

Collaboration

Summer 1995

Journal of the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother

Vol. 21, No. 1



Music and consciousness • Farewell Jerry Garcia • In search of community
Editorial and letters about the Net • Auroville almanac • The story of Matagiri

Transformation” is a word that I have brought in myself (like “supermind”) to express certain spiritual concepts and spiritual facts of the integral yoga. People are now taking them up and using them in senses which have nothing to do with the significance which I put into them. Purification of the nature by the “influence” of the Spirit is not what I mean by **transformation**; purification is only part of a psychic change or a psycho-spiritual change—the word besides has many **senses** and is very often given a moral or ethical meaning which is foreign to my purpose. What I mean by the spiritual transformation is something dynamic (not merely liberation of the Self or realisation of the One which can very well be attained without any descent). It is a putting on of the spiritual consciousness, dynamic as well as static, in **every** part of the being down to the subconscious. That

cannot be done by the influence of the Self leaving the **consciousness** fundamentally as it is with only purification, enlightenment of the mind and heart and quiescence of the vital. It means a bringing down of the Divine **Consciousness** static and dynamic into all these parts and the entire replacement of the present consciousness by that. This we find unveiled and unmixed above mind, life and body. It is a matter of the undeniable experience of many that this can descend and it is my experience that nothing short of its **full** descent can thoroughly remove the veil and mixture and effect the full spiritual transformation. Its madness is a wise madness of Ananda, the incalculable ecstasy of a supreme consciousness and power vibrating with an infinite sense of freedom and intensity in its divine life-movements.—Sri Aurobindo, *Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 482

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"*Collaboration* does not mean that everybody should do the will of the man who asks for it. True collaboration is a non-egoistic union of all personal efforts to express and realise the Divine's Will."—The Mother

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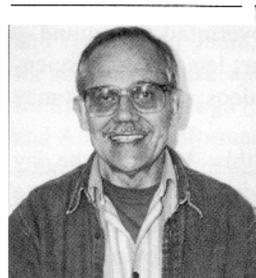
To make tax-deductible contributions: Contributions, all tax-deductible, are welcome for the work of the SAA; contributions for Auroville and the Sri Aurobindo Ashram can also be made through the SAA at the above address.

About the cover: The cover photo shows Matrimandir construction workers in Auroville, India, 1986. The Matrimandir is a 100-foot-high elliptical sphere containing an inner chamber for silent concentration. Built with the support of people from all over the world, Matrimandir represents the human unity in diversity that Auroville seeks to express. For more on Auroville, see "Auroville almanac," p. 11, and "In search of community," p. 38. Further Auroville information is available on the Internet's World Wide Web at <http://www.webcom.com/~miraura/aa/av/av.html>. (Photo by John Mandeon)



EDITORIAL

One body—one substance



Wayne Bloomquist

In the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo, each individual has the capacity to unite in consciousness with the Divine in three dimensions: the individual, as the psychic being or soul; the universal or cosmic consciousness; and the transcendental. What role does the body play in these three realizations?

By a process of yoga, the individual can realize or "bring forward" the psychic being and know the Divine in one's individual being. What happens to the physical body in this realization?

On the universal level, one can also have the unifying experience of the Divine in all manifestation, i.e., experience the Divine in every person and object as oneself. How can the physical body take part in this unity?

In the religion of Vedanta, one can realize the transcendent as Sat-Chit-Ananda or pure existence, pure consciousness, pure bliss. Does the transcendental experience have a transforming effect on the physical body?

Sri Aurobindo introduced the concept and practice of an ascent followed by a descent of consciousness-force into our body by an agency of the transcendent he called supermind or supramental consciousness. According to the Mother, Sri Aurobindo's spiritual collaborator, this supramental consciousness has descended en masse and is working out the divine play and manifestation on earth today.

The human body, and thus the cells, are a vital and instrumental part of this divine transformative process. This presupposes enormous implications for humankind.

The Sri Aurobindo Association will be exploring many of these issues in a conference called "Cellular Evolution: The Transformation of the Body" at the San Francisco Airport Clarion Hotel October 11-15, 1995 (see p. 9).

