted and sustainable are the spiritual underpinnings of the work. For Dr. V, this is the great challenge of his life: can an institution (not just an individual), through the way in which it carries out its daily practice of service, open itself upward sufficiently to allow the higher force and wisdom to pour forth through it in such a far-reaching way as to change the map of world blindness. The teachings of Sri Aurobindo in his writings on the Gita regarding sadhana through work are most useful in this regard.

We in the Seva Foundation have been graced to share a good part of this journey with Dr. V and his family. For many of us, this has been an extraordinary education and inspiration as to



The Aravind Eye Hospital pioneers methods to reduce the cost of quality eye surgery. (Photo by Geoffrey Bugbee.)



Aravind serves more people than any eye care institution in the world. (Photo by Geoffrey Bugbee.)

what is possible when one opens oneself to the divine Nature. The accomplishments at Aravind speak clearly as the manifestation of the bringing down of the supramental Light and Force for healing. May this model of the effective blend of spirit and technology find the hearing it deserves in our troubled world and serve to inspire renewed efforts by all of us to become vessels for the expression of the vision of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

Ram Dass is the author of a number of books, including Be Here Now, Miracle of Love, and How Can I Help? The nonprofit Seva Foundation (415-492-1829) sponsors projects around the world that promote health, education, economic sustainability, and environmental protection.

Dr. V on good eyesight, global solutions, and higher consciousness

These excerpts are taken from Illuminated Spirit, a book based on Dr. Venkataswamy's Wit Lectures at Harvard. A moving account of Dr. V's life work and how he has been influenced by Sri Aurobindo, the book (83 pages) is available through Seva.

In America there are very powerful marketing devices to sell products like Coca-Cola or hamburgers. All I want to sell, to market, if you will, is good eyesight, and there are millions of people who need it badly.

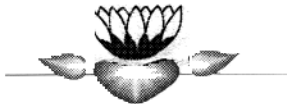
... The idea for the institute was that it would be an opportunity for us to bring about the happy marriage between spiritual consciousness and modern technology—that is the challenge we face today.

... Control of blindness is now a global effort ... the International Lions Foundation has agreed to raise hundreds of millions of dollars, and they recently agreed to finance our whole institute. The American Academy of Ophthalmologists is also committed to supporting the global effort. So things do happen, slowly and steadily. There are higher forces at work in these situations, and the global solutions to blindness are beginning to take shape.

... It is difficult to conceive intellectually what the supermind is. To describe it would require a language other than our mind's poor, abstract one. But we can say that the transition from mind to supermind is a passage from nature to supernature. For that very reason, it cannot be achieved by a mere effort of our mind, or our unaided aspirations. Overmind and supermind are both involved and hidden in earthly nature; but their emergence in us requires the powers of the superconscience to descend to us, to lift us up and transform our being.

But in what way is this going to help us? There is so much misery, so much suffering. Yet if it is possible to eradicate a disease like smallpox, it is possible for the human body to improve and perfect itself, so that it can prevent diseases from overwhelming us. All modern science looks for such answers, but the scientific world has not been able to help in the way the higher consciousness can help, to bring harmony, light and truth wherever there is darkness—from disease, from drugs, from war and violence. In our work, though we are confining ourselves to the control of blindness, we are also interested in seeing how we can grow in our consciousness, and whether we can become a new human being, not with a mind groping in darkness, but a human being who is a better instrument, an improvement, just as the electron microscope is an improvement upon the ordinary microscope. For the new consciousness, the new supermind, will be able to see a thing in its truth.

—Dr. G. Venkataswamy



A proposal

Cohousing: Meeting the need for individuality and collectivity

by Janis Coker

Devotees of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother are scattered all over the United States. Some are active in the Sri Aurobindo Association, Auroville International, various centers, and some are doing the individual sadhana.

This proposal is for those who may wish to activate the ideals of the Integral Yoga into their daily living: those who wish to form a sangha that will at the same time afford them opportunity for individual sadhana, doing creative work, establishing new centers and libraries, and providing schooling and other services for the children and the elderly who may be part of the group.

The impetus for this project, which I envision as a form of cohousing specifically designed for and by devotees of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, came from a deep concern for the continuation of Their work among the generations to come.

It struck me that except for the devotees who have children of their own and the few centers that are engaged in teaching children, we are missing the opportunity to pass along the wonders of the path of Integral Yoga to the younger generation either through schools or through literature designed for young people.

It also appears that the older generation is being left to itself to live on whatever it can scrape up for survival even after they may have lived beyond their inheritance or savings. And, as we have been taught, the successful outcome of this yoga depends on a certain longevity.

With these concerns, I waited.

Then the idea for cohousing began to formulate itself.

Cohousing would provide the scope for teaching and assisting all age groups. Sangha as well as privacy would be available anytime. There would be the opportunity to work out in the community—or not, depending on the needs and abilities of the individual.

Again, depending on the location and the talents of the residents, gardens and cottage industries could be maintained. "Cosangha" residences could be established in the city or the country, in the east or west, mountains, seacoast, or plains.

The governance of each cohousing unit would rest with residents, who would form an organization similar to a homeowners' association; each unit would make its own guidelines.

Residents would be encouraged to share commonalities and common space, such as cooking, dining, and laundry. Adult members would be available to care for preschool children. Home learning could be established for school-age children—or they could be sent to local schools and educated along the path of the Integral Yoga after school hours.

Start-up money could come from donations from the residents themselves, with monthly rent and maintenance fees in addition.

It would be desirable for most maintenance to be done by residents so that those who could not afford the rental fee could nevertheless become member-residents. Who to admit as residents would be up to the governing board, which would also oversee the legal and financial affairs for the unit.

These various functions would necessitate each governing board to form its own administrative body and its own regulations.

Decisions that affect all cohousing units could rest with an umbrella group made up of delegates from each sangha.

Cohousing fills the need for a collective approach to the sadhana, and could provide a school, a library, and a center at each cohousing location. There could be as many cohousing units throughout the U.S. and in other countries as devotees may wish to organize.

What cohousing is not: It is not an attempt to proselytize; it is not an attempt to persuade.

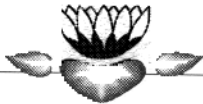
It is a strictly voluntary living arrangement that can demonstrate by the activities and sincerity of the residents that the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother are a living, thriving, creative, and integral way of life.

Janis Coker is the library director at Schiller International University in Dunedin, Florida. People interested in this proposal may write to Janis at 234 3rd Ave. N., Safety Harbor, FL 34695; call her at (813) 726-2205; or send e-mail to jcoker@snoopy.tbtc.lib.fl.us.

A revolution in housing

Across the United States, a revolution in housing is under way. But don't be alarmed if you hadn't noticed. To the passerby, there's nothing particularly noteworthy about these so-called cohousing projects. What's remarkable is something that you can't see, a feature that suburban neighborhoods and urban apartments too often lack: a sense of community.

With their clustered private dwellings, shared grounds, and a collective common house for meals and activities, cohousing developments are specifically designed to bring people together for their mutual benefit. Kids can play with their friends without having to be chauffeured about. Adults can gather socially without elaborate planning. At the same time, families have as much privacy as they need, and can limit their interaction as much as they want.—from "Cohousing American Style," *New Age Journal*, August 1994



Status update on the American Institute for Evolutionary Research

Many people have inquired about developments vis-à-vis the Institut de Recherches Évolutives in Paris and the American Institute for Evolutionary Research. NexUS recently spoke to Luc Venet, president of the American Institute, and obtained the following background information and status update. NexUS has not yet contacted or heard from the French Institute, although we welcome further clarification.

In late summer and fall of 1993, a number of American disciples of Mother and Sri Aurobindo held a series of three meetings, two at the Baca in Crestone, Colorado, and one in Chicago during the Parliament of World Religions. Participants at the various meetings included Wayne and Surama Bloomquist, Ariel Browne, Rod Hemsell, Arvind Habbu, June Maher, Paula Murphy, Will Moss, Devan Nair, Seyril Schochen, Larry Tepper, and Luc and Susie Venet.

At the first meeting, held in Baca on August 15, a number of attendees reported an extraordinary collective spiritual experience. Many of them gathered together a second time in September 1993 at the Parliament of World Religions in Chicago; a meditation in Ariel Browne's hotel room brought an astonishing descent of force. Luc passed around a slip of paper with the words "American Laboratory for Evolutionary Research." It seemed to many that a new collective consciousness in America might be emerging.

Participants decided to hold a third meeting in Baca to examine this apparent development and see if there could be some means of encouraging it. Luc sent a short note to Satprem explaining that there had been "a beginning of a gathering of American disciples around the aspiration for physical transformation."

The group met for the last time in Baca on Oct. 15 to discuss forming the American Laboratory for Evolutionary Research (ALER) as a way to bridge the geographic gap between disciples in America, hoping to find an inner focus other than meeting once or twice per year at AUM or Baca. As a first attempt to formally express this idea, Luc developed a statement of purpose (see sidebar).

On Oct. 24, Luc received a copy of a letter dated Oct. 10 from Satprem (see next page), which had been forwarded to him by the French Institute. In the letter, Satprem expresses the opinion that the formation of ALER compromises the existence of the American Institute and orders the Institute's closure. Luc, however, states that the American Institute was formed specifically to publish and distribute books, and does not see why the two organizations could not coexist.

So far, Luc has not agreed to dissolve the American Institute. Instructions he has received from Satprem via the French Institute have had the tone of "dictate and excommunication," he says, and Satprem is not legally entitled to dissolve the American Institute. Certain debts and liabilities must be resolved, and there remains the matter of three yet-unpublished, English-version Agendas promised to people who prepaid subscriptions to the entire series.

Luc says that in the meantime, excerpts from his personal letters to Satprem have been taken out of context, photocopied, and distributed in an attempt to prove that Luc harbors hidden ambitions. Rumors have circulated in Auroville, Europe, and America claiming that Luc wants to become a guru, usurp Satprem's place, and rewrite the *Agenda*. (Luc has had an idea to publish a set of "notebooks" based on Mother's experiences, but makes it clear that he does not intend to violate any legal copyrights.)

Luc reports that Satprem has hired a lawyer and is currently threatening a lawsuit to remove Luc from the American Institute. Luc has also hired a lawyer.

In a related development in the winter of 1993-94, the French Institute ordered reorganization of the Institute for Evolutionary Research in Montreal, requesting board members to sign what would have amounted to a loyalty statement to a new organization under Satprem. Board members refused the reorganization and request and closed the Canadian Institute in December 1994.

—Lynda Lester

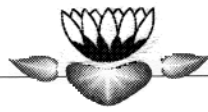
ALER: 'In search of the future of the human species'

The American Laboratory for Evolutionary Research is a voluntary gathering of people who would like to lend their lives and their bodies to the experience of incarnating on this earth a new physical being as envisioned by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

For 15 years, Mother described to Satprem the process of birth of this new being in her *Agenda*. In *Evolution II*, Satprem is showing us that this new being is a physical reality and lies on this earth.

The participants in the American Laboratory approach their appointed task without any knowledge or any plan. They do not know and cannot know how to unlock the new being from within themselves.

But they resolve to prepare a place within themselves where this new being will be able to take birth, and to steadily aspire for that birth to take place.



Satprem: 'American Institute for Evolutionary Research has ceased to exist'

The following letter from Satprem to Micheline Etevenon of the French Institute for Evolutionary Research was posted in various centers in the U.S., Canada, Europe, and India in the fall of 1993. (Translated from the original French by Luc Venet.)

October 10, 1993

Dear Micheline,

I have just received a few lines from Luc announcing the formation of his new American group. On a piece of paper dated from Chicago, Luc had written: "American Laboratory for Evolutionary Research." Strangely enough, this note from Luc was written on the back of an issue of the "Gazette Aurovilienne" . . . We all know the Auroville mixtures and I wonder what this new American mixture will be like—it will be a hodgepodge, as usual.

So I consider that our American Institute has ceased to exist, in view of the new direction taken by Luc. WE do not seek to form groups and gather disciples under or in any name—we have only one Name, that of Mother and Sri Aurobindo, and Their Work, which we are ready to spread everywhere, whatever the groups, Aurovilian or American or whatever. Therefore I don't want the French Institute or any other Institute to be associated to those mixtures, even if we have good friends among them.

Last June, already, I had warned Luc as he was about to associate himself with some kind of "group" or other.* I had then said to him: "If you want to have personal relations with this 'group' . . . it is your business, but I want to make it absolutely clear that the Institute has nothing to do with all this well-intentioned spiritual mishmash . . . these types of people usually USE Sri Aurobindo and Mother to inflate their own Church or their own Ego or their own business."

All this is perfectly clear, as it should have been perfectly clear to Luc. Therefore, I want you to officially communicate to Luc that he should make all necessary arrangements to close down the American Institute. I am sorry to ask you to do this unpleasant task, but everything becomes extremely entangled the moment Falsehood and human Mixtures come into the picture.

(signed) Satprem

**This refers to a publisher of books on conscious evolution who occupied the booth next to the American Institute for Evolutionary Research at the June 1993 American Booksellers Association convention in Miami.*

Recent and ongoing activities .

Matrimandir Solar Panel project raises funds for illumination

About 50 volunteers formed a telephone tree last fall to contact a list of 1,000 people for donations toward illuminating the Matrimandir with solar power. By November, donations totaled \$12,239.

Jack Alexander, president of Auroville International USA, says that the estimated cost of setting up a photovoltaic power plant at Auroville is \$323,000, of which a grant from the Government of India would cover two-thirds of the cost. Auroville must raise one-third, or \$107,667, plus \$26,700 for infrastructure.

The solar power plant, to be located southwest of the Matrimandir in the outer gardens behind the amphitheater, will light the inside and outside of the Matrimandir, including the heliostat on top of the Matrimandir that tracks the sun. It will also power the halogen night lights for the Inner Chamber, inner skin lights, petal lights, night lights and spotlights for the gardens, as well as other interior, safety, and maintenance lights.

If the Matrimandir is going to be permanently illuminated without interruption and always open and accessible, having its own solar power source is the only solution.

Synthesis of Yoga being discussed on the Internet

In November, a *Synthesis of Yoga* discussion group began on the Internet via e-mail. The group is open to anyone in the world with Internet access and electronic mail (e-mail). The particular network service provider or e-mail software an individual has does not matter.

The group reads about one chapter each week, then exchanges comments. Each time a participant sends a comment, it goes to all the people on the distribution list. (David Hutchinson sends out a logical summary of each chapter to aid discussion.)

The study is concentrated and requires a certain commitment of time and effort; the study is also active. Participants are trying to actively grapple with the Integral Yoga, turn it over, look it inside out, examine it in detail and in the whole.

If you are interested in joining, or would like more information, please send e-mail to David Hutchinson at dbhutchinson@ucdavis.edu.



Upcoming events . . .

Savitri in the High Sierra

Over the weekend of July 4, Sri Aurobindo Sadhana Peetham will sponsor a four-day backpacking retreat at Carson Pass in the Sierra Nevada mountains south of Lake Tahoe. Participants will leave Lodi (south of Sacramento) early Saturday morning and return Tuesday.

The base camp for the three nights/four days will be at Winnemucca Lake below Round Top Mountain, a majestic rocky crag that rises 1,000 feet above the lake. The hike from the trailhead to the campsite is quite easy, rising only a few hundred feet over several miles. Carson Pass is one of the most accessible and spectacular sites in the High Sierra.

Each day the group will have a loose schedule of hiking, meditation, discussion, and reading from *Savitri*. This is an opportunity to experience magnificent mountain scenery in the company of a group of fellow sadhaks (and an invitation to experience the awe-inspiring heights!).

Participants will share the cost of food and travel; beyond this there is no charge. For more information or to register, contact David Hutchinson, Box 161613, Sacramento, CA 95816 (e-mail: dbhutchinson@ucdavis.edu); or Prapanna, Sri Aurobindo Sadhana Peetham, 2621 W. Highway 12, Lodi, CA 95242 (e-mail: prapanna@aol.com). Deadline for registration is June 15.

Conference set for SF

"Cellular Evolution: The Transformation of the Body," a conference sponsored by the Sri Aurobindo Association (SAA), will take place in San Francisco Oct. 11-15, 1995. The conference will be held in the Clarion Hotel, where discount lodging rates will be available. For information, call the SAA at (510) 848-1841.

Briefs . . .

• Former SAA vice president **Wayne Bloomquist** succeeded **Will Moss** as SAA president in October, and **Ariel Browne** moved into the VP slot. In December, two new members joined the board: **Surama Bloomquist** of Berkeley and **Vishnu Eschner** of Lodi, California.

• On October 9, Sri Aurobindo's relics arrived at **Matagiri**. They are housed in the building containing the bookstore. The relics came with a marble altar three feet high and two feet wide, showing Sri Aurobindo's symbol inlaid in brass.

• **Pravir and Chitvan Malik** have been having satsang in their house for over a year, and would like people to know of the activity in Chicago. They have weekly meditations, *Savitri* readings, and a study circle each Saturday at 3 p.m. For information, contact Pravir or Chitvan Malik, (708) 869-6547; or write to the Sri Aurobindo Center, 2764 Hampton Parkway, #Y1, Evanston, IL 60201.

• The **Auroville Liaison Office** in Victoria, British Columbia, publishes the electronic newsletter *Attempt* to facilitate the building of Auroville. For information, contact **Auro and Fidelite Arindam**, (604) 383-4699, or send e-mail to auro.arindam@cleap.com. You can also write to: Auroville Liaison Office, 1310 Government St., Victoria, British Columbia, V8W 1Y8, Canada.

• In December, **Ariel Browne** made the long, cross-country drive from Georgia to California, where she is currently residing at the Sri Aurobindo Sadhana Peetham in Lodi. • **John Robert Cornell** and **Kathy Cornell** recently returned from a short visit to Pondicherry. • In January, **Sam Spanier** left for a three-month sojourn in France and **June Maher** went to Auroville.

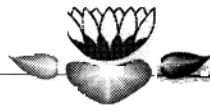
• A *Savitri* workshop was scheduled at the Baca in Crestone, Colorado, March 26-April 1. For information on future workshops, contact **Rod Hemsell**, (719) 471-7860.

• This is the last issue of *NexUS*, which is merging back into *Collaboration*. Send your letters, articles, poetry, and art to either of the submission addresses listed on the inside front cover.

• **Julian Lines** and **Wendy Roy** will be married in a special ceremony to be held at Matagiri on April 23.



Participants in the August 1994 Savitri workshop, Savitri Solar Dome, Crestone, Colorado.



CENTER TO CENTER

Boston Study Group dates back to 1960

Eugene "Mickey" Finn began the Sri Aurobindo Study Group in Boston back in 1960. Since that time, countless students, residents, and visitors to the Boston area have passed through his doors, and through him have come to know about Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

Mickey says he became aware of Sri Aurobindo in 1959 and realized immediately that "this is a brilliant light on the earth." When Mickey first started out on the path of Integral Yoga, he wondered why, if Sri Aurobindo is such a brilliant light, nobody had heard of him. "At that time nobody was into yoga," he says. "It was almost completely unknown." Mickey set about resolutely to start his center and do his part to rectify that situation.

Today, Mickey is confident that "it's happening." Millions of people are meditating; 100,000 copies of *The Adventure of Consciousness* sold out in Russia. Mickey feels that those who are sincere enough will eventually find out about Sri Aurobindo and Mother.

"It's enough that a few people move into the supramental consciousness," Mickey says. "Then everybody benefits. It's like a giant orchestration. It's inevitable. We hope it happens before mankind goes through a meat grinder!"

Mickey's study group of about 14 people meets every Wednesday. They read from *Savitri* and have a discussion, meditation, and refreshments. Sadhaks passing through the area come to meetings, and Mickey himself gives talks in the area.

Mickey places an ad about his study group in a publication called *Earth Star*. He has on hand some of the smaller books he buys from the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry and gives away. For all these years, he has been trying to interest as many people as possible in Sri Aurobindo and Mother and their works.

Last summer, the world-famous eye surgeon Dr. G. Venkataswamy (see p. 8) gave a talk at the Boston center. Mickey had met the doctor three years previously when Dr. V gave a talk at Harvard Divinity School. The surgeon is most famous for developing a technique for cataract removal "en masse," Mickey said. Many prestigious universities in the U.S. send their doctors to him to learn the technique.

In an effort to stamp out cataracts, Dr. V is engaged in training doctors from Third World countries. Dr. V was present at the 1994 AUM meeting and gave one of the best talks on the program, according to Mickey. Dr. V is well known and loved and a personal friend of Ram Dass.

For more information on the Boston Study Group, contact Eugene Finn, 91 Kilbarnock Street, Boston, MA 02215, (617) 262-6390.

—Janis Coker

Wisconsin center integrates business and spirituality

All the ingredients of the traditional ashram are present: a group of people dedicated to spiritual practice, meditation, surrender, and work. The notable difference at Wilmot Center in Twin Lakes, Wisconsin, is that workers operate a successful business and the salaries they receive can be utilized any way they see fit, says Santosh Krinsky. Unlike traditional ashrams, participants do not necessarily pledge all their income back to the center.

Santosh stresses that the center is not a collective ashram. Everybody receives market rates for their services and there is no mandated living environment. "We don't tell people how to organize their personal lives. We try to stay away from an ashram-type organization here in the West. We've organized it so that people can earn their keep and then set up their own lifestyles."

The center carries on interrelated businesses such as supplying health and beauty aids and alternative health products. It functions as the North American agent for Auroshikha incense and is the agent for Sri Aurobindo Ashram incense. A number of devotees work in the business, Santosh said.

The success of Lotus Light Publications, the center's publishing venture, is evidenced by an impressive 50-page catalog. The catalog features works by and about Sri Aurobindo and the Mother; classical spiritual texts; books on Native American, yoga, health, and metaphysical subjects; and videos, audio cassettes, and incense. Lotus Light has become the U.S. publisher for the writings of Sri Aurobindo and has brought out U.S. editions of some of his works. It also publishes M.P. Pandit books in the U.S. and imports books from SABDA, the Sri Aurobindo Book Distribution Agency in Pondicherry.

The center also operates the Institute for Wholistic Education, a nonprofit organization that acts as an umbrella for various activities such as a library and correspondence courses in Vedic studies, including Ayurveda.

Santosh moved to the Wisconsin location in 1981. Prior to that, he had been in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram for about a year. He and his wife Doris started the company, which is run from a warehouse and employs about 50 people. The Krinsky home doubles as the center. The center library has grown to about 4,000 volumes and is a major attraction; people are also welcome to attend darshan meditations at the center. The facility also includes workout equipment and a pool.

Individually, some of the members are involved in home-schooling of their children. In the future, Santosh said they envision establishing a formal school.

For more information, contact Santosh Krinsky, Wilmot Center/Institute for Wholistic Education, 33719 116th Street, Twin Lakes WI 53181, (414) 877-9396.

—Janis Coker



CHRONICLES AND RECOLLECTIONS

Phantom India stays in the mind

by Jon Carroll

This article is reprinted with permission, © San Francisco Chronicle.

Several things: A friend talking about the smell of jasmine outside a restaurant in New Delhi. A videotaped image of the abandoned city of Fatehpur Sikri. A book about the Everglades with extraordinarily evocative writing about dense tropical air.

India on my mind, again.

Because I travel a lot, people sometimes ask what my favorite country is. I always say "India" because it's the truest answer, although "favorite" is not exactly the right word. But if the question is, what country do I want most to revisit before I die, the answer is unequivocal: India.

I think there is some curious link between the cultures of Western Europe and India, some mutual fascination that goes deeper than the accidents of colonialism. It is as though, long ago in a mythic wood, one road became two, and Europe took one fork and India the other, and when they encounter each other now there is a shock of recognition.

Woolgathering, of course; unhistorical nonsense. And yet I am not the only person who feels that way, and that uneasy sense is shared by as many Indians as Europeans. There is something maddening, baffling, fascinating, lovely—all those—about the other culture.

It is not like two sides of the same coin. It's more like two coins from the same mint. And I am head over tails in love.

We walked around Fatehpur Sikri on a cool November day; the wind was dry and nasty. This was a dozen years ago now; the bottoms of my feet can still feel the uneven stone terraces.

Fatehpur Sikri was built by the Moghul emperor Akbar to serve as his new imperial capital. Its construction took 14 years. Then, for reasons still not entirely clear, the city was abandoned almost overnight. It's the gaudiest ghost town in the world.

On one of the many great plazas, there is a particular design made of stones so large a person could stand on any of them. The design was eerily familiar. I squinted at it; looked at it from a distance; tried to recover the tendril of memory from the haze of forgetfulness.

Finally I asked. "Oh," said the guide. "You call it Parcheesi."

You know those giant chessboards that medieval princes used, with real people as the pieces? Same deal, only Parcheesi. My name is Akbar, king of kings—care for a game of Parcheesi?

We saw the Taj Mahal at midnight under a full moon. The bottoms of my feet remember that because we had to take our shoes off to walk around the inner parapets, and midnight marble is cold.

One is rarely alone in India, certainly never alone at the Taj Mahal. There are men who remind you to take off your shoes, and other men who watch your shoes. Even at midnight, there are boisterous families clattering around the gardens, running up the stairs.

It didn't matter. The architectural hush of the place was so extreme, so dominating, that it seemed to suck the sound from the air. The dome seemed to levitate in the moonlight, to take us all to the stars. It was irresistible; Taj radiance is too pure for thought.

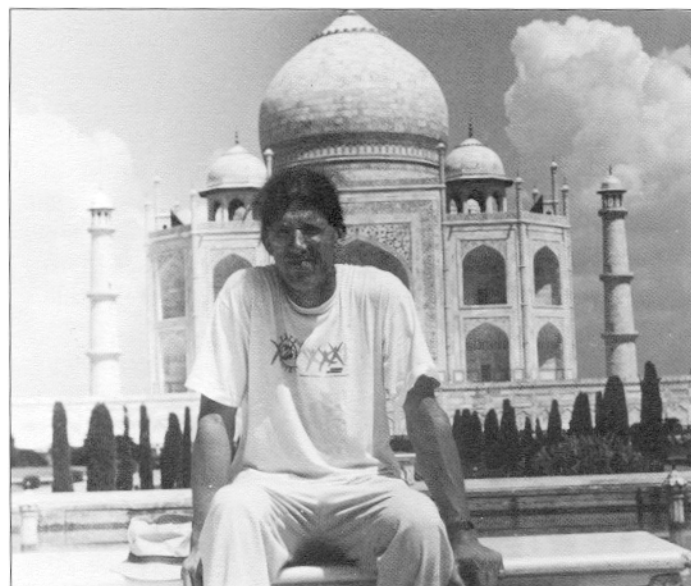
I was standing on a street corner in Bikaner. A few pedicab drivers were lounging under an awning, awaiting customers who seemed unlikely to come. After a few minutes, one of them detached himself from the group and came up to me.

"Tell me, sir," he asked, "do you think violence is inherent in the heart of man, or is it learned?" I said I thought it was probably inherent, that it had to be unlearned. The other drivers came over. We had a seminar. It lasted an hour, under the hot sun.

My friend Michael is even more enamored of India and things Indian than I am, and yet he has never been there. I once asked him why not.

"Because I could only go once," he said. "I know I would never come back."

Jon Carroll is a columnist for the San Francisco Chronicle.



The Taj Mahal was a moving experience for SAA board member Vishnu Eschner when he visited India last fall. (See profile on p. 17.)



Yoga with a sense of humor

by Nirodbaran

Nirodbaran, a personal attendant of Sri Aurobindo for 12 years, has published a number of books, including several volumes of correspondence with Sri Aurobindo. These passages are excerpted from Light and Laughter: Some Talks at Pondicherry, published by the Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

I begin with some unpublished portions of my correspondence with Sri Aurobindo, sometime in 1936, when an unaccountably good relation was established between the Supramental Godhead and the mental doghead that was still the former's own human portion. [. . .]

You will mark two things: the looseness of my expression and the tone of Sri Aurobindo's reply, which are signs testifying to our good relation. As time passed this good relation increased little by little until it became undefinable and 'nameless.' One day I heard him thundering at me: "Why the devil do you want to know of my life?" Well, instead of being intimidated, my heart leaped for joy and almost popped out of its chamber! Because the thunder had no edge, it was full of sweetness. Then followed a series of such members of the nether family of terms as "damn," "hell," "deuce," etc., along with their higher counterparts "Eternal," "Jehovah," "Shohbhan Allah," "Good Heavens," "Good Lord," and so on. From these ejaculations you can ascertain the nature, the intensity, and the extent of the good relation between us. Not only doghead, but many other epithets he hurled on this head—wooden-head, blockhead, ass, idiot. I took them all in my stride, waiting for the day when I could pay him back with quip and jibe at his Super-mind. [. . .]

Nirod: You referred to "circumstances being exceptional as regards my early success in English versification." But how are they exceptional?

Let me know
How it's so,
A dullard like me
Bursting like a sea,
With the heart of the Muse
Makes his rhythm fuse?

Sri Aurobindo:

You are opening, opening, opening
Into a wider, wider scopening
That fills me with a sudden hopening
That I may carry you in spite of gropening,
Your soul into the Supramental ropening.

Nirod: X has got phimosis, Sir.

Sri Aurobindo: What kind of medical animal is this? My dear sir, if you clap a word like that on an illness do you think it is easy for the patient to recover?

Nirod: Nose boil boiling down, terrible headache, fever, feeling fed up. Sir!

Sri Aurobindo: Cellular bolshevism, probably.

Nirod: I realise every moment that I am not made for the path of the Spirit, nor for any big endeavour in life.

Sri Aurobindo: Man of sorrows! man of sorrows! knock him off, man, knock him off!

Nirod: Wretched, absolutely done for.

Sri Aurobindo: Why? Disburden yourself!

Nirod: Disburden? You mean throw off the burden or place the burden at your door?

Sri Aurobindo: Both!

Nirod: The word 'focus' was unintelligible? But you understand all right. I adopt the device and 'your attention' to save your time and mine as well, as is obvious.

Sri Aurobindo: Good Lord! Is this Hebrew or Aramaic or Swahili? I can't understand a word. Which device? which attention? Some reference to something I wrote? If so, it has clean gone out of my head. That, by the way, is a manner of speaking, for I never have anything in my head.

Nirod: As I was positively conscious that there was something, you can't say there was nothing.

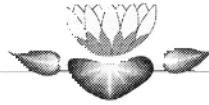
Sri Aurobindo: I can and I do.

Nirod: I was positively conscious that there was something and I only want to know it so that I can rectify the error.

Sri Aurobindo: Only fancy, sir, dear delightless fancy . . . Very often it comes from a guilty conscience or a feeling that one deserves a thrashing, so obviously a thrashing must be intended. Anything like that here?

Nirod: It may be the thing about which I wrote you long ago and got a smack!

Sri Aurobindo: Consider yourself smacked this time also.



Confessions of a cranky seeker

by Gloria DeWolfe

This selection is excerpted with permission from Gloria's unpublished spiritual autobiography, Saga of a Cranky Seeker (© Gloria DeWolfe).

I studied the teachings of theosophy, Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Tantrism, Sufism, eastern and western mystics. I absorbed the crazy wisdom of teachers such as Da Love Ananda, Chogyam Trungpa, Gurdjieff. I was captivated by the nontraditional teachers such as Jiddhu Krishnamurti, U.G. Krishnamurti, Ramana Maharshi. I read books by experts in parapsychology, the occult, astrology, the Tarot, the I Ching, by channelers, out-of-body travelers, after-death experiencers, UFOlogists, Armageddon-oriented fundamentalist Christians.

I thought I had a reasonably well-rounded exposure to spiritual teachings, until, one Saturday afternoon in a bookstore, an unusual title caught my eye: *The Mind of the Cells*. On the back cover was the question, "Could it be that the primary form of living matter, the cell, holds a power of consciousness or a 'vibratory mode' capable of making all our present mental devices and pointless artifices obsolete? . . . a mind of the cells which will open up to us . . . a new biology and a new consciousness which will enable us to face the challenge of a species on its way to self-destruction?"

I took the book home and began to read. I read through dinner, through the evening, and through Sunday. The book, by Satprem, briefly described the work of Sri Aurobindo's disciple, Mirra Richard, known to her followers as "the Mother," of her efforts toward the possibility of a transformation of consciousness in the body, in the very cells, to an evolved spiritually, physically transformed divine state on earth.

After all the years of study, it was chaos to come face-to-face with this concept. Yet, something deep within was pushing me to consider what I had read. Was it possible? The Mother's efforts, her goal, were unique.

As I read that book, my emotions shuttled among resistance, hope, doubt, excitement, angry disbelief. What spiritual chaos had I fallen into? What form of crazy wisdom was this? My guardian angel, if I had one, had become a demon of dirty tricks, shattering the idealism of one who clung, albeit precariously, to the raving hope of an all-encompassing, purified, pleasurable, perfected, peacefully paradisiacal state of Divine perpetuity through flights into other-worldly states of con-

sciousness. I tried to return to more comfortable reading, in familiar areas that did not offer the new threat to my complacency that Satprem's book had thrust upon me. It did not work.

This new concept of spiritual evolution was constantly in mind. I noted, with some wry amusement, the possibility I was perversely allowing some inner need for suffering to manifest. Obviously, I was in a fine mental fix, and even my body was reacting with restlessness. But slowly, the mind began to broaden its scope of possibility, though I still had many doubts about the ultimate goal of these teachings.