Call or write for a conference brochure: Sri Aurobindo Association, 2288 Fulton Street, Suite 310, Berkeley, CA 94704; phone: (510) 848-1841; fax: (510) 848-8531.

—Wayne Bloomquist

... when we rise from mind to supermind, the new power of consciousness does not reject, but uplifts, enlarges and transfigures the operations of our soul and mind and life. It exalts and gives to them an ever greater reality of their power and performance.—Sri Aurobindo, *Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 810

Higher mind: Coming soon to a computer near you

As shown in the "New letters on yoga" section in this issue, readers are still kicking around the spiritual implications of the Internet.

So is John Barlow, co-founder of the Electronic Frontier Foundation, a group devoted to protecting civil liberties in cyberspace. Barlow, a contributing editor to *Wired* magazine, was recently named by *Utne Reader* as one of "100 Visionaries Who Could Change Your Life."

In a panel discussion called "What Are We doing On-Line" in the August 1995 *Harper's* magazine, Barlow observes:

I have said on numerous occasions, and I still believe, that with the development of the Internet, and with the increasing pervasiveness of communication between networked computers, we are in the middle of the most transforming technological event since the capture of fire. I used to think that it was just the biggest thing since Gutenberg, but now I think you have to go back farther. There has been much written both celebrating and denouncing cyberspace, but to me this seems a development of such magnitude that trying to characterize it as a good thing or a bad thing trivializes it considerably. . . .

Over the long haul, I'd say that society, everything that is human on this planet, is going to be profoundly transformed by this, and in many ways, some of which will be scary to those of us with this mindset [refusal], some of which will be glorious and transforming.

In his article "The Great Work," published in the January 1992 *Communications of the ACM* (Association for Computer Machinery), Barlow makes some observations that may interest *Collaboration* readers—especially since Teilhard de Chardin has often been compared to Sri Aurobindo:

Earlier in this century, the French philosopher and anthropologist Teilhard de Chardin wrote that evolution was an ascent toward what he called "The Omega Point," when all consciousness would converge into unity, creating the collective organism of Mind. When I first encountered the Net, I had forgotten my college dash through Teilhard's *Phenomenon of Man*. It took me a while to remember where I'd first encountered the idea of this immense and gathering organism.

Whether or not it represents Teilhard's vision, it seems clear we are about some Great Work here . . . the physical wiring of collective human consciousness. The idea of connecting every mind to every other mind in full-duplex broadband is one which, for a hippie mystic like me, has clear theological implications, despite the ironic fact that most of the builders are bit wranglers and protocol priests, a proudly prosaic lot. What Thoughts will all this assembled neurology, silicon, and optical fiber Think?



Teilhard was a Roman Catholic priest who never tried to forge a SLIP connection, so his answers to that question were more conventionally Christian than mine, but it doesn't really matter. We'll build it and then we'll find out.

In a nutshell, Barlow says, something really weird is happening—a fundamental shift taking place that will have consequences that can hardly be imagined.

I too think something weird is happening. These days I'm getting a funny feeling at work, where, as a member of a digital technologies group at a national research center, I have been ordered to surf the Net for an hour a day. So, I explore sites on a particularly interesting part of the Net called the World Wide Web. World Wide Web (WWW) sites are like suites of rooms containing data—text, graphics, animation, sound. A Web site can look like a library, a store, a newspaper, a museum, or any other facility, depending on focus. More importantly, a Web site connects to related sites through a maze of “hyperlinks,” which can take you through cyberspace quicker than a Star Trek transport beam.)

On the Net, I am experiencing the magnitude of humanity's growing connectedness. Physical distance is vanishing. Information travels so easily and so fast, it's like being in the same room with people 12,000 miles away. Indeed it resembles the nascent global “Unity” of a Julian May science fiction novel (*Metaconcert*, etc.). Incidentally, Julian May is a big fan of—what a coincidence!—Teilhard de Chardin.

Barlow again, in an interview posted on the Net:

I think that very rapidly, human consciousness is going to change to a much more explicit awareness of the continuity of mind. They are going to see that the apparent idea that you've got your mind and I've got mine is nonsense. That you have your thoughts and I have mine is ridiculous. It absolutely is. Mind is absolutely continuous. It's bodies that aren't continuous. And if you actually start thinking about all the invisible life between bodies, then you can see how continuous they are as well. It's just that it's not visible to you. So I think that after a couple of generations on the Net, what one thinks will not be what one thinks. There will not be “one thinking.”

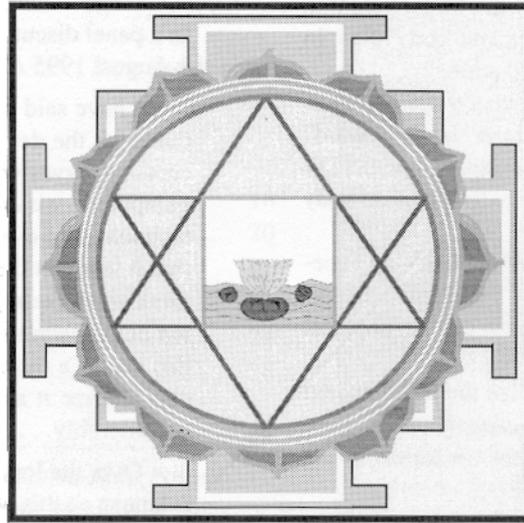
I personally believe that the Internet is a massive and wholesale expression of universal mind. And I think that once we get a handle on universal mind—experientially, every day, at home and in the office—we will be ready for a larger universality.

The Internet has created channels for thought, a dedicated structure for intelligent awareness. Right now it's *manas* and *bud-dhi*—sense mind and refined understanding—using these channels; but after all, if mind proper is finally established at this enormous scale (after epochs of material and vital reign), the higher planes of mind—illuminated mind, overmind, supermind—may be moving in soon. Today the Internet lets us search scientific archives and download *Lion King* videos; tomorrow it may prompt us to be more than human.

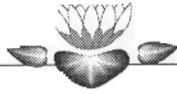
Think of this: August 9, the day Jerry Garcia died (see p. 24), there were thousands of messages per hour posted to the Internet; by noon there were candlelight vigils being organized at cities all over the country. What would happen if people with online connectivity began to catch hold of the *vijnana*? What if they sent off field notes to their cohorts and correspondents, scattered here and there around the earth, via the Net? (Already in Aurodiscuss and Auroconf, we are sharing experiences with each other, and the number of members in these groups grows each week—see p. 10.) There would be no more waiting for a treatise to be written, edited, typeset, printed, and distributed every few years—gnostic

awareness could flash its way across continents in real time. Truth is contagious. If the Internet can instantly globalize news of a coup in Russia, why can't it be used by supramental apprentices to share and transmit a more divine vibration?

[Digression: a) Those of us who never met Sri Aurobindo and the Mother absorb their vibration through the written word; electronic words, traveling over wires at megabits per second, can also transmit vibration. Fiberoptic cables are made of God, and can convey God's heat. Ethernets can packet switch the power, love, and bliss of the Divine. If “all this is for habitation by the Lord,” to quote the Upanishad, surely the Lord can inhabit a UNIX workstation. b) As to the possible objection that gnostic awareness has no need of networked computers, remember that Mother often made use of material photographs to connect inwardly with disciples. (It may be that in the future, communication will be between psychically aware collaborators, not masters and disciples.) Mother also advised using the simplest tool: if you break a bone, use a splint, not just spiritual force, to fix it. c) I realize that premature accounts of personal supramentalization are common, delusional, and to be viewed with discretion; also, that it may be all most of us can do to gain intuitional clarity, to say nothing of the supermind. Nevertheless, I believe that here, now, today, even though prone to stumbling and error, we can worthily aspire to transformation. I also know this: the



Yantra by Vishnu Eschner



NEW LETTERS ON YOGA

Internet "yoga": Viable or not?

The following comments were made in response to Arvind Habbu's letter in the last issue of NexUS. The comments were posted to Aurodiscuss, a Synthesis of Yoga study group conducted via the Internet (see p. 10), and are reprinted with permission.