I next located *On the Way to Superhumanity* and *Sri Aurobindo or the Adventure of Consciousness*, both by Satprem, describing Sri Aurobindo's work toward this evolutionary goal. Then I found *The Synthesis of Yoga* and the three volumes of *Letters on Yoga* by Sri Aurobindo. In *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Sri Aurobindo extended the philosophies of the traditional forms of yoga toward an evolutionary goal beyond them. Perhaps it was an impossible goal to reach, but could one simply ignore it?

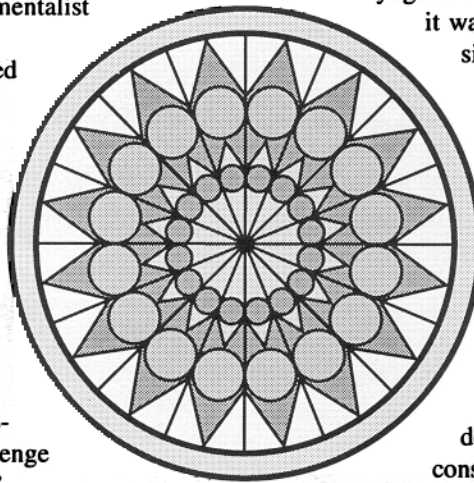
Sri Aurobindo and Mother offer the challenge of the process they dedicated their lives to discover—an evolution toward divine consciousness and form. Evolution is an accepted fact, and it continues with or without our conscious cooperation. Human beings, in general, deal only with the present crisis, or pleasure, and do not consider that evolution of the human body, to a divine being, through consciousness, may be the next evolutionary step we are meant deeply to aspire for and cooperate with. Such consideration and effort could shock us into a wakefulness that offers possibilities far beyond momentary personal transcendence.

Satprem's books are a unique voice in today's world. They make us totally aware that whatever attempts are made to improve our lives—whether political, activist, religious, or "new age"—we are left with the devastating reality of a world in growing conflict, in bodies that face death, and live in death through the conditioning processes of the ages.

In Satprem's *Sri Aurobindo or the Adventure of Consciousness*, and in Sri Aurobindo's books, are also the various practical approaches to the spiritual life—their value, their limitations, the most detailed and helpful descriptions of practice. At the same time, it is stressed, again and again, that each person must use or discover approaches, practices most appropriate for them.

One comment Sri Aurobindo made was particularly fitting for me: "If you try to apply everything you read, there will be no end to your new beginnings." That short comment did more than anything I had ever read to convince me I must reduce my efforts to a few simple but vital practices.

Pointed comments also caused me to examine my endless





hours of reading, the hungry searching in every direction. One was told that reading must be only a supplementary tool, not the major substance of one's efforts, and never a tool to be used in place of practice:

Reading good books can be of help in the early mental stage—they prepare the mind, put it in the right atmosphere, can even, if one is very sensitive, bring some glimpses of realization on the mental plane. Afterward the utility diminishes—you have to find every knowledge and experience in yourself.—Sri Aurobindo, *Letters on Yoga*, p. 1273

[I]f we brought as much sincerity, meticulousness, and perseverance to the study of the inner world as we do to our books, we would go fast and far . . . —Satprem, *Sri Aurobindo or the Adventure of Consciousness*, p. 17

It was time to face the thoroughly practiced, well-developed, solidly ingrained, much beloved reading compulsion I had nurtured for many years, most often in recent years to avoid spiritual practice, and contemplate attempting to reduce its powerful hold on my life.

I could acknowledge that aspiration and effort toward Divine guidance is far superior to ineffective intellectualization; yet, I still need to guard against the mind's desire to search and compare. I knew that when I have a question and search for an answer in books, or from another person, and receive an answer, I then conceptualize about the answer—do I understand it, how does it relate to other concepts, can I make use of it? That process places the answer outside myself, and there is a crystallizing of the dualistic mode of the answer, set aside from the question, as something to be acquired elsewhere. Yet, in contradiction, I had always hoped for an answer I could take into myself as an inner understanding.

More and more, through the influence of these books, I began to concentrate on the certain specific approaches running through writings that had penetrated most deeply through the years. More and more, I would refer back to certain passages in favorite books and in Sri Aurobindo's and Satprem's books to refresh my memory and to aid in my unskilled practices.

I finally became free of the heaviness, the feeling of uneasy displacement that too many lines of study had created. I also saw with greater clarity that I do not have to devour, retain, and accept or discard all of anything by anyone. I find crystal statements, hidden in extensive verbiage, that deeply stir the sleeping inner self. At last, I began to concentrate on more specific practices.

I became more attentive to take time for meditation, no matter how ineffective it might prove, and to expand attempts to be more aware in daily activities. It was a rough road.

Gloria DeWolfe is retired. She does word processing and editing from her home in Minnetonka, Minnesota, a suburb of Minneapolis.

Profile: Vishnu Eschner

My name is Vishnu Eschner. After surviving years as a movie industry carpenter by constantly chanting "Hare Krishna," I felt it a blessing when Sri Krishna's name Vishnu was jokingly applied to me. Later, through a dream, it came again and finally stuck, and the blessing, now overwhelming, is nevertheless more familiar than the name I used to have. I was glad to have it recently confirmed as "a good name" by a revered sadhak of the yoga in Pondicherry.

Getting a new name after age 35 helped loosen the shackles of the past and eased my passage into the ashram of Sri Aurobindo's yoga in Pomona, which is where I live.

I first read *The Mother* in about 1982. After that I always treasured it and kept it with me, but I was, in retrospect, surprisingly uncurious about Sri Aurobindo's other works until 1988 when my turbulent sadhana led to an embryonic realization something like, "Wait a minute! If God is everything, including matter, maybe matter is Divine!"

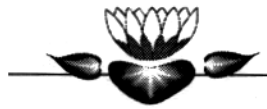
About two weeks later, a dear, long-lost buddy called, said he had purchased the complete works of Sri Aurobindo, and would I move to Chicago to help start an ashram.

Mother choreographed everything; savings account, career, and dumb luck conspired to arrange a year of uninterrupted reading in the course of which the magnificent river of Sri Aurobindo's words massaged the chaos ransacking my mind into a smoothness resembling comprehension. Other people have told me of having similar experiences when they first encountered Sri Aurobindo's books.

Due in part to the innate, pioneer-like individuality of Sri Aurobindo students, and my own refusal to do much in Chicago except read his books, the hoped-for ashram didn't materialize, and I finally returned to Southern California where not long afterwards I stumbled over Sri Aurobindo's yoga in the form of a small ad found at the bottom of a to-be-recycled stack of year-old newspapers. The ad led me to the ashram here, where a short, reflective visit convinced me to remain, which I have since February 21, 1990.

I was educated in the fine arts, but my practical experience has ranged from video tech to plumber. Though I am doing just about what I was doing before coming to this ashram, I find that the collective environment allows me to experience Mother's force as an intense and constant pressure. I'm grateful for the opportunity to practice the yoga in this way.

Looking around, I'm starting to believe that Mother is finally awakening Her children here in the West, that She's entrusting assorted works of yoga to each of us in our daily lives, just as She did earlier in the Ashram in Pondicherry. I am very happy to be one of the many small, separate embers which are growing into a vast and joyful supramental community now making its appearance across the continent.



Profile: Surama Bloomquist

I was introduced to the yoga of Sri Aurobindo in 1972 by my friend Wayne Bloomquist, later to become my husband and still my friend. Wayne gave me a copy of *The Adventure of Consciousness* as a gift for the new year. Over the next few weeks I read this book every evening. I finally had to confess to Wayne that I had not understood much of what the book was about and did not know who Sri Aurobindo was. Wayne solved this problem by taking me to the Cultural Integration Fellowship to hear Dr. Chaudhuri speak about Sri Aurobindo and to meet other devotees, many of whom had been to the Ashram and Auroville.

When Wayne decided to visit the Ashram in 1973, he invited me to accompany him along with his daughter, Catherine. I was told that I should write to the Mother asking her permission to visit the Ashram and to ask if she would assign me someplace in the Ashram where I could be of service during my stay. Mother sent me to work for Balkrishna Poddar at SABDA books. Balkrishna and his family were to become our best friends in the Ashram, and thanks to Mother's wisdom and Balkrishna's patience, I found out working in an office could have many rewards—not the least of which was shipping books all over the world, meeting those who came to the SABDA office to buy books and pictures and to talk about their experiences at the Ashram.

In January 1974, I met Nolini at the School for Perfect Eyesight. I was sitting in a darkened room, eyes shut after a treatment, and I heard someone come into the room and sit down opposite me. The whole atmosphere of the room changed, and when I was told to open my eyes there was this beautiful man sitting opposite me, dressed in white, with a smile on his face such as I had never seen before. He nodded to me and then was escorted outside to his car. I had no idea who he was and wondered if I would ever see him again.

On January 13, Nolini's birthday and three days before mine, he gave a darshan in the courtyard of the school, passing out candy and flowers. When I saw him I fell to my knees and had to be helped to my feet. I wobbled home after that and told Wayne about my experience. After finding out that the man was Nolini, I then used to sit at the Samadhi each evening waiting for him to leave his room and take his evening walk.

I began to write notes to him, which he always answered, and after leaving the Ashram and returning home, I continued to



Surama Bloomquist reflects on flowers and their messages.

write. Nolini always wrote back, sent me many letters and postcards and pictures, and best of all he gave me the name Surama, which is something I treasure. My link with the Ashram continues to this day thanks to Nolini, whom I adore.

When I am not working for the SAA, distributing books, and helping Wayne in his business, I continue my studies on the 15th century British history and constitutional law, a lifelong interest, and have lately begun to study the life and death of the playwright/poet Christopher Marlowe to supplement my long-time interest in Richard III.

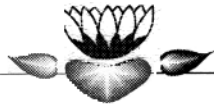
Mother on metaphysics & etc.

There is a state—an essentially pragmatic state, spiritually pragmatic—in which of all human futilities, the most futile is metaphysics.—*Agenda*, Vol. 6, p. 98

You know, one minute of such an experience gives you courage for years—it lasted a few minutes, I was having my breakfast.—*Agenda*, Vol. 5, p. 100

But I have myself never had much respect for yogic life! Never.—*Agenda*, Vol. 5, p. 100

In spiritual life, one is always a virgin every time.—*Agenda*, Vol. 6, p. 119



SALON

In "Salon," NexUS readers discuss a variety of issues in relation to Integral Yoga and the spiritual endeavor. Topics are intentionally broad to allow for a wide range of interpretations. Future topics and deadlines include "Aging" (May 1), "Meeting Mother" (July 1), and "Rejection" (September 1).

Readers discuss "The one thing needed"

Trust gives wings

I find in my own life that for the fullness of the sadhana, or any service you offer, the one thing needed is trust. If you have organizational skills, you can make things work all right; but without that trust you don't have the fullness and the dimension to the service. When you don't trust, you get back into your little self; you spin your wheels, existence becomes thin, or tinny . . .

If you're the kind of person who has exalted in the mind, as I have—at one time I thought the mind had all the answers—it's hard to shift from reliance on yourself, on your developed tools of thinking and mentality, and rely on the Divine. It's been hard for me, I've had Kali knocks on the head—you shift into self-reliance and you have the rug pulled out from under you: this has been my lesson again and again.

Without trust, maybe something can happen; but the miracle isn't there, the thing that takes you away against rational odds. Without trust you don't fly; it is trust that gives you wings. Against all odds you go ahead: you have trust and then you take off. Miracles can happen with trust.

Trust is like a channel that allows Their guidance to pour over you. In my personal experience, for that all-out surrender, trust needs to be there. That's what I aspire for . . . I want it to be more than a sometime thing.

June Maher, Aptos, California

Details, details

For me, the mantra is "attention to details." I suppose everyone will have a different answer, but this suits me well.

In my profession, software engineering, it is a necessity, for without it my work may be unusable. I've never met a "lucky" programmer who could expect his/her work to be right without a thorough testing.

Sometimes I get carried away, because the details involve so many levels. Users will never see my source code, but does that mean I shouldn't line up all the semicolons and comment fields? Should my program text look pretty to the eye?

Is there a danger point where one can be too self-possessed and drive one's co-workers crazy with exasperation?

Balance is needed, because that, too, is just another detail.

The danger point is when we get overwhelmed with details of our own making. If we widen our perspective (take in more details), we would see how small our own importance is.

So just what are the important details?

Wideness, calmness, depth; focus on the permanent, consider that some things are temporary fads. It can be maddening to get detailed, because the mind is such a labyrinth!

But there are details and DETAILS. Material, emotional, mental, and more. Ideally all these levels should be balanced, but if in doubt I think one should give more focus to the higher parts over the lower.

When I am seriously in doubt over what action I need to take, I remember something I read (can anyone ever remember the source?) by the Mother: One should take the object and hold it up to one highest light. And there in calmness look at it, expose it to the light, without insistence. If a voice says: "it must be this way, it can be no other," consider it suspect, for the Truth does not insist, but allows all possible freedom.

—Jim Hurley, Santa Clara, California

The simplest and most challenging demand

Probably after reading all the responses to this question, it will be pretty clear that for the practice of the Integral Yoga, definitely more than one thing is needed. Sri Aurobindo has narrowed it down to two: "a fixed and unfailing aspiration that calls from below and a supreme Grace from above that answers." In my own sadhana it is the remembrance to call for and rely on the divine Presence and Grace that is most important.

Whether by lighting a stick of incense, offering a flower at the altar, singing a favorite bhajan, beseeching the photos of Mother and Sri Aurobindo with an ardent prayer, watching the divine Presence slowly emerge out of a painting in progress, concentrating on equanimity in the face of disturbing forces, on Truth behind appearances, on the inner chant repeating the divine Name—every conscious effort of remembrance and each unexpected reminder that wakes one up invokes and invites into our daily life and nature the transforming power and protection of the divine Grace. This call to the Divine, this inner remembrance in the midst of outer activity, is at once the simplest and most challenging demand of sadhana, as the effort to widen the remembrance into "all the time," makes one all the more conscious of how often one forgets the Divine.

Although the forms this call for the Divine can take are and should be as myriad as the daily activities of our life, the most powerful means to generate a more and more constant remembrance for me is through Nama-Japa, the repetition of the divine Name . . . MA MA MA MA MA MA MA MA MA MA MA MA . . .

—Dakshina, Lodi, California



So old a call, so elusive a quest

Could there be only one thing? With the divinity we can experience in each of a multitude of diverse realms and realities—of interest, action, thought, feeling, planning, dreams, fears, propensities, promises, paradises—one suspects a multitude of things are needed.

New things, new initiatives, perspectives and insights, new action. Those of us familiar with the Mother's public statement on the supramental manifestation in 1956 remember her emphasis on a new world, totally new.

I know when I look carefully that any possibility of the true new in me, the supramental transformation, stands ultimately on the pedestal of the psychic transformation: the conscious contact with, emergence of, and organization of all my mental, vital, and physical consciousness around the psychic being—that term which Sri Aurobindo uses to describe the literally *special* development of the soul in human beings as their true center, replacing the ego in impulse, thought, feeling, speech, and action. The true being.

Even though it is not a patently new goal for those of us familiar with Integral Yoga's literature, its very nature as a basis for all that is new, and as the sky of the heart's vastitude of all possibility, brings its flame of ever renewing aspiration to the front of all effort and purpose. Perhaps it seems so old a call, and at the same time so elusive a quest, because it is yet to be fully attempted with the perseverance it needs, the ardency of aspiration by which it carries us. Soren Kierkegaard said, "Purity of heart is to will one thing." And we are told its song lies deep, deep behind the heart.

Yet in my best moments I know it is the song of all creation, of all possibility, that it bears the very qualities which make all else new and fresh with its endless love. And, most astonishing, it bears these very qualities only to draw them immaculately out of our seeking heart. I know no mixture with anything else will do it, for it is precisely the psychic's purity, called forward by our growing devotion and ardency, that may bring a decisive turn, person by person, in the change of the world and its conditions.

We are graced, I feel, to have each other's company and encouragement. To have a literature, especially in *The Synthesis of Yoga*, *Letters*, *Savitri* by Sri Aurobindo and *Prayers and*

Meditations, Questions and Answers, On Education excerpts by the Mother. Graced most by their active companionship and help. Not least by the Master deep in each of us who knows every step of the way.

—Ronald Jorgensen, Enumclaw, Washington

The crux: Sincerity

It seems to me that if there is one thing needed in the Integral Yoga, it is most certainly sincerity. Sincerity is the crux of the yoga, and without it one cannot make any real progress. Mother has said that we must have "perfect sincerity," by which I believe she means sincerity in all the parts of the being. This is not an easy thing.

To think of and aspire for only the Divine and offer all one's mental movements to the Divine; to want only the Divine and to allow the true vital to manifest and realize its Truth as a powerful instrument in the service of the divine Will; to open the physical to the workings of the Mother's Force so that its movements cease to be wholly animal in their workings: to be perfectly sincere means all of this and much, much more. If we are sincere in all the parts of being, then all else needed for the yoga will naturally follow. In 1957, the Mother said:

"The only thing that is truly effective is the change of consciousness; it is the inner liberation through an intimate, constant union, absolute and inevitable, with the vibration of the supramental forces.