Reading Arvind's letter in *NexUS*, I believe that his comments that "an intense applied silent personal sadhana . . . does not need discussion, nor networking" is in the context of a larger point, that there are altogether too many distractions from the central task of yoga, which is an inner work. He appears to be commenting on the growing number of "side-lights" to the yoga, including the commercialization of spirituality and people advertising their personal paths to transformation. David Hutchinson's article on the Internet and my plug for America Online (which I was asked to write) look to Habbu to be intended to *sell* people on networking, rather than an invitation to simply "join in if you choose."

If I take Arvind's point correctly, he is saying that you *don't* need networking, you *don't* need this one and that one telling you how to transform; what you need is to simply and quietly focus in on "the work"—and there is plenty of that to be found.

Which is not to say that I agree completely with what he says about e-mail and Internet—he may not be qualified to judge, since since he's never been part of any of the "aurolists." I also think that his point of view ignores the whole rationale behind the founding of Auroville—to spread the work out beyond those who wish to do a private sadhana.

I do, however, think he has a point to make—though it is amusing to read his ranting and raving about Silence.

—Will Moss, WillMoss@aol.com

The point to start from is I think the varied and different attitudes that people have with regard to communication in itself and in general. The means of communication is in this respect largely irrelevant, though many people in this yoga show a kind of hatred for technology. There will always be people arguing that communication is better avoided, and there will be people arguing that it's needed. It is more a matter of personal preference than anything else. Both an excess of communication and its utter lack have their own pitfalls. It is possible to spend one's life in talking about yoga, without ever actually doing it. It is also possible to create an isolated world of one's own with less and less contact with reality.

Neither discussion nor networking are strictly needed, but what is needed then? I think communication is more or less like action in the Gita, just inevitable. It is another field of this yoga, like our bodies and our lives. Why should one make a rule? I

transformation *will* happen—and not by miracle, but through established, earthly instrumentation.]

Consider: The Indianapolis 500 has a Web site; you can find out why Valvoline is the choice of nine out of ten race car drivers. The Boundary Waters Canoe Area in Northern Minnesota and Tamil Nadu, India, both have Web sites. There are Web sites for asthma, incense, and hurricanes. And now there is a Web site for the Integral Yoga (see p. 10), complete with links to Ashram and Auroville information. Already, this site is being visited by seekers unknown to many of us in the traditionally tight-knit (inbred?) U.S. Auro community. I suspect that this Web site, along with other Internet applications, will touch a new and wider audience with Sri Aurobindo's vision.

Finally, everybody, everywhere observes that with the Internet, no one's in charge. No one's directing it. A friend of mine at work says, "With all the other revolutions, there were obvious, exoteric reasons—in France in 1789, for instance, the peasants revolted because they were starving. The Internet, however, is a great, spontaneous revolution without apparent cause." Barlow likens it to a historic force beyond societal control. Me, I point a finger at the Divine Perpetrator. I have a hunch that this whole Internet thing might be God-engineered for a specific and huge purpose—perhaps, if you get my drift, terrestrial supramentalization.

But back to Jerry Garcia. For readers who may not know, Garcia was lead guitarist for the Grateful Dead, a rock and roll band that began playing together in the 1960s and who are featured in this issue's "Music and consciousness" section. I have employed the Grateful Dead as a spiritual evolutionary device ever since 1970, the year I first experienced transcendence listening to an extended metaphysical jam called "Dark Star." The mass media often report that appreciation of Grateful Dead music is a factor of drug-induced stupification; they are wrong. Grateful Dead music is not about drugs, tie-dye, or 60s time-warps; it is about consciousness.

And by the way, in addition to his many other capacities, John Barlow has also been, since 1971—what a coincidence!—a lyricist for the Grateful Dead.

* * *

We apologize for the irregularity of our publication schedule. *NexUS* and *Collaboration* have been, for the most part, one-person operations; this editor has been in submarginal health; and all work is volunteer effort limited to a few hours on nights and weekends. Ergo, it's difficult to publish with clockwork precision. SAA is working to acquire a fax, a scanner, and a modem for the Boulder *Collaboration* office as well as distributing responsibilities for more efficient multitasking. In this context, we are rotating the editorship: one issue in three will be produced in Vermont, the other two in Colorado. Gordon Korstange is currently working on the next issue, so stay tuned.