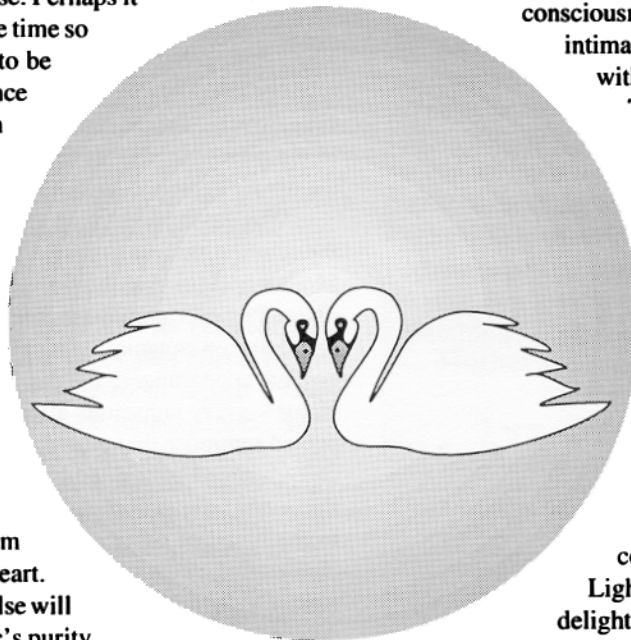
The preoccupation of every second, the will of all elements of the being, the aspiration of the entire being, including all the cells of the body, is this union with the supramental forces, divine forces. And there is no longer any need at all to be preoccupied with what the consequences will be. What has to be in the play of the universal forces and their manifestation will be, quite naturally, spontaneously, automatically, there is no need to be preoccupied with it. The only thing that matters is the constant, total, complete contact—constant, yes, constant—with the Force, the Light, the Truth, the Power, and that ineffable delight of the supramental consciousness.

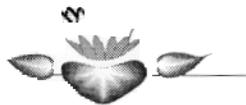
"That is sincerity. All the rest is an imitation, it is almost a part one plays for oneself.

"Perfect purity is to be, to be ever more and more, in a self-perfecting becoming. One must never pretend that one is: one must be, spontaneously.

"This is perfect sincerity."

—Prapanna, Pomona, California





No formulas

Truly a thirst, a need, a need. All the rest has no importance, it is THAT that one needs. No more ties—free, free, free, free. Always ready to change everything, except one thing: to aspire, to have this thirst. I understand it well: there are those who do not like the idea of a “Divine” because immediately it gets mixed up with all these horrible ideas and then that somewhat complicates their existence—but one doesn’t need that! The “something” that one needs, the Perfection that one needs, the Light that one needs, the Love that one needs, the Truth that one needs, the supreme Perfection that one needs—and that’s all. As for formulas . . . the fewer there are, the better. But that: a need, a need, a need, which only THE Thing can satisfy—nothing else; no half-measures, only that. And then, go on! Go on! Your path will be your path, it makes no difference—no matter what path, no matter, even the excesses of the American youth can be a path, it makes no difference!

—The Mother, *The Divine Materialism*, p. 208

No generalizations

I am unable to believe in absolute generalisations in this field, because the development of spiritual consciousness is an exceedingly vast and complex affair in which all sorts of things can happen and one might almost say that for each man it is different according to his nature and that the one thing that is essential is the inner call and aspiration and the perseverance to follow always after it, no matter how long it takes, what are the difficulties or impediments, because nothing else will satisfy the soul within us.

Sri Aurobindo, *Letters on Yoga*, p. 905

Perchance to dream

The other night I had a dream about Sri Aurobindo. I was in his bedroom, near his bed. He was lying there, his head propped up on a pillow, reading out loud from a book on his chest. I think it was *Savitri*. A group of about 20 people was gathered around the bed listening.

As the bed revolved (or the dream) and I could see him face-on, I saw that he had a woolen cap on, like photos of Swami Muktananda, and, though I identified him as Sri Aurobindo, I couldn’t be absolutely sure.

The one thing I need right now in this yoga is for my dreams, to be absolutely sure.

Gordon Korstange, Saxtons River, Vermont

Sri Aurobindo on opening & etc.

I see no reason for either ripping or wandering or throat-slitting. Even if the permanent opening does not come at once, you have only to wait and it is bound to come.—*Letters on Yoga*, p. 1145

A touch or influence of the supramental is not the same thing as the supramentalisation. To suppose that the physical can be supramentalised before the mental and vital is an absolute absurdity.—*Letters on Yoga*, p. 1227

Death is there because the being in the body is not yet developed enough to go on growing in the same body without the need of change and the body itself is not sufficiently conscious. If the mind and vital and the body itself were more conscious and plastic, death would not be necessary.—*Letters on Yoga*, p. 1229

Every formula we form about God, though always true as a symbol, becomes false when we accept it as a sufficient formula. The Atheist and Agnostic come to remind us of our error.—*Thoughts and Aphorisms*

Just one thing . . .

S*U*R*R*E*N*D*E*R (to Mother)

—Prem Sobel, Bay Area, California

The one thing needed is the direct experience of Truth.
The paradox: it is the end—it is also the means.

—Constance, Santa Cruz, California

One ness. Some experience of oneness (within, with another, with the Divine, or with a cup of coffee) is all that is needed, as long as it stimulates a desire for more such experiences. With that experience and desire, a way will be found. Of course it may take a few millenia, but that is why we have yoga for the impatient ones, becoming one.

—Bill Leon (which rearranged, spells “one blill”),
Colorado Springs, Colorado

Don’t be silly

I don’t think there’s only one thing needed. It’s considerably more complicated than that.

—Rod Hemsell, Colorado Springs, Colorado



EARTH HOUR

"This human hour, this earthly hour is the most beautiful of all the hours."—The Mother

Quitting sex: Worth it or not?

by Lynda Lester

In 1986 I wrote an article for Collaboration called "Quitting Sex." It was the story of how in March 1975, eight months after I'd embraced Sri Aurobindo's yoga and the practice of brahmacharya, I was struggling with sexual relapse—when I got caught on a back-country mountain road in a blizzard. A suspicious blizzard. A divine setup, as it were, precipitated from my sadhana and presenting me with an offer I couldn't refuse: Cold turkey or cold storage? Quit sex, or die? Unhappy with the way things were developing, I waited till the last possible moment; when doom was certain, I decided to quit sex. The snow stopped. The sun came out. I survived and became a celibate.

Nineteen years later I looked back, wondering if it had been worth it. Here is that account, taken from my journal. (In view of last issue's "Earth Hour," also a journal excerpt, NexUS assures readers that journal excerpts will not be the default setting of this column.)

3-27-94 • Sunday

All day Thursday I was thinking about recent events and their evocation of sexual issues. By 11 p.m. that night, I was starting to get a psychological headache.

Nuts, I thought. You can enjoy sex for the delight it offers, if you're on that level—but as soon as you change levels, sex loses most of its attractiveness; it doesn't look the same at all.

On the ordinary human level, sex is wonderful: intense, powerful, a vehicle for expressing love. On the spiritual level, it's less appealing. It's no longer a peerless source of fulfillment and pleasure, because you've got something else that beats it by orders of magnitude.

Sex begins to take on hues of obnoxiousness; it starts to annoy you in its consistent prevention of more concentrated experiences of love, passion, and bliss.

Then it starts getting dangerous, and ruining everything.

So you say: Buzz off, I don't have time for this.

3-29-94 • Tuesday

I was lying in bed under the ceiling of glow-in-the-dark stars, still thinking about sex. I thought back to 1973, remembering the scene on Pine Street: everyone propositioning everyone else, and all the fun we had. Back then we were conspirators against "straight" America—young and hopeful, strong and beautiful, revolutionaries and carousers to an individual. It was a glorious time; and sex was normalcy, sex was the ether of daily existence.

That memory returned—the healthy, earthy, animal memory of sex as part of one's identity. It was a good memory, and the reliving of it felt so natural—as quick as a snap of the fingers, I could slip into it again: E-Z. Familiar. Known.

I wasn't a stranger to sex, or to the revelries of the time; it was marvelous, it was grand while it lasted (although in the end it did get boring, compared to the spiritual experiences I started having) . . .

And as I lay there under the ceiling of glow-in-the-dark stars, I remembered last summer's realization of full-potential womanly sexuality (*vide*: Tina Turner at 40), and the attractive power amassing behind at beck and call . . . the questions and longing I'd had, the feeling it would be so simple (like surrendering and sinking into a feather mattress) to fall into the arms of a man and become partnered and normal forever after.

I lay there concerned and perplexed, examining my nearly two-decadal abstinence from sexual relations, wondering: Was it all for nothing? Since I am apparently as yet untransformed, since sexuality is so close at beck and call, could be so easily summoned. . . .

And after all these recollections, I thought about the people I care for. There came a stillness of luminous peace; there came a radiance of diamond light. Ego and personality shattered and fell off like cracked ice, and there came a holiness—and love so profound it was like the sea.

Then I turned out the light and started concentrating on the Divine. And as I lay there in bed, I noticed something funny.

My stomach started crying—I felt the familiar rapid trembling in the vital center, the sensation of being broken asunder—I've had that experience many times both in the heart and in the solar plexus; when it happens, there's an intense spiritual movement going on.

Ah, kundalini moving, I thought.

It got bigger. My abdomen was getting warm, like a golden teakettle, radiating heat—it was delightful! (because I'm *always* cold when I go to bed, despite the many layers of sleepwear and blankets).

My tummy was like a warm brick people used to put in their beds on icy nights; like a toaster, a 1,500-watt heater, a roasted potato. How funny! A golden sphere warming the space under the covers—better than an electric blanket! Much mellower, but equally effective.

I was amazed.

And as I sat there watching, thinking, "Hmm, kundalini, moving, BIG kundalini moving, I've never noticed actual physical heat like this before—" (though many times I'd experienced the fast molecular vibration, the crying, the breaking)—as I watched it, surprised and charmed, something else happened:

I felt a strong golden Force descend into my trunk in a large triangle, moving down from my shoulders, through my chest and stomach, narrowing to a point right at the muladhara. Tangible Force! Golden! Palpable! And definitely, descending—I could feel the body and pressure of it.



So I just lay there feeling this surprising golden force field in me, a triangle from my shoulders to the root chakra—very *definitely* pointed and terminating there—yow!

And I realized: Man! This is a spiritual descent! Exactly as Sri Aurobindo described! Well documented! Works as advertised! A descent of Force and Light (golden), whose purpose is transformation of the lower three centers!

I opened to it, concentrating on offering the vital/physical—

And oh! It penetrated me! Oh, I bathed in it, basked in it—it was delicious—it was gorgeous, it was so agreeable . . .

And *then*, Virginia, and then—

Then it got orgasmic.

Oh, my gosh.

But it was a thousand times better than sexual orgasm—

Nothing was moving.

It was like being in a Cadillac on velvet seats cruising at an unlockable speed and the shock absorbers so deep and rich and invisible that all there is is glide and ride . . .

It was like a hundred gardenias floating on air currents, drifting down, each one a creamy white, with angel fragrance—a hundred camelias in miniature, drifting through the molecules of my stomach, like gossamer milkweed fairies, like starfall . . . a super-condensed tincture of intensity, a concentrated magic substance—but instead of a drop of it (and sexual orgasm gives only a drop, a homeopathically diluted, undetectable amount of what this was)—instead of only a drop of it, it filled my entire being—major deliciousness, frictionless delight, pure, unperpetrated ecstasy.

And so unexpected! I'd been minding my own business, *thinking*—and suddenly I was filled with sustained, quiet, physical rapture, all white, like organdy, but concentrated and sensual—supersensual (I declaim again, the most intense feeling in sex is orders of magnitude weaker than this): beautiful, astonishing, and moving in pure desirelessness.

Well, I just had a big mushfaced smile. What a rush, as we used to say—except it wasn't a rush, it lasted for five minutes. (I know, because I'd happened to look at the clock right before it started, and when it faded, I looked again.)

People would kill for this, to have an experience a thousand times more intense and ecstatic than orgasm, for five sustained minutes.

Ha! Ha!

So then I started laughing and laughing, recalling all those people whose hedonistic sensibilities I'd offended for 19 years, thinking, SUCKERS! You think *I* gave up something? Look who's laughing now!

And once more I put the question: Did it do any good, to forego sexual partnering all these many years? Well as a matter of fact, smirk, smirk, I'd say, as a matter of fact, *yeah!*

People off the street do NOT have experiences like this. You have to do some tapasya, to get an experience like this.

... there is some vague ignorant idea of the mind due, I suppose, to the ascetic tradition, that the divine nature is something cold, bare, empty, austere, aloof, without the glorious riches of the egoistic human vital life. As if there were not a divine vital and as if that divine vital is not itself and, when it gets the means to manifest, will not make the life on earth also infinitely more full of beauty, love, radiance, warmth, fire, intensity and divine passion and capacity for bliss than the present impotent, suffering, pettily and transiently excited and soon tired vitality of the still so imperfect human creation.—*The Integral Yoga: Sri Aurobindo's Teaching and Method of Practice*, p. 299

... it is not a fact that there can be no sadhana or no experience before [sex] is entirely overcome, only without that conquest one cannot go to the end . . . —*Letters on Yoga*, p. 1528

It is only a minority that is called to the strict yogic life and there will be always plenty of people who will continue the race. Certainly, the yogi has no contempt or aversion for human nature; he understands it and the place given to each of its activities with a clear and calm regard.—*Letters on Yoga*, p. 1513

So the kundalini was having a field day in my abdomen, all this smooth rapturous ecstasy going on, from ribcage to knees—and then the Force—remember, it had descended in a triangle down to the muladhara?—the Force kept on descending, still in a triangle, down my legs—down, down, until it got all the way to my feet. And I could feel it, golden, warm, superimposed now from my hips to my toes. So even it was touching the lowest levels, down to the base of the subconscious—

And there it stayed and there I was, enveloped utterly in palpable Force and Light.

And after a just-perfect amount of time, and a just-perfect experience, the Force and Light faded.

I went, *hoofta!* and looked at the clock—five minutes.

And I just lay there in bed smiling, thinking, wow . . . would you get a load of that . . .

Then I knew that all the sexual issues and concerns were just an evening's entertainment, and the fears were flitting shadows on the wall, and the 19 years weren't a mistake, and I don't care what the cynics say about my being wrong and having a sexual problem and being a dissatisfied mutant who only needs, and secretly but desperately wants, what they want—

Aw, **** em! Let them have fun with themselves!

I'll be intimate with God.

YESS-s!



P.S. And this morning at work, I noticed this: I could feel the Divine against the front of my body, all up and down it, the whole surface—as if I were lying with a man in a full embrace: interface.

The Divine was right there, touching me, right in front of me; I didn't have to do anything but acknowledge the fact—didn't have to perform mantric machinations, call, aspire, raise the consciousness, or anything.

It was like breathing, like embracing a lover: real.

No effort required.

Batteries included.

3-30-94 • Wednesday

The point of it being, of course, that no, it wouldn't be worth it to give up 19 years of fulfilled living for five minutes of ecstasy (nor were those years an arid wasteland, being rich with delight); and no, you don't do yoga to have hypersensual bliss experiences, that is not the goal; but that those five extraordinary minutes indicate the Supreme is there, paying attention; and that progress and change have been happening slowly, underneath, through all this time . . . (and also, incidentally, once more showing that sex is a pallid subset, not a superset, of Ananda).

But even all that isn't the main thing. Most of all, what it points to is the future: a promise of continued, larger, more wonderful realization. This is just the tip, just the beginning.

And without purification, tapas, concentration, you can't get to that point, that opening to greater glories—you can't jumpstart it. You can't decide you're going to do yoga today, and get this kind of experience tomorrow; it takes awhile.

Of course I didn't believe a word of that when I started—I thought I was the hot dog yogi of the century.

But I was pretty much like all the rest; in fact, kind of a sluff yogi . . . but in the long run, determined—never say die.

* * *

"A spiritual Ananda can flow into the body and inundate cell and tissue . . ."—Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, p. 989

"The body burns with Thy rapture's sacred fire,
"Pure, passionate, holy, virgin of desire."

—Sri Aurobindo, from "Divine Sense" in *Collected Poems*

Even before the gnostic change there can be a beginning of this fundamental ecstasy of being translated into a manifold beauty and delight. . . . In the body it reveals itself as an ecstasy pouring into it from the heights of the Spirit and the peace and bliss of a pure and spiritualised physical existence. A universal beauty and glory of being begins to manifest; all objects reveal hidden lines, vibrations, powers, harmonic significances concealed from the normal mind and the physical sense.—*The Life Divine*, p. 991

The touching of the head is only a first pressure. Afterwards there is a feeling of a mass of peace, force, light, Ananda or consciousness coming down in the head directly and descending further to the chest and so to the navel through the body.—*Letters on Yoga*, p. 1175

X has . . . a day or two had the experience of the ascent above and of the wideness of peace and joy of the Infinite (free from the bodily sense and limitation) as also the descent down to the Muladhara. She does not know the names or technicalities of these things but her description which was minute and full of details was unmistakable.—*Ibid.*, p. 906

The experience you had was simply the descent of the Divine Force into the body. By your attitude and aspiration you called for it to work in you, so it came. Such a descent brings naturally a deep inward condition and a silence of the mind, and it may bring much more—peace, a sense of liberation, happiness, Ananda. It is very often attended as in this experience by a light or luminosity. It was felt enveloping the upper part of the body down to the cardiac centre, because it is these centres, the head and heart centres that are first invaded and occupied by whatever descends from above, Consciousness, Force, Light, or Ananda. Usually, there is at first a pressure from above on the head, then one feels something entering the higher part of the head and then the whole head is occupied, as you feel now with the "fourmillement" at the time of concentration. Once the head with its mental centres is open and occupied, the Force descends rapidly to the heart centre, unless there is some obstacle or a resistance in the higher vital parts. From there it sends its stream into the whole body and begins to occupy the vital and physical centres—from the navel to the Muladhara. The coming of this experience, occupation of the body, by the Force from above, is a great step forward in the sadhana.—*Ibid.*, p. 1176



THE POETRY ROOM

New Year's Eve in Vermont

Deep and neverlasting cold stars overspread the night outside
while we huddled in woodstove overheated old houses.
How faint the clink of ice dropped in glasses
to the rocks cracking in the cold hills,
How faint the glow of our affable conversation
to that of glittering city salons
where urbane irony is distilled from expensive sentences.

Easing ourselves out of another year of living carefully,
our feelings and heads capped,
feet booted, fingers fur-secured
we scurried across the creaking packed snow to other stoves—
nor did we pause beneath heaven to drink cold air
suck in the icy silence

sing
proclaim
praise

At midnight our mulled murmurs crescendoed
dwindled
quickly departed
to warm-bed dream-schooners, buoyed in darkness.

In the morning our own winter-weakened star
searched for us through frosted windows.

—Gordon Korstange

Sri Aurobindo

A vast glimmering breeze he came,
Almost a tornado frozen in Peace.
A strange slow dawn upon the edge of being
Reminiscent of inwardnesses, the flower-touch of the Lord,
The voice nectarean, the Himalayan presence,
The Mountain of Light, brooded, enveloping all self.
A deep freshet of invigorating calm,
A silence as when the Sun rises from sleep
And all the air is tremulous to his ray.
So too the Lord: all being upturned, offered unutterably.
A possession profound, a mass of Peace,
A sweetness heaven-sent of the ecstasy, the sight
That wells before the inner eye, the footfall
Approaching. A towering figure of Compassion infinite.
Shiva, mute, transcendent. Krishna's enchantment, ineffably sweet.
And all the gods surpassed, the very Supreme
Stood before me, and ere I bent to those
Golden luminous feet, my whole being to lay prostrate
Forever there, a hand stayed upon the head,
And the heart knew, the Source of all this universe.

—Arvind R. Habbu

Play of Love

But one day beloved,
embraced in thy arms of light and might,
united with thee, inseparable identical,
the secret of multitudinous unity
will be ours beyond duality.

Symphonic diversity in unity,
bathed in the ocean of love,
creative play of infinite laughter
will wash away the veils and barriers.

All will be one individual-universal-transcendent
mystery in heart and mind,
life and body, total spirit—
free, absolute, unbounded,
eternal, infinite play of love.

Agniprem

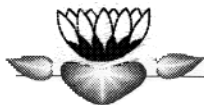
Safe-Free

This Love is in safe keeping . . .
Vaulted, Exalted,
Positioned in a no-deposit box
with Tantric locks.
The grasp of my heart is a Tai Chi fist
That holds firm, unclutched, unopposing.
Kundalini ripples, spine erect
Inclined to spark a Shakti effect
Surrendered supine, prone to be Divine

This Love has found safe haven
but seeks no refuge.
Inundates through the floodgates
but creates no deluge
On a conduit unpaven
Through a funnel unpiped
The ego flung to the walls
of the whirlwind centrifuge
. . . Looms huge, but unhyped.

This Love has found safe harbor
yet never disembarks.
Accustomed to the rocking of the waves
Needs no life preserver,
No light-house in the dark
With the anchor and ground of being brave
True to being true . . .
It's more than the self-interested I who
Loves more than the personal You.

—Leslie Levy



Poem of a Farmer

And the old farmer never would
Let the sun find him in the bed

Every morning before the daybreak,
A little piglet in his hand, he would take
Lifting him, one and two, and three, now down
For I have to make many a round

Off he goes, with his farming chores
Chopping cotton and hoeing corn
He never seems to tire or yield
Just continually working on the field

Can you see how he bursts with sweat
And it rolls down, like the sap of a tree?
He knows life not to be, That, of a piece of cake
It's a blend of ingredients, of what you make

Sunshine and blue sky surround by far
But honey nor sweet milk is ready-made in a jar
One must deliver to receive, That, he knows,
As even the old heads have foretold

Shoo, do you not feel the sun rising high
And so are his steps!
Though a heavenly smile is tinted on his face
Bearing with an ornery animal, he keeps the pace

Look, as he ploughs his row, behind the mule
And his mental eye shows him splendor true
Grace and contentment indeed
Has not life shown a many beautiful thing?

Snow, how it melts into green
Winter, how it melts into spring
Even the little piglet has now become a fat hog

And every morning before the daybreak
In his hand, he would take
That big hunk of pork, and hand not trembling in any sort
Lifting him, one and two, and three, now down
For I have to make many a round

And people would often wonder, how it is
This man can lift such an enormous swine!
Does his strength lie in the depths of his mind?

And after all these years, what holds him together?
The old farmer's reply:
For just weight, there is full measure.

Routh

Evening

A golden evening, when the thoughtful sun
Rejects its usual pomp in going, trees
That bend down to their green companion
And fruitful mother, vaguely whispering,—these
And a wide silent sea. Such hour is nearest God,—
Like rich old age when the long ways have all been trod.

—Sri Aurobindo

from Song of the Sky Loom

May the warp be the white light of morning,
May the weft be the red light of evening,
May the fringes be the falling rain,
May the border be the standing rainbow.
Thus weave for us a garment of brightness.

—Tewa, North American Indian (anonymous)

from Night Chant

House made of dawn,
House made of evening light,
House made of the dark cloud. . . .
Dark cloud is at the house's door,
The trail out of it is dark cloud,
The zigzag lightning stands high upon it.

—Navaho (anonymous),
translated by Washington Matthews

Questions

Are facts facts?
Or are they phrases people say?
Is truth truth?
Or did someone make it up?
Is life over when it's over?
Or is there more?

These are the questions.
Will we ever know?

Kelley Delaine Haerer, age 12

Haiku you ku he
she or it kus we ku you
ku they ku. Thank you.

—From the Internet, author unknown



NOTES FROM THE FIELD

When intensity overtakes integrality: A personal look at the man and myth called Satprem

by Savitri

On August 15th no less, I found myself sitting on Luc Venet's front porch in Baca, Colorado, listening for three hours as he (at my invitation) unburdened himself in a painful tale that traced the eventual rupture of his relationship with Satprem. I had heard the rumors and wanted to know Luc's side of the story for myself. The deep wound and still-incomprehension of it all were evident, even as he distanced himself as narrator.

A week later, I was back home in Oregon, sorting out the meaning of our journey to the Southwest and the volcano of memories and emotions Luc's conversation had catalyzed in me. I found myself drawn back into that vortex of my own experience of Satprem and the unresolved enigma he represented; found myself struggling to release that knot of feelings in writing as much to exorcise as to make sense of them.

That first raw outpouring of pages dredged up all the corpses that had silted over the stories. Not something to be shared in its present form. But should I pursue it, churning through the silt for something that still needed to be said, or simply leave it as the personal exercise that it was? The volatile and provocative nature of the subject matter—Satprem—intimidated and discouraged further pursuit, particularly for publication. Intentions could be too easily misconstrued. I was, after all, dealing with a man, not an abstraction of ideas.

And what were my intentions anyway? To vent frustrations? to expose injustice? to play with fire? Or was there some truer intent that I could not formulate then even to myself?

How would I know until I had moved through the process? A process that, if it saw its way to print, certainly carried its risks: The risks of igniting the demons within us, setting off a shooting war (as the same subject had all-too-often generated in Auroville). The risks of being held up for occult target practice by those who would see some *asuric* conspiracy in all this, those for whom Satprem was beyond question and accountability. And then there were the opposite risks of playing into the hands of those looking for anything to use against him, for whom he had become a Lucifer or a tragic Promethean figure whose fire burned more than it illuminated.

Was it possible, I felt myself torn between the polarities, to face—openly, honestly, respectfully and compassionately—the powerful phenomenon we call Satprem without getting caught up in the distortions and exaggerations, the judgments and melodramas that seemed to swirl around him? to get past that super-

charged field surrounding the persona in order to approach and understand the human complexity and contradiction we all still are?

That, I knew, would depend as much on the attitude and integrity of the reader as of the writer. Yes, could we create a space of trust together in which such delicate and conflicted issues—presently relegated to gossip or repression—could be dealt with responsibly, honorably, and meaningfully in open forum? Or was our community still too fragile?

As these questions turned in me in the days and weeks to come, I found events and circumstances conspiring to provide clues: In this case, a passage from the '67 *Agenda* and a video of *Schindler's List*.

"You know," the Mother was saying then, "I have the impression, exactly an impression (it's a transcription), the impression of being on the verge of finding a key—a key or 'trick' . . . a procedure (I don't know how to put it: all this is popularization), but something which, if you got hold of it without being wholly on the true side . . . in one second you could be the cause of a frightful catastrophe. That's why the integral preparation of the consciousness must go side by side with the perception of the Power. And then, there are such subtle differences that for the understanding (I am not referring to the ordinary understanding, but even for a quite spiritualized and prepared state of consciousness, which is not THE consciousness), an insignificant, almost imperceptible tiny little movement could bring about catastrophe."

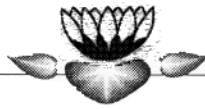
That paragraph, juxtaposed with Spielberg's extraordinary film, created a potent chemistry. Perhaps another quote, another film, would have led me elsewhere. But here, it seemed as I re-read Her words, was that core-perspective I was struggling to

uncover—that could elevate the issue from a purely personal one to a more archetypal theme. And here was Oskar Schindler pinpricking my conscience to tell the story as I actually saw it, reminding me that our silence and inaction in a given moment can be just as destructive as our darkest deeds.

*Sometimes that
Truth-at-all-
costs actually costs
us the Truth . . .*

Yes, what if we got hold of that key, the issue refocused in me, that "trick," *without being wholly on the true side?* . . . Where things are so subtle that *even for a quite spiritualized and prepared state of consciousness*, an insignificant, almost imperceptible divergence could open us to catastrophe . . . Where, She warned us, *the integral preparation of the consciousness* must be equal to the emerging perception of the Power.

I began to go back through the pages I had written earlier carrying the question She kindled in me not as a weapon but as a lens to edit and reintegrate the raw material.



The Banyan Tree, Auroville, India.

What happens when intensity overtakes integrality? When the uncompromising will-to-truth that drives us forward in one part of our being begins to eclipse the truth of the whole?

My own window of experience with Satprem was through the Auroville of the 70s and 80s. It was a roller-coaster time then as we swung from elation to disaster and back again. A period marked by the community's war with the Sri Aurobindo Society (SAS). Eventually, that war with forces outside us wore us down—weakened our immune system—leaving us vulnerable to ourselves. What followed was a prolonged period of internal civil strife. We had caught the disease.

Amidst the initial turbulence when the SAS attempted to dominate the Auroville experiment so soon after Mother's passing, Satprem became a rallying point for a confused community unprepared then to believe that those whom Mother trusted were actually doing this to us.

He was in fact, as I saw it, the only one actually involved, the Ashram trustees virtually abandoning us, not wanting to enter the fray. (In an institution where sole responsibility for resolving conflict had always been left with Mother, those who inherited this unprecedented confrontation were simply not equipped to deal with it—with such unrefined human realities and the communication skills they required. In addition, there was a tremendous cultural gap in the way we approached our problems: the Ashram, primarily Indian, leaned inwardly toward discretion, passivity, withdrawal, and surrender; the Aurovilians of that era, primarily Western with a distinct French edge, were more susceptible to charging forward and outward.) So there stood

Satprem, offering us hope and belief in ourselves and pointing us in a noble direction to defend rather than compromise the truth we were seeking.

The nobility, however, didn't last too long. Soon, he himself was bogged down in the Agenda Wars, and eventually, by the late 70s, the infiltration of his negative vocabulary into the community was beginning to slice up sides almost as effectively as the SAS. We were at this point a community under siege, growing more and more paranoid, more and more stressed under the intensifying madness. And for many, particularly the wave of French who had arrived just after Mother's passing, Satprem seemed to fulfill a deep human need for some intimate physical Presence. He was now not only speaking *in* Her name but *for* Her. Imperceptibly, the "for" became "as." And the rhetoric became more black-and-white, more inciting to relive the glories of La Révolution. And more dangerous.

It was hard for me then to admit it to myself, to see what was actually happening. I had respected and in some way adored Satprem and my personal relation with him. He had been there for me when I was expelled from India by the SAS. He had spoken to that part of my soul which yearned for the new, the Great Adventure, the Truth at all costs. (It would only be later that I began to question the "at all costs." Sometimes that Truth-at-all-costs actually costs us the Truth, blurring the subtle line between aspiring, straining, and forcing. Truth costs us our ego, but nothing else.)

I can recall with painful clarity, the point when Satprem's "elimination of falsehood" anthem (that had begun to permeate every message and letter sent to a generic Auroville or chosen Aurovilians) began to take a toll no less distorting and damaging than that of the SAS's. I can remember the infamous book-burning near Last School, purging us of all the tomes of the Old World. I can remember Amrit recounting to me that day when a hostile crowd forcibly passed through his room, menacing him, some spitting on him because of his relations with the dreaded Tantric Guru X that Satprem castigates in the *Agenda*. (It is ironic that Mother allowed Satprem himself to pursue an earlier phase in his own evolution under the tutelage of the same guru.) I can remember the "spontaneous" (one of the favored terms to explain unexplainable behavior) throwing out of people or guests from their homes who were deemed "collaborators with falsehood."

The images flared up from their tombs: Images of our collective atrocities and excommunications committed in the name



of Truth or "Something Else." Wounds that still remain unhealed. I wince as they exhume from my subconscious, ashamed—ashamed not of the community's right to determine its residents but of the arbitrary tactics, criteria, and methods of execution. Of that indiscriminate storm trooper mentality that possessed us then. How was it possible? Didn't Satprem see the fascism he was fueling?—he who had heard the jackboots at his own door as the Gestapo took him away in the night for his role in the French Resistance.

It had clearly been a time of great aberration: on the one side, the violence from the SAS; on the other, our own, somehow sanctified by Satprem. In such a state of confusion and with so much pressure squeezing us from all sides, there was a tendency either to take refuge in one camp or the other. Either to seek support from one set of "parents" or the other as they fought for custody of the children.

For me then, it was easier to see the threat the SAS represented. Their actions were quite blatant: Close our bank accounts, expel the troublemakers (those who questioned SAS rule) or arrest us as trespassers, bribe villagers to beat us up and harvest our crops, etc. With regard to Satprem, my loyalty and admiration refused to let me see the shadows. Or, perhaps, mixed up with all the turmoil and disillusionment then, I didn't want to see them, couldn't handle a champion so close to Her falling. For wasn't *he*, after all, the one Mother had confided in? Who had delivered the gift of Her *Agenda* to us (despite his own overlays), courageously revealing the true emphasis and direction of Her Work when the Ashram seemed content just to worship Her?

But by the early 80s, just after the Supreme Court case ruled that Auroville was not a religion and, in a sense, levered Auroville out of the SAS's grip (toward a whole new set of complications with the Government), I was becoming more and more disaffected with Satprem—with the way in which his influence was being wielded and the religious cult that, knowingly or not, he seemed to be fostering in Auroville. What was so troubling was that there was no dialog, no access to question things. It was all or nothing. Believer or infidel. And letters sent to him by all but his chosen elite were either never answered or returned unopened. Something which I never experienced with Mother, who somehow always managed to respond to our humanity, one with us even in Her most fathomless inaccessibility.