—Lynda Lester



Food for thought

I want to have a cyberspace with *prana* in it. I want to have a cyberspace where there's room for the breath and the spirit.—Electronic Frontier Foundation co-founder John Barlow in *Shambala Sun*, September 1995

I have experienced soul-data through silicon. You might be surprised at the amount of soul-data that we'll have in this new space.—Kevin Kelly, executive editor of *Wired* magazine, author of *Out of Control: The Rise of Neo-biological Civilization*, in *Harper's*, September 1995

Also, the world is becoming more UNITED on account of the discoveries of modern science—the airplane, the railways, the telegraph, etc. Such a union is the condition for the highest Truth coming down . . . —Sri Aurobindo in 1925, enumerating one of four signs of the imminence of the supramental descent (from *Mother or the New Species*, Satprem, p. 50)

don't expect that all the people in this yoga show an interest in its collective side. But why should those who feel that the collective aspect is important give up and limit themselves to just "an intense applied silent personal sadhana"? Is the equation "discussion = useless gossip" always necessarily true?

Though it is true that some support for Habbu's viewpoint can be found in Sri Aurobindo's letters, we are in a different position than that which is described there: we do not live in an ashram, we are not surrounded by other sadhaks, we do not have Sri Aurobindo or Mother in a physical body to answer our questions. If I decide not to accept any Sri Aurobindo substitute, then there is no one to write a letter to with my questions and get a precise, reliable (meaning more reliable than inner voices), and authoritative answer. I think this makes a great difference.

In my experience I have seen that blindly applying "silence rules" may lead to a solitude that may be stern and solemn (and proud), but often sad and useless. I very often felt that people arguing against any form of communication are those who use yoga as a kind of armor from the rest of the world.

A good question could be: What do we expect from communicating with other sadhaks? I personally expect at least to gain a better intellectual understanding and to learn how to communicate with more awareness, but it's just the very beginning. Hasn't this group undergone an undeniable evolution by the use of conferencing?

—Carlo Chiopris, chiopris@icon.it

To the extent that this electronic interchange succeeds, it becomes less of a discussion of yoga and more of the practice of yoga. It is a practice that involves discussion.

Sri Aurobindo's sadhana involved writing the *Arya*, evening talks with disciples, and a prolific correspondence. If Sri Aurobindo had been born in 1962 instead of 1872—would not he and his disciples utilize contemporary forms of communication?

The goal and methods of this yoga impel us to explore new frontiers and embrace new modes of the self. Even here in cyberspace we meet the Beloved.

—Constance, cnstnce@cats.ucsc.edu

As Sri Aurobindo points out in the chapter "The Four Aids" (*Synthesis of Yoga*), the written word can serve as a pointer to awaken the inner understanding, just as can the spoken word—or in our time, the e-mail word.

Yes, talk (and much more commonly, voracious reading) can be used as a substitute for real inner work. The mind wants to believe that ideas are the same as experiences, which is patently untrue.

Yet the solution to mental superficiality is not to lock up all your books (and modem) but rather to see that something else is needed.

It is not required in the Integral Yoga to own a modem, any more than it is required to have visited India. The spirit is wider than that. And communication, like action, happens whether we will it or not. It is a part of being in nature, *prakriti*, the interchange between beings on every level. To single out one type of communication (the written word) and one implementation of it (e-mail) is a denial of life. Nobody expects all those who aspire to Integral Yoga to be online. Neither do all have to live in the Ashram or Auroville, or to have read a certain book, or chant a certain mantra. The spirit is wider than that.

Carlo asks if we should give up the collective aspect and limit ourselves to (quoting Arvind) "an intense applied silent personal sadhana," and wonders if the equation "discussion = useless gossip" always true. For some, at some point, isolation is useful and important. For others, sharing and communication and support are useful. That sharing may take place by sitting around a dinner table in an ashram in Lodi, or through a series of shared letters via e-mail. Have we touched each other less?