And as the snowballing division continued to fling us further apart, it became painfully apparent that only that which is itself divisive can create such division; that Truth and Love—even for the warrior—cannot create such virulent patterns of behavior. Yet here we were, turned irreconcilably against one another, split in our little microcosm like the fundamentalist and free-expression archetypes facing off wherever one looked then around the world: a fanatically rigid pro-Satprem group that clung to every message as gospel and an anti-Satprem group which, like the collective adolescents we still were, revolted from his

perceived authority by indulging in the opposite exaggerations. Both groups, armed with different quotes, shrugged off morality as a thing of the past. It is understandable how we set such a bizarre role model for the children of Auroville.

And in the collective tug-of-war, it became so difficult to try to hear Her for oneself with all the shouting going on, one side claiming to have the Truth, the other reacting, turning up the midnight volume of Mick Jagger. And, I suppose, that was the thing I held Satprem most responsible for, if we can ever really hold another solely responsible for what happens: He was an intense and charismatic man, in touch with powerful truths; but, aside from his rhetoric, he never really encouraged us to find *our own truth*. He always seemed, despite his revolutionary aura, to be putting the truth in our mouths for us.

I wonder, in retrospect, how we might have worked out our internal conflicts had there not been the constant intervention of voices like Satprem's, who were themselves unwilling to participate in the actual give-and-take reality in the field, who always communicated what they had to say *at* us, not *with* us; then withdrew back into their shells in Kotagiri or Delhi or wherever. Listening did not seem to be part of the equation.

I know such speculations have an element of the absurd to them, but I cannot escape the exercise of imagining other possibilities. Might the hardcore group of French not left en masse when Satprem "gave up" on Auroville in the late 80s? Might the hardcore French not have been "hardcore" at all but simply individuals thinking for themselves, groping their way through with a certain humility like the uncertain humans we still are? Might the ground then have been safe enough so

*How easy it is . . .
to label the feelings
of others as we
trample them as mere
sentimentality . . .
Until everyone else is
wrong, everyone else
has been eliminated
from the circle.*

that an anti-group acting out its reactions need not have emerged? Might we as a community of individuals (rather than national and ideological group-entities) have been able to face our shadows together more honestly and supportively and compassionately?

I will never know the answers to these questions. And behind them all, I am left still wondering what Satprem's role actually was in the evolution of Auroville. What if he would have used his enormously inspiring power and influence to bring us together? his enormous *gift* to help us find Her in our own ways while protecting the fragile unity and harmony that embraces mutual respect, that sees *each one* as Her child?



Yes, what would have happened if Satprem had not turned our attention so exclusively toward the cells, leaving behind in the rush, it seemed amid all the drama, the heart? Because without that love to save us—that true, pure, and *trustworthy* light and guidance of our psychic being to temper and widen and heal our more subhuman selves—those cells become prison cells and we shrink; and Transformation becomes just another word, just another illusion in the hands of the ego.

Yes, how easy it is then to simply abstract ourselves from responsibility, to label the feelings of others as we trample them as mere sentimentality. And then the rest becomes a narrowing circle of denial and defense. Until everyone else is wrong, everyone else has been eliminated from the circle.

How difficult it is to reverse the process: To hold courageously to one's truth *without* excluding the other's, widening the circle to allow each the space, as She did, to find their true place and pace. Yes, how difficult, especially for one who burns within to cut straight through to the Goal. But perhaps that very Goal can only be truly reached when *all* of us are there, or are at least included.

As I reflect now back on these experiences and the history of that moment as I saw it, another question presents itself to me: What was *our* role in the story, *our* complicity in the phenomenon we call Satprem?

Perhaps it was that reflex in us—still so compelling in our uncertain human transition—to set him up as a god, a superman. To transfer all of our irrational expectations upon him *as if* he was already infallible, a transformed being to follow without question. For throwing such power at someone—even for a quite spiritualized and prepared state of consciousness which is [still] not *THE* consciousness—can only inflate and distort those elements not yet transformed; can only imprison him in our fantasies, setting us both up for the fall, exaggerating his shadows as well as his light with the infusion of that power we surrendered to him—a power that only She among us could receive uncorrupted, even purifying it (and us) in the process from the ignorant and ego-driven demands mixed in with our giving.

And perhaps, if we allow ourselves to reclaim our own responsibility in the matter, we can help to rectify things by simply allowing Satprem his unique *humanity*; by acknowledging his true gifts and the remarkable contributions he has made (and, no doubt, still aspires to make) without deifying (or demonizing) him, without ignoring the vulnerabilities, flaws, and limitations he shares with our still-evolving species.

And perhaps in liberating him from our formations and projections, we liberate ourselves and our own truer relationship with Her.

Savitra, a 21-year resident of Auroville, relocated to the States in 1990. His "AV resumé" includes the book Auroville: Sun-Word Rising; the community's representation in India's Supreme Court to the proprietary and religious claims of the SAS; and the original Peacetreets Program with Danaan Parry.

Flame song

by John Robert Cornell

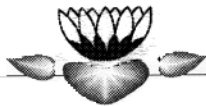
This article is reprinted with permission from Sunseeds.

What is it about fire that fascinates? Who is not awed by the sight of a building racing to the sky in rippling orange and red tongues? Who does not want to burn with the separation-melting, searing fall into love? Who is not moved to dance by spring, by the burning thirst of bursting buds for life and self display and sunlight? Or by the soft luminous green fire of miners' lettuce glowing in a gully? The heart, once touched by the fire finger of the Divine, which it cannot forget, either drowns itself in a self-immolation of pleasure and pain or searches desperately, disregarding all good taste, for that burning touch that will finally melt it down, falling, spent, into a rain of peace.

Fiercely and doggedly the body itself, that slow furnace of consumption, resists the end of its smoldering ways. Crippled by arthritis, limping along with only a memory left of kidney or lung lobe or spleen surgically removed, eyes dimmed, still it stirs every morning in a new pulse of hope: Perhaps today? Perhaps *what* today? It does not know what it is longing for. Chocolate does not suffice. Sunset yields to night. Beer grows stale or turns to become the master. Bedroom turns to bored room if desire cannot find wider fields.

It is flame I want to write about, aspiration, desire. It is flame that I want to sing. I have nothing else. I am nothing but longing, aching dissatisfaction, a depth calling to a peak. Give me the high places, the persevering peaks of tumbled granite reaching for the sky across ten million years. Give me the seething ruins of the underworld, twisted and grimy and vicious. Give me the clear, calm fire of the heart behind the heart, stretching easily, embracing, clothing the peaks with green longing and leafy comfort. Stroking the smoky smudge pot of the gut and the genitals so that their lava may finally rise clean and fierce into new ranges and eruptions. Bury the spark of divine longing in my roots. Fan it. Flame the muscles along my spine with one reflex: Om, Supreme Lord, I greet thee. I bow to Thee. I dance Thee. Kindle my thought with the need for immensity. Fill it with liquid oxygen and hydrogen. Blast it beyond the deadly pull of lazy circling habit.

I am walking in Desolation Wilderness today, on the highest crest of the Sierra Nevada. I can't see it. Occasional fragments of naked, broken, orange and grey granite backlit by blue break through the bubble that surrounds me. The bubble is opaque grey, wallpapered with small thoughts of this person, that book, this worry, that conversation. Wilderness disappears. It is completely gone. Instead I am pacing the tight circles in my head. I am a cow chewing the cud of the mind, but there is no term to it, only a nervous circling. Rehashing, masticating, trying to make some little scene digestible when all this Immensity is calling. Streaks of pure emptiness slip through the corners of this bubble, filling

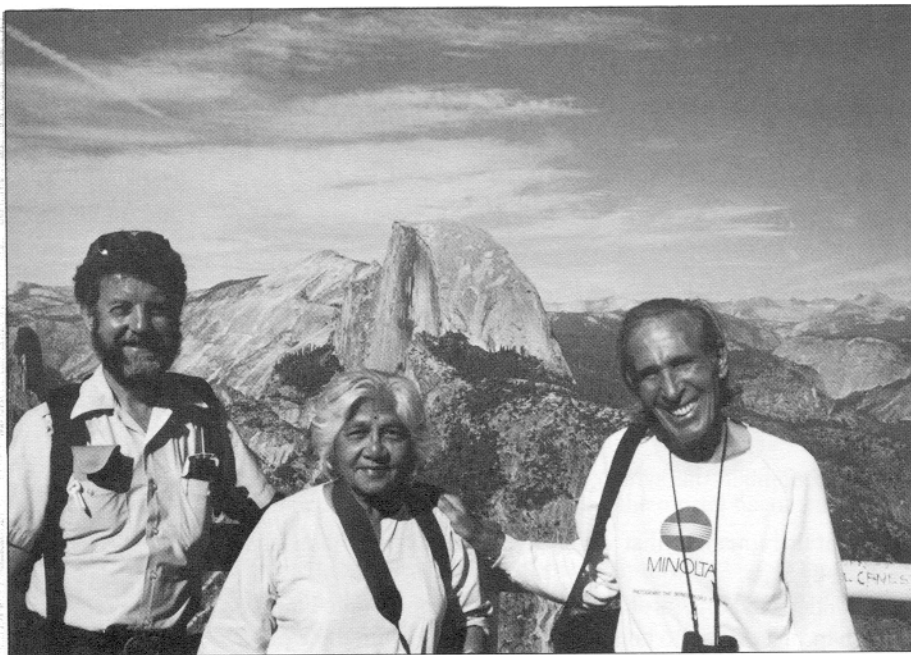


me with red fir needles and grey, tightly fractured pine bark. Glimpses of open water, clouds of bouncing midges tease me with memories of a wildness no longer confined, free from the spider's web. Occasionally I escape and sneak rides on a raven's tail. I bubble excitedly over tiny falls with clear snowmelt. I snooze full length on the ground beside relaxed whitening logs, soothed by a blanket of warm sun. I struggle over foot-high granite ranges with impossible loads in my black mandibles.

It is only momentary. Instantly I am back in the cage. Exiled from my playmates. I hope to reach the summit views unawares, unprepared, so that I may hang glide out over the slopes and valleys and the cascading streams before the guards notice my escape.

Once I sat alone within a circle of chairs around a fire pit in the forest. Absorbed in writing, I did not notice someone come up on my left. Suddenly one of the chairs supporting the circle of my concentration dropped out of the universe. Surprised, something inside me poured out over the countryside like flood waters released from the dam. A chink in the armor and I fell out across the land and lay over it like a blanket of mist, like a lover released to his desire. Like a bud free at last to flame into flower. In the beat of a hummingbird's wing I was back in the circle, plugging the hole with reason (somebody just moved the chair, I told myself.), safe again with the womb of thought. Does one really want to be that exposed, spread out on the body of the earth? Dare I give up my hard-won order so completely?

Thought was my second mother. It gave birth to some children of meaning, brothers and sisters to cling to when I was an orphan. It divided the night from the day and separated the waters from the dry land. Eagerly I climbed on its back and away we flew to high places. We perched in the ancient towers of Babylon and joined debates at the universities at Padua and Rome. We rode the harmonies of the spheres with Ptolemy and Raphael and Newton and then crashed on the battlefield of the Hundred Years War. We spread the faith around the globe among the savages, and they died as we converted them. Our flights got lower, more practical. By the time we limped into the 20th century we were piloting bombers and damming rivers. We had forgotten something. We knew a lot of things, but we didn't know where we were any more. We went to the moon and thought it was dead. We were lost in the fog. We were walking in the wilderness again, unable to see it. We were the sorcerer's apprentice, casting spells but not knowing why, blinded by our brilliance. We were the wilderness, all 5 billion of us in one bursting cottage. Five billion centers of the universe jammed together, each alone, on one planetary pinhead! Five billion pecking egos.



John Robert Cornell shows Kailas and Richard of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Yosemite National Park.

It's no wonder there is no space any more! And something else behind it all is calling.

Something! Let something crack open.

We need a new meltdown, and the temperature is rising. Not the radioactive holocaust, but a human meltdown. Reasoned, thoughtful, yes, perhaps. Well, probably not; one can hardly imagine humanity stuffed into a melting ivory tower!

We are seeking, rather, a new fire, something bolder than ape, higher than mind, deeper than coal, richer than gold. A fire that leaps beyond the mind's abstractions, that smelts unconditioned love from the ore of the emotions, that purifies the vision in the imagination, that refires the body into something shameless and fluid and self-regenerating as Life itself. We are suffocating for want of the new breath of fire. Yet that *is* our fire—that need, that suffocation.

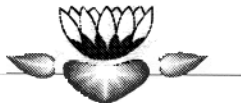
We are seeking the depth and height of New. We are eager for a new Age of Discovery, a new blast-off, a new invention that will invent us, instead of another machine. The Veda called it the honey in the rock, Jeremiah called it a heart of flesh to replace this stone, Jesus called it the Kingdom of God, Paul called it new man, Sri Aurobindo called it the supramental, Mother called it the mind of the cells.

We call it . . . We call it.

We are the call:

Come.

John Robert Cornell is a technical writer and publisher of the newsletter Sunseeds (8615 Fair Oaks Blvd., #39, Carmichael, CA 95608), which contains inspiration from Sri Aurobindo, the Mother, and the American earth. (Issues may be sporadic in the near future.)



ESSAYS

Mantra, mythos, and the mystic hero's journey

by Rod Hemsell

This continues the theme begun in the article "Sri Aurobindo's Savitri: Mantra and mythos," published in the last issue of NexUS.

1. Introduction: Sri Aurobindo's methodology

"O Will, remember, that which was done remember!"

Let us remember that which was done, as the Upanishad suggests.

To understand Sri Aurobindo's work, it is appropriate I think, and perhaps necessary, to begin at the beginning, with the Upanishad, that settled inner knowledge with which he began, and which formed the foundation of his philosophy, his poetry, and his yoga.

Isha:

The face of Truth is covered with a brilliant golden lid; that do thou remove
O Fosterer, for the law of the Truth, for sight.
O Fosterer, O sole Seer, O Ordainer, O illumining Sun, O power of the
Father of creatures, marshal thy rays, draw together thy light;
The Lustre which is thy most blessed form of all,
That in Thee I behold. The Purusha there and there, He am I.

The *Ishopanishad* sings to us of the divine Self in all things and of the possibility of our life being a constant living of that experience, a constant "seeing" of the divine Truth.

Kena:

The name of That is "That Delight"; as That Delight
One should follow after It. He who so knows That,
Towards him verily all existences yearn.
Of this knowledge austerity and self-conquest and works
Are the foundation, the Vedas are all its limbs, truth is its dwelling place.
He who knows this knowledge, smites evil away from him
And in that vast world and infinite heaven finds his foundation,
Yea, he finds his foundation.
Thou has said "Speak to me Upanishad," spoken to thee is Upanishad.
Of the Eternal verily is the Upanishad that we have spoken.

The *Kenopanishad* sings to us of the way to that inner knowledge by which we transcend even the godheads of mind and life to achieve conscious identity with the Brahman, the Absolute, the Divine, Eternal Delight.

Sri Aurobindo commented often on these Upanishads in his early writings, on their meaning, their language, their importance and on his method of interpretation. And they became the basis of his philosophy of the Life Divine. He said, most interestingly for us I think:

I hold firmly the belief that the truths of the Upanishads were not arrived at by intellectual speculation, cannot be interpreted by disputation . . . I hold them to have been arrived at by revelation and spiritual experience, to be records of things seen, heard and felt in the soul . . . These supra-intellectual faculties by which the *rishis* received the Veda and developed its implications, *drsti*, *sruti* and *smrti*, are also the only means by which their thoughts can be perfectly understood.

My method does not allow me to deal with the language of the Upanishad in the spirit of the scholar,—not the pride of the Pandit dealing with words as he chooses, but the humility of the seeker after truth in the presence of its masters is, I have thought, the proper attitude of the exegete.

I have also held it as a rule of sound interpretation that any apparent incoherence, any want of logical relation and succession of thought in the text must exist by deficiency of understanding and not in the seer's deficiency of thinking.

But if a man can make his mind like a blank slate, if he can enter into the condition of bottomless passivity proper to the state of the calm all-embracing Chaitanya Atma, not attempting to fix what the Truth shall be but allowing Truth to manifest herself in his soul, he will find that then it is the nature of the *Sruti* to reveal perfectly its own message.

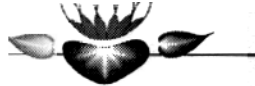
This is a demanding hermeneutical exercise, as no doubt we can all agree. *Drsti* . . . *Sruti* . . . *Smrti* . . . But it can also lead to much much more than exegesis, as I hope we shall see, as we humbly consider Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*—mantra, mythos, and the mystic hero's journey.

2. Mantra

Sri Aurobindo's theory of *mantra* was expounded in a full-length work titled *The Future Poetry* which was published serially in his monthly magazine *Arya* along with his other major philosophical works between 1914 and 1922.

It is not my intention to analyze the theory here, but to be faithful to the hermeneutic that he employed to arrive at the theory. I wish only to present it in his words as a background to an eventual interpretive presentation of the poem *Savitri*, in which I believe Sri Aurobindo carries out the project he envisioned early in this century of a future mantric poetry in English.

He said:



What the Vedic poets meant by the Mantra was an inspired and revealed seeing and visioned thinking, attended by a realisation, to use the ponderous but necessary modern word, of some inmost truth of God and self and man and Nature and cosmos and life and thing and thought and experience and deed. It was a thinking that came on the wings of a great soul rhythm, *chandas*. For the seeing could not be separated from the hearing; it was one act. Nor could the living of the truth in oneself which we mean by realisation, be separated from either, for the presence of it in the soul and its possession of the mind must precede or accompany in the creator or human channel that expression of the inner sight and hearing which takes the shape of the luminous word.

The Mantra is born through the heart and shaped or massed by the thinking mind into a chariot of that godhead of the Eternal of whom the truth seen is a face or a form. And in the mind too of the fit outward hearer who listens to the word of the poet-seer, these three must come together, if our word is a real Mantra; the sight of the inmost truth must accompany the hearing, the possession of the inmost spirit of it by the mind and its coming home to the soul must accompany or follow immediately upon the rhythmic message of the Word and the mind's sight of the Truth.

The idea of the poet who is also the Rishi has made again its appearance. Only a wider spreading of the thought and mentality in which that idea can live and the growth of an accomplished art of poetry in which it can take body, are still needed to give the force of permanence to what is now only an incipient and just emerging power. . . . the attempt itself would be a rejuvenating elixir and put the poetic spirit once more in the shining front of the powers and guides of the ever-progressing soul of humanity. There it will lead in the journey like the Vedic Agni, the fiery giver of the word, *yuva kavi*, *priyo atithir amartyo mandrajihvah rtacit, rtava*, the Youth, the Seer, the beloved and immortal Guest with his honied tongue of ecstasy, the Truth-conscious, the Truth-finder, born as a flame from earth and yet the heavenly messenger of the Immortals.

Is *Savitri* that new poetry of which he spoke, the embodiment of that flame-word which shall lead the earth-soul to light? Certainly there are many indications in his letters that Sri Aurobindo intended it to be so. He worked on the poem for the next 30 years of his life and made it the record of his yoga of transformation. But perhaps the truth cannot be found in the telling, but only in the hearing. And more, as he indicated in a letter on *Savitri*:

The mystical poet can only describe what he has felt, seen in himself or others or in the world just as he has felt or seen it or experienced through exact vision, close contact or identity and leave it to the reader to understand or not understand . . . A new kind of poetry demands a new mentality in the recipient as well as in the writer.

3. Mythos

The story of *Savitri*, as we know, is a myth of the conquest of death. Its origins are at least as old as the Vedas and along with the Vedas, it enjoyed a major rebirth in the works of Vyasa, whose great synthesis was the *Bhagavad Gita*. But the myth, as transmitted to us through Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*, also finds its roots in the *Kathopanishad*.

Katha:

When every desire that finds lodging in the heart of man,
Has been loosened from its moorings,
Then this mortal puts on immortality;
Even here he tastes God, in this human body.
Yea when all the strings of the heart are rent asunder,
Even here, in this human birth, then the mortal becomes
immortal.

This is the whole teaching of the Scriptures.

Thus did Nachiketas with Death for his teacher win the God-knowledge:

He learned likewise the whole ordinance of Yoga:

Thereafter he obtained God and became void of death.

So shall another be who comes likewise to the Science of the Spirit.

Through his interpretive wisdom and yogic application of the principles and processes of the Upanishads—the silence of the mind, the quiescence of the emotional being, the stillness of the body—the experience of the one Self in all, Sri Aurobindo discovered a way not only to the spiritual immortality which is the “whole teaching of the Scriptures,” but to the descent of that divine Consciousness-Force into the body and its eventual divinization of matter. He discovered another potential, a new evolution—beyond spiritualized mind and life. He called it the supramental Truth-Force, as yet unmanifest here, the supramental Mahashakti. And She took the form for him of a particularly luminous and powerful being, descending through the planes of consciousness, opening the way for a wholly new, luminous and powerful, undreamed possibility for the earth. The symbol for that new possibility, that luminous force of transformation and its power to conquer death, its word of Truth, is *Savitri*.

This is the “*legein*” of the myth, the story, as Prof. Pannikar's hermeneutics would tell us. The “*mythos*” is *Savitri* herself, the living symbol which stimulates in us the ability to see its reality, her vibrant presence and its pathos, and to identify with its movement in us. That is the essence of Mantra.

Now let us try to hear her, as he intended that we should.

This is the text of a presentation Rod Hemsell made at the Parliament of World Religions in September 1993. He followed the talk with excerpts from Savitri, read aloud in the mantric style.



The fire within

by Rand Hicks

This article is reprinted with permission from The Peacock Letter.

This is your rightful womb; from here you shine forth when born. Knowing this, Agni, ascend and increase our wealth.

Now from the propelling plenitude in which all beings dwell, we have come into true being. May the wise move the unwilling to give, and grant us wealth and spiritual heroes.

—Atharva Veda, III. 20. 1, 8

The scene is fitting. The prayer is intoned in the early morning hours as the sun makes its appearance. The aspirant looks afresh toward the resumption of his life's work and sees the whole of eternity's potential spread before him in the new light. The illuminating dawn is a rich symbol recalling us to active effort, but so too is the symbol of light in the womb suggestive. Here the womb has a special reference. It refers not to the altar on which the sacrificial fire is physically lit, but to the very one who offers the sacrifice. The womb is the inner being of the aspirant and it is there from the force of personal aspiration that the divinizing fire is ignited. Our effort and life-experience form a qualifying ground for this leap in consciousness. Agni, the inner flame who knows the way to the Divine, consents to take birth in the human when a place has been rightly and properly made for him, when an environment given to the sacred dimension has been arranged and kept ready. That environment extends outward from the person.

This divine Fire which leads from within needs no compass. It knows with an inherent authenticity how to yield the sap from our life's labor and greatens, purifies and deepens us. Never exhausted, it mounts from truth to larger truth, outpacing what opposes, indeed converting opposition itself into a field of learning and self-exploration. Once this critical step has been taken, one is led truly by one's inner nature and its constant surrender to the divine guidance; the richness that accompanies the soul's development becomes evident. The nature is bathed in the soul's glow and all of life responds in some way to the psychic touch and its penetrating influence.

The discovery of the inmost soul's fire is a capital step, but the inner adventure does not exclude the life around. Climbing upwards from that secured realization is our new motive and with each step we encounter and carry and integrate more of the surrounding world with us. Each experience unmasked affords delight, is a stepping stone to a more complete formula of the Divine's unending being, a lesson in love and fellow-feeling. Integrating the heights with the breadths and seating both upon

the secret profundities of the soul is the larger measure of our work in the world. We grow, we offer, we are enriched through our giving. The wealth received (*rayi*) from the inner growth is no doubt primarily psychological, the soul's felicity, but it can rightly manifest in the material symbols of wealth which are its physical fruits. They can be safely held now, for in this psychic state the falsely aggrandizing ego has lost the power to attempt its divisive mastery.

Giving birth in us to the ripened soul-consciousness, we are ready to expand the range of personal growth to encompass a wider term of being. Now we aspire to a richer commerce with the divine realms. In other verses the seeker asks all the beings of light, the gods and goddesses in their vast diversity, to follow Agni's lead and pour bountifully their gifts into himself so that he in turn may share that wealth with all around. The awakened soul is not a solitary figure, but lives in the community as its heart and connecting core, linking all who are in his bright vicinity with the Divine above. In such a one all the worlds meet in conscious communion.

The eighth verse, cited above, has always seemed strangely placed to the scholiast; it need not trouble us. Simply, the true being we discover within is also around us. Spirit indwells both person and world. This one being spread everywhere has within its abundance an inherent force that seeks expansion, growth in real being, and consciousness and delight. We have arisen from a common ground; we know it in ourselves and now we find that self-same and active potential in all. The very thrust of our lives forces us through and beyond the littleness of the delimiting ego.

The aspirant grown into the sage does not cease to aspire. He moves from division in the ego into unity in the soul, from partial being into full being. Self-giving is the key. The sage is spontaneously generous and his influence upon those around is incalculable. His sacred life extends into other lives, potentializing and fomenting the birth of a meaningful spiritual community. We note that the psychological family is drawn upwards to meet the sage's real nature and realization, for he concentrates the upward force of the Divine which is in all beings and focuses it on those readiest around him. Their growth quickens, indeed all participate in the collective path more fully and even the unwilling are coaxed along, for the sunlit path is compelling in its allure. The urge to surrender is ignited within them, too.

When such a community takes root, then the richest endeavor becomes possible. The cosmic yoga describing itself through humankind presses beyond the personal into the collective and thence into the global. An all-consuming inner fire sweeps through the earth and offers an endless growth into the richness of being.

Rand Hicks is editor of The Peacock Letter, a quarterly newsletter published by the Integral Knowledge Study Center, 221 Clematis St., Pensacola, FL 32503. The center sponsors a study group, meditation, and workshops focusing on the work of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.



Eight Sanskrit terms basic to the Integral Yoga sādhanā

by Arvind Jani

1. **SHAKTI**: Energy. SHAK means to be able, to become possible. So *Shakti* signifies that which makes everything possible.

Divine Shakti is the Divine *as* Shakti. This Shakti, this energy makes all existence possible. And everything and anything that happens in the existence is the doing of this Shakti, this energy. She is the ultimate Ability, infinite, indivisible, invincible.

2. **PURUSHA**: The Spirit. *Purusha* means the Divine as well as a soul in a human being. This term *Purusha* is related to PURA, which means a city, a well-guarded town, a fortified residence, an abode, a body (as well). *Purusha* is Conscious Being in all Becoming.

Purusha in a human being is the one who dwells in the body. *Purusha* in cosmic status is the one who pervades the PRAKRITI.

Purusha at its highest state is *Purushottama*: PURUSHA + UTTAMA. *Uttama* means the highest, the best. At its ultimate state, in essence, *Purushottama* is PURNA, is integral. The Divine is PURNA—PURUSHA—UTTAM.

3. **PRAKRITI**. The term is made up of PRA and KRITI. *Pra* means forth, forward, and *Kri* means to make, to produce. *Kriti* denotes action, work, creation, composition, performance. So *Prakriti* is the forward-going action of creation. It is manifesta-

tion by Shakti. *Prakriti* is the dynamic aspect of Shakti; it is the phenomenal dimension of existence.

Prakriti is creative, its formations are fresh, new, and original. *Prakriti* is Shakti-in-action. *Prakriti* is all movement.

4. **ĀTMAN**: Spirit or soul in a human being. It signifies the Self, the true identity of "I," the Truth at the core of an individuality. Its presence is indicated as Consciousness and it is felt as Self-Consciousness. It is beyond word and thought, and realized only in silence. (See *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library*, Vol. 22, p. 267.)

Sri Raman Maharshi has put it beautifully: "The expanding silence is the Self (the Ātman)."

5. **SADHANA**. SADH means going to the goal without wavering, piercing straight to accomplishment. *Sādhana* means one-pointed action for efficient fulfillment. It is a personal endeavor to accomplish the goal.

In such an endeavor, a means toward the end is called *sādhān*, an instrument, a tool. A *sādhak* is a person who is engaged in *sādhana*. This means that in *sādhana* a person, a *sādhak*, is functioning as a means for SIDDHI, i.e., complete attainment. A *sādhaka*'s self-perception is only being an instrument of divine Shakti.

6. **ATMA-SAMARPANA**: Surrender. The term ARPANA means act of offering. When all that one wants to offer is gathered together, it carries the sense of SAMARPANA. This offering is total, complete, and final. *Samarpana* is understood as surrender because that which is offered is unconditionally given away to the one to whom the offering is made.

Atma-samarpana means offering of one's own self. In such *atma-samarpana* what is offered is not only all that one has, but also all that one *is*. When such an offering is made, one's own psychological identity is dissolved.

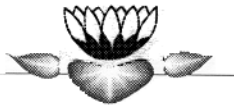
In this sense, such *atma-samarpana* is done in *sādhana* exclusively to the Divine.

As a striking example of such complete self-surrender can be taken the last words of Christ on the Cross: "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit." (Luke 23:46)

7. **PRĀNA**. PRA means forth and AN means to breathe. Breath is the Life-Force. *Prāna* means the Life-Force that goes forth. It is the moving power in *Prakriti*. Because of *Prāna* the life emerges and the living individual organ-



The swan is a symbol of the soul on the higher plane. (Painting by Michelle Mara.)



isms are created. Such living organisms exist with bodies and survive by the act of breathing. This breathing also is the result of Prāna; and the air with oxygen which is inhaled is known as Prāna as well.

8. SHANTI. The term *Shanti* is derived from SHAM. *Sham* means to subside, to be calm, quiet, tranquil. Shanti is the state when everything has subsided; and it means Peace.

In sādhanā the movements of word and thinking, the movements of mind, have to subside. When words subside there is a wordless state; and it is to be understood as silence. Shanti means silence or wordlessness; where mind is completely quiet and calm. In that silence the Light and Force of Consciousness grows.

Serious seekers interested in the discussion of Sanskrit and the Integral Yoga may contact Mr. Jani by phone, (813) 962-7993. Please call in the evening after 5:30 p.m. Eastern Time.

PUBLICATIONS

The Integral Yoga: Sri Aurobindo's Teaching and Practice (Selected Letters of Sri Aurobindo). *Compiled by Sri Aurobindo Ashram Archives and Research Library (Twin Lakes, WI: Lotus Light Publications, 1993). Available from Lotus Light, (800) 824-6396; Sri Aurobindo Association, (510) 848-1841; Sri Aurobindo Sadhana Peetham, (800) 735-4691.*

Sri Aurobindo (1872–1950) left behind a body of work many thousands of pages long, in his books, letters, and talks with disciples. For the newcomer interested in his yoga this extensive literature can be almost impossible to manage. But now we have a brief compilation of his letters that presents the essentials of his teaching in an orderly and progressive fashion.

For many years, beginning in the 1930s, Sri Aurobindo directed his disciples through correspondence. The result was some 1,800 pages of letters on every conceivable topic related to yoga. Planes of consciousness, experiences and realizations, transformations, difficulties, art and beauty and religion: all are discussed in these letters, with an intimate, detailed, and concrete prose.

Yet reading all of the collected letters is a herculean task. Many of the letters are repetitions, and in most collections there is no real progression from one topic to the next. The character of Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga—what it is, what it does, how to do it—has been hard to fathom, even for long-standing disciples.

This new selection corrects all that. Peter Heehs and Bob Zwicker of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram have presented the essentials in a well-thought-out format. The book starts with an exploration of the relationship between yoga and ordinary life—"The best way to prepare oneself for the spiritual life when one has to live in the ordinary occupations and surroundings is to cultivate an entire equality"—and from there begins to dive deeper into

the planes of the inner being.

This starts with fundamental attitudes such as faith, aspiration and surrender. Yet these are not easy to practice or sometimes even to understand. "The sadhana of this yoga does not proceed through any . . . prescribed forms of meditation, Mantras or others, but by aspiration, by a self-concentration inwards or upwards . . ."

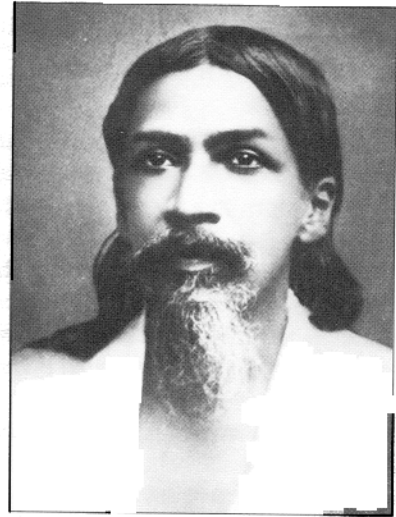
Sri Aurobindo also placed a strong emphasis on the threefold path of the *Bhagavad Gita*: knowledge, love, and works. The next section of this book is devoted to these powers of the human psyche, and to the details of carrying out the Gita's triple path. "The Divine love, unlike the human, is deep and vast and silent; one must become quiet and wide to become aware of it and reply to it."

When we come to the section on experiences, we see the full flowering of Sri Aurobindo's practice and teaching. Here are extensive descriptions and explanations of the inner life which are only dimly hinted at in most traditions—and given in a straightforward prose. "The piercing of the veil between the outer consciousness and the inner being is one of the crucial movements in yoga. . . there is a sense of going in or deep down, a feeling of the movement towards inner depths; there is often a stillness, a pleasant numbness, a stiffness of the limbs."

Further on he elaborates on the three transformations—psychic, spiritual, and supramental—that are essential to the fulfillment of the Divine in the individual, and the further transformation of the very nature, the physical being of the person, which occurs. Here Sri Aurobindo was breaking new ground, and his writings are without precedent in the spiritual literature of the world.