So little is known about what collective yoga consists of—and still less of what it might consist of among a community of gnostic (i.e., supramentalized) individuals, that pronouncements in this realm seem premature.

Carlo speaks about getting reliable answers to his questions. We all look for corroboration of our views in many realms, not the least of which is yoga. Without a single authority, it is natural to turn to others for relative guidance. This doesn't imply that inner guidance is less important or should be eschewed; both can help.

Insisting on solitude and silence can be a reaction to uncontrolled vitality. The emotional nature is so strong that the only way to deal with it is to refuse all activity. Again, for some, at



some times, this can be useful. But not always or for all.

And how is it bad to feel bolstered on the path through a friendship initiated and conducted electronically? These are not impersonal Usenet discussions among faceless ciphers; they are discussions among a committed group who share personal experiences, uncertainties, and knowledge.

Having an online sangha has “brought me out of the closet” in some ways, by bringing a community of sadhaks into near-daily communication with me. Here is a group of people who are pondering the same deep questions as I am at any time—is that kind of sharing bad? When someone posts a searching reflection to the group, it invites me to search with them—to pay attention to more fundamental questions than the often trivial details of life.

—David Hutchinson, dbhutchinson@ucdavis.edu

As to the question “Is the Internet useful for practitioners of Integral Yoga”? The answer seems to be a resounding YES! And this is for many reasons. The Integral Yoga is a collective yoga, and that means not just the lofty “we are all one” stuff. It also means getting to understand and know the others who walk this path, to see things as they do. This insight into others’ lives is clearly helpful in many ways. It allows us to see that others’ experience some things as we do, face the same problems, and may already have found solutions that they can share. It also shows us in a discreet way that there are other ways than our own, and this gives a greater wideness. This latter growth into wideness is perhaps obvious, but the Net is another means to open to it.

Then, very importantly and practically, karma yoga is an essential part of this yoga. In Auroarchive,* this is not just an idea but a practice and, I may add, a successful way for people to work together who are spread around the country and the world and who have vastly differing schedules. It also allows people to work together who otherwise could not because of the distances.

I would like to return to the “getting to know each other” aspect. This also is not a small factor of significance. Inwardly and in the future we will all be working together in many ways (especially on the central work of transformation). By coming to know each other, this is greatly facilitated.

—Prem Sobel, prem@ix.netcom.com

*Auroarchive is an online working group dedicated to construction and maintenance of an Integral Yoga Web site on the Internet (see p. 10).

Call for papers—why?

The call for papers regarding readers’ yoga practice in the world brought forth mixed thoughts and questions: “Good. This will help satisfy my curiosity of how others practice the yoga,” and, “Instead of big-time visions, this will get down and dirty with the practical applications, experiences (or not!) of the yoga, on a day-to-day basis.”

Readers respond to the final issue of *NexUS*

With this issue of *Collaboration*, the two publications *NexUS* and *Collaboration* have merged, retaining the title *Collaboration* and the best features of both newsletters. Readers responded to the final issue of *NexUS* with a variety of comments.

The service organization Seva expressed appreciation for the articles on the Aravind Eye Hospital in Madurai, India, by Ram Dass and Dr. Venkataswamy. A number of readers gave positive feedback on the article “Quitting Sex” by Lynda Lester. Several subscribers sent in general compliments, while another felt the publication should include more quotes by Mother and Sri Aurobindo. One person wrote, “I feel that you have at last provided an open forum in which people can speak their minds. At the same time the spirit of expression is positive, enthusiastic, full of hope and good will.”

Savitra’s article “When intensity overtakes integrality: A personal look at the man and myth called Satprem” generated many favorable comments to the editor. In addition, Savitra received phone calls and letters from the East and West coasts, Paris, the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, and Auroville. One Aurovilian wrote: “. . . It’s a remarkable and historic article, and has been widely photocopied and passed on. . . . What has impressed everyone deeply is the way you have been able—at last, for the first time—to really focus on Satprem’s role in Auroville in a very penetrating, honest, and courageous way. . . . I think it’s an important article for all of us—everyone here and everyone associated with Auroville; because at some point all you have said needed to be said by someone, and that person had to be from among those who were drawn into the events of that time.” The article has been translated and is being reprinted in *Domani*, an Integral Yoga magazine in Italian that has been published at the Ashram for 27 years.

But then the questioning began.

For the persons submitting such articles (indeed, many kinds of articles), what are their motives? To put it in contemporary jargon, “What is your point?”

What motivates us to go public—to spill our mental, our emotional, our yogic guts?

Can anyone claim it is a pure nonegoic act of altruism: “Perhaps this will help someone else in their practice.” Why does one think so?

From those who feel they have substantial success with their yoga (by what standards?), do they want to show others how far



journey. I have found that gift of communion most fulfilling in an intimate setting of quiet conversation, or even silence, with aspiring friends; or in a spontaneous telephone call or letter from or to a friend in this effort.

Articles regarding practice will satisfy both whatever motives the writers have, and the curiosity of the readers. Perhaps that is all that can be accomplished.

—Gloria DeWolfe, Minnetonka, Minnesota

CURRENT AFFAIRS

News

April 23 darshan observed at Matagiri

A darshan gathering at Matagiri on April 23, 1995, commemorated the 75th anniversary of Mother's final arrival in Pondicherry. Participants made their way up "Mother's mountain" to consecrate 40 acres of land to the next step of Matagiri's evolving collective vision. They moved silently around the Matagiri symbol, which had been outlined in rocks collected from the land, and placed handfuls of rose petals into a ceramic container made for the occasion.

After a potluck lunch, attendees met in small gatherings. Sam Spanier corralled a group, comprised mostly of artists and dancers, which included Robert and Ghislaine Aarsse-Prins, Marvin Rosenberg, and Chitra Neogy. The artists pledged support from their works in progress and felt that the new form of Matagiri should spontaneously evolve from the needs of activities taking place on the land. Miriam Belov, Alex Stark, and Will Moss focused others who variously pledged support, promoted healing as a work of the center, and suggested phases of a multipurpose building, emphasizing the role of Sri Aurobindo's relics in creating a focus for meditation.

National meeting held in Italy

From April 22–25, more than 70 Italian disciples met in an ancient villa in the Tuscany hills. The title of the Italian national meeting was "The Psychic Being—The Finding of the Soul." The program included readings from Sri Aurobindo and Mother, videos about the Ashram and Auroville, meditations, discussions about common projects, concerts, and a bonfire. Bianca Toccafondi (an Italian actress who met Mother many times) and her husband Giuliano gave a touching reading of *Savitri*. The program also featured three Indian music performances.

One main issue of the gathering was the identity of the group itself—what was expected and what could be done. All the projects (discussion lists on the Internet, a new newsletter, other meetings during the year) revolved around the problem of this group identity.

Upcoming activities

Conference to study "Cellular Evolution: The Transformation of the Body"

The Sri Aurobindo Association (SAA) will present a ground-breaking conference called "Cellular Evolution: The Transformation of the Body" from Oct. 11–15, 1995, at the Airport Clarion Hotel in San Francisco, California.

This conference is the first in the world to focus on phenomena happening at the cellular level—in matter itself. It will be an opportunity to explore these phenomena from many perspectives: spiritual, scientific, artistic, cultural, psychological, medical, and mystical. We are about to embark on a remarkable adventure into the body—to the very core of cellular consciousness.

Conference presenters and topics include:

- *Stanislav Grof, M.D., Ph.D.*, founding president of the International Transpersonal Association: "The Cosmic Game: Metaphysical and Spiritual Insights from Modern Consciousness Research"
- *Michael Murphy*, Esalen Institute co-founder, and author of *The Future of the Body*, *Golf in the Kingdom*, and *Jacob Atabet: "The Future of the Body"*
- *Arabinda Basu*, member, Sri Aurobindo Ashram: "The Future Evolution of the Species" (an all-day workshop on Integral Yoga)
- *Wayne Bloomquist*, SAA president: "Integral Yoga and Mother's Agenda"
- *Ariel Browne, Ph.D.*, cellular psychotherapist: "Cell-Talk"
- *