The book ends with the common difficulties and questions that every person faces in the spiritual life: How do I conquer fear? How should I manage depression? What is the difference between a real need and a desire? How do I reconcile ordinary relationships and interactions with the deeper and more unusual experiences of yoga? Each of us needs to return upon our lives and the world around us with the wisdom gained through yoga. Sri Aurobindo was adamant that yoga includes all of life, that it is not just a retreat to snowy mountain caves. This collection of his letters will get you started—and take you a long way on the glorious adventure of consciousness.

—David Hutchinson



Sri Aurobindo



SOURCE MATERIAL

The Mother: "No imaginings, no mystic atavism"

I was an outright atheist: till the age of twenty, the very idea of God made me furious. Therefore I had the most solid base—no imaginings, no mystic atavism; my mother was very much an unbeliever and so was my father. So from the point of view of atavism it was very good: positivism, materialism.

Only one thing: since I was very small, a will for perfection in any field whatever; a will for perfection and the sense of a limitless consciousness—no limits to one's progress or to one's power or to one's scope. And that, since I was very small. But mentally, an absolute refusal to believe in a "god": I believed only in what I could touch and see. And the whole faculty for experiences was already there (they didn't manifest because the time hadn't come).

Only, the sense of a Light here (*gesture above the head*), which began when I was very small, I was five, along with a will for perfection. A will for perfection: oh, whatever I did always had to be the best I could do. And then, a limitless consciousness. These two things.

And my return to the Divine came about through Théon's teaching, when I was told for the first time, "The Divine is within, there" (*Mother strikes her breast*). Then I felt at once, "Yes, this is it." Then I did all the work that's taught to find Him again; and through here (*gesture to the heart center*) I went there (*gesture of junction above with the Supreme*). But outwardly, mentally, no religion—a horror of religions.

And I see now that it was the most solid base possible for this experience: there was no danger of imaginings.—*Agenda*, Vol. 7, p. 75

Sri Aurobindo: "The indispensable utility of rationalistic materialism"

As soon as we begin to investigate the operations of mind and of supermind, in themselves and without the pre-judgment that is determined from the beginning to see in them only a subordinate term of Matter, we come into contact with a mass of phenomena which escape entirely from the rigid hold, the limiting dogmatism of the materialist formula. And the moment we recognise, as our enlarging experience compels us to recognise, that there are in the universe knowable realities beyond the range of the senses and in man powers and faculties which determine rather than are determined by the material organs through which they hold themselves in touch with the world of the senses,—that outer shell of our true and complete existence,—the premise of materialistic Agnosticism disappears. We are ready for a large statement and an ever-developing inquiry.

But, first, it is well that we should recognise the enormous, the indispensable utility of the very brief period of rationalistic Materialism through which humanity has been passing. For that vast field of evidence and experience which now begins to reopen its gates to us, can only be safely entered when the intellect has been severely trained to a clear austerity; seized on by unripe minds, it lends itself to the most perilous distortions and misleading imaginations and actually in the past encrusted a real nucleus of truth with such an accretion of perverting superstitions and irrationalising dogmas that all advance in true knowledge was rendered impossible. It became necessary for a time to make a clean sweep at once of the truth and its disguise in order that the road might be clear for a new departure and a surer advance. The rationalistic tendency of Materialism has done mankind this great service.

For the faculties that transcend the senses, by the very fact of their being immeshed in Matter, missioned to work in a physical body, put in harness to draw one car along with the emotional desires and nervous impulses, are exposed to a mixed functioning in which they are in danger of illuminating confusion rather than clarifying truth. Especially is this mixed functioning dangerous when men with unchastened minds and unpurified sensibilities attempt to rise into the higher domains of spiritual experience. In what regions of unsubstantial cloud and semi-brilliant fog or a murk visited by flashes which blind more than they enlighten, do they not lose themselves by that rash and premature adventure! An adventure necessary indeed in the way in which Nature chooses to effect her advance,—for she amuses herself as she works,—but still, for the Reason, rash and premature.

It is necessary, therefore, that advancing Knowledge should base herself on a clear, pure and disciplined intellect. It is necessary, too, that she should correct her errors sometimes by a return to the restraint of sensible fact, the concrete realities of the physical world. The touch of Earth is always reinvigorating to the son of Earth, even when he seeks a supraphysical Knowledge. It may even be said that the supraphysical can only be really mastered in its fullness—to its heights we can always reach—when we keep our feet firmly on the physical. "Earth is His footing," says the Upanishad whenever it images the Self that manifests in the universe. And it is certainly the fact that the wider we extend and the surer we make our knowledge of the physical world, the wider and surer becomes our foundation for the higher knowledge, even for the highest, even for the Brahmayidya.

In emerging, therefore, out of the materialistic period of human Knowledge we must be careful that we do not rashly condemn what we are leaving or throw away even one tittle of its gains, before we can summon perceptions and powers that are well grasped and secure, to occupy their place. Rather we shall observe with respect and wonder the work that Atheism has done for the Divine and admire the services that Agnosticism has rendered in preparing the illimitable increase of knowledge.—*The Life Divine*, p. 10



ONGOING ACTIVITIES

CALIFORNIA

Auroville International USA

P.O. Box 162489, Sacramento, CA 95816

A nonprofit, tax-exempt corporation founded to support the Auroville project in India. Auroville is the first attempt anywhere to be a universal town where people of all countries can live together in progressive harmony, above creeds and nationalities. Contact Jack Alexander, (916) 452-4013.

California Institute of Integral Studies

765 Ashbury St., San Francisco, CA 94117

An accredited graduate school offering M.A. and Ph.D. programs in philosophy, religion, psychology, counseling; also offering lectures, library, book sales, educational facilities. Call (415) 753-6100 for information.

An Integral Yoga study group meets alternate Thursdays in the president's office. Contact Brenda Dobia, (915) 661-5619; Megan Thomas, (415) 753-6100 x297; Christina Zubelli, (510) 215-6761.

Cultural Integration Fellowship

360 Cumberland St., San Francisco, CA 94114

2650 Fulton St., San Francisco, CA 94118

Draws inspiration from the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother as well as other great prophets of modern India. Offering lectures, residence facility, musical events, book sales. Contact Bina Chaudhuri, (415) 626-2442.

Sri Aurobindo East Bay Center and

Sri Aurobindo Association

2288 Fulton St., Suite 310, Berkeley, CA 94704

Study group Sunday, 9:30-10:30 a.m.

Meditation Sunday, 10:45-11:15 a.m.

Devoted to the realization of the spiritual vision of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Facilitates visitors to the Ashram and Auroville; publishes *Collaboration* and *Nexus* newsletters. Offering Darshan services, meditation, lectures, library, bookstore, meditation hall. Contact Wayne and Surama Bloomquist, (510) 848-1841.

East-West Cultural Center

12329 Marshall St., Culver City, CA 90230

Human Cycle study group Monday, 8-10 p.m.

Beginning Sanskrit Thursday, 7-8 p.m.

Synthesis of Yoga study group Thursday, 8-10:00 p.m.

Advanced Sanskrit Saturday, 2-3:30 p.m.

Chanting Saturday, 3:30-4:30 p.m.

Savitri study group Saturday, 4:30-6:00 p.m.

Karma yoga Sunday, 3-5:30 p.m.

Inquiry into collective yoga Sunday, 5:30-7 p.m.

A 30-40 minute meditation is held after each study group. The first Saturday of the month a special ongoing presentation on the foundations of Indian culture is held from 4:30-6 p.m. Call (310) 390-9083 for information.

San Francisco Study Group

Meetings alternate Thursdays, 12:15-1:15 p.m., reading *Synthesis of Yoga*. Contact Jan Stein, (415) 751-1307.

Savitri Reading and Meditation Group

A *Savitri* reading for 30 minutes and meditation following to complete the hour. No discussion held, but attempt to make the reading a sadhana as much as possible. Meets weekly, sometimes more. Contact Dave Hutchinson for schedule, (916) 452-4380.

Sri Aurobindo Sadhana Peetham

1291 Weber St., Pomona, CA 91768

2621 W. Highway 12, Lodi, CA 95242

Collective residential facilities provided for concentrated sadhana in an ashram atmosphere. Community is self-supporting through sales of books, incense, and Ayurvedic products. Karma yoga work-exchange programs offered, visitors welcome. Offering Darshan gatherings, daily meditation, chanting of Vedic hymns and Indian devotional music, weekly study group, library. Currently organizing a sustainable farm, residence, and devotional center in Lodi, California. Contact Dakshina, (909) 629-0108; e-mail: SASP@aol.com.

COLORADO

Informal meetings in Boulder

A few people meet alternate Thursdays at 6 p.m. for brief meditation and tea. Contact Joe Spanier, (303) 444-4578, or Larry Tepper, (303) 447-2755.

Sri Aurobindo Learning Center at the Baca

Savitri House, P.O. Box 88, Crestone, CO 81131

Hosts conferences and events towards its purpose of becoming a collaborative center of research for a "living embodiment of an actual human unity." *Savitri House* and the *Savitri Solar Meditation Dome* are the first structures in a proposed campus for a new education for a new world. Weekly meditation and readings from *Savitri* and *The Mind of the Cells*, Wednesdays, 7:30 p.m. Contact Seyril Schochen, (719) 256-4917.

FLORIDA

Integral Knowledge Study Center

221 Clematis St., Pensacola, FL 32503

Dedicated to the elevation of human consciousness in the light of Sri Aurobindo. Offering Darshan gatherings, meditation, lectures, study groups, karma yoga, library, book sales, residence facilities, meditation hall. Publishes books and a quarterly newsletter. Contact Rand Hicks, (904) 433-3435.

GEORGIA

Aur-ientation Integral Healing Center

1924 Cliff Valley Way, Suite 201, Atlanta, GA 30329

Hosts a Mother and Sri Aurobindo study group the second and fourth Sundays of the month, 5-7 p.m. Call (404) 728-9807 for information.



ILLINOIS

Sri Aurobindo Center

2764 Hampton Parkway, #Y1, Evanston, IL 60201

Weekly meditations, *Savitri* reading, and a study circle each Saturday at 3 p.m. For information, contact Pravir or Chitvan Malik, (708) 869-6547; or write to the center.

MASSACHUSETTS

Boston Study Group

91 Kilmarnock St., Boston, MA 02215

Study group meeting..... Wednesday, 7 p.m.

Reading from *Savitri*, group meditation, unstructured discussion about yoga. Group on yoga in the local prison at their invitation. Contact Eugene Finn, (617) 262-6390.

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Merriam Hill Education Center (MHC)

148 Merriam Hill Road, Greenville, NH 03048-9729

A nonprofit organization established for the study of wisdom and community, providing opportunities for adults to increase their sense of interconnectedness with others and the environment through education. Located on 54 acres in the Monadnock region of New Hampshire, MHC offers comfortable accommodations in a renovated farmhouse and barn surrounded by woods. Call (603) 878-1818 for information.

NEW JERSEY

Sri Aurobindo Center

25 Hill Street, Bloomfield, NJ 07003

Works closely with groups in New York; provides an opportunity for the local community to gather for discussion, fellowship, and devotion in the light of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Often hosts guests from Pondicherry Ashram. Offering meditation group, meditation hall, Darshan gatherings, library, special events. Contact Dushyant Desai, (201) 748-0639.

NEW YORK

Auroville Information Office

P.O. Box 676, Woodstock, NY 12498

An East Coast branch of AVI-USA located at "Pondicherry," a gift shop specializing in Auroville handicrafts. Sponsors talks and fund-raising events and is focused on completion of the Tibetan Culture Pavilion in Auroville's International Zone. Contact Julian Lines, (914) 679-2926; e-mail: jhl@aol.com.

Matagiri

1218 Wittenberg Rd., Mt. Tremper, NY 12457

Maintains a library of the complete works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, with audio and video tapes, photographs, and other materials. Offering Darshan observances, book shop, special programs. Regular Thursday evening meditation at 7 p.m. Call (914) 679-8322 for information.

New York Study Circle of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother

124 W. 60th St., New York, NY 10023

Monthly gatherings in Manhattan include a reading, study of a selected work, and meditation. All are welcome. Contact Miriam Belov, (212) 965-5683.

SOUTH CAROLINA

Sri Aurobindo Center Southeast

c/o JHM Enterprises

880 S. Pleasantburg Dr., Greenville, SC 29607

Founded to provide an opportunity to learn about and experience Sri Aurobindo and Mother's grace and power. Offering meditation, Darshan gatherings, study group, residence facilities, book sales, newsletter. Contact R.P. Rama, (803) 232-9944.

WASHINGTON

Pacific Northwest/Puget Sound Center

2020 Roosevelt Ave., Enumclaw, WA 98022

Psychic being study group (Enumclaw) Sunday, 7-8:30 p.m.

Savitri study group (Seattle) Tuesday, 7-8:30 p.m.

Vedas study group (Seattle) 1st Tuesday, 7-8:30 p.m.

Purpose is to further the development of yoga in all members and nourish the spiritual aspiration of visitors. Offering Darshan services, meditation, lectures, library, book sales, workshops, retreats, musical and cultural events, meditation hall. Contact Ron Jorgensen, (360) 825-3413.

WISCONSIN

Wilmot Center/Institute for Wholistic Education

33719 116th St., Twin Lakes, WI 53181

Purpose of center is study and implementation of Sri Aurobindo's yoga. The nonprofit institute focuses on Vedic knowledge of all types, including Ayurveda. Offering Darshan services, meditation, extensive library, book and other sales, educational programs, meditation hall. Contact Santosh Krinsky, (414) 877-9396.

CANADA

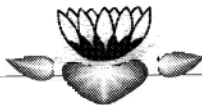
Auroville Liaison Office

1310 Government St.

Victoria, British Columbia, V8W 1Y8, Canada

Publishes the electronic newsletter *Attempt* to facilitate the building of Auroville. For information, contact Auro and Fidelite Arindam, (604) 383-4699, write to the above address, or send e-mail to auro.arindam@qleap.com.

I may say that it is far from my purpose to propagate any religion, new or old, for humanity in the future. A way to be opened that is still blocked, not a religion to be founded, is my conception of the matter.—Sri Aurobindo



APROPOS

The youth of America is their oldest tradition. It has been going on now for three hundred years.—Oscar Wilde, 1854–1900

I believe that we are lost here in America, but I believe we shall be found.—Thomas Wolfe, 1900–1938

The yearnings of a few in one century can become the motivating ideal of millions in another . . . A new gadget like a compass or a computer chip can turn the course of generations. A new music can be the seed, the laboratory, of a half a dozen world-challenging movements. . . . And new ways, at least new for us, can manifest even here, at any moment, spontaneously, from the most unexpected source . . . , beyond anyone's capacity to predict or control.—Michael Ventura, *Letters at 3 a.m.*

A problem cannot be solved by the consciousness that created it.—Albert Einstein, 1879–1955

Grown-ups never understand anything for themselves, and it is tiresome for children to be always and forever explaining things to them. . . . It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye.—Antoine de Saint Exupéry, *The Little Prince*

Rigorously trained in several philosophical schools, he had realized early in his university career that, however admirable any one of them, none was sufficient to explain life in the world. In fact, even when combined, they were miserably inadequate. He had no patience with Marxism, Julianism, socialism, and the other economic faiths that endeavored not merely to explain everything but to reorder and replace that which had come into being in spite of a thousand philosophies, ten thousand theories, and uncountable millenia of nature, necessity, and chance.—Mark Helprin, *A Soldier of the Great War*

The wind rustles through the branches of the fir trees in the forest opposite my veranda, the forest through which, as a child, I longed to rove. The stars shine in the evening gloom. I have come to the end of these few recollections. While writing them down, I started realizing more fully the purpose of my life and its unity. To tend, unfailingly, unflinchingly, toward a goal, is the secret of success. But success? What exactly is success? For me it is to be found not in applause, but in the satisfaction of feeling that one is realizing one's ideal. When, a small child, I was rambling over there by the fir trees, I thought that success spelled happiness.

I was wrong. Happiness is like a butterfly which appears and delights us for one brief moment, but soon flits away.—Anna Pavlova, 1882–1931

I put tape on my mirrors so I don't accidentally walk through into another dimension.—Steven Wright

In a dark time, the eye begins to see. —Theodore Roethke, 1908–1963

We need a theory of what I call the "extended mind" as opposed to the conventional scientific view of the "contracted mind" holed up inside the skull.—Rupert Sheldrake

All great truths begin as blasphemies.—George Bernard Shaw, 1856–1950

We shall find peace. We shall hear the angels, we shall see the sky sparkling with diamonds.—Anton Chekhov, 1860–1904

Courage and love are the only indispensable virtues; even if all the others are eclipsed or fall asleep, these two will save the soul alive.—Sri Aurobindo

SRI AUROBINDO ASSOCIATION

2288 Fulton Street, Suite 310
Berkeley, CA 94704

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED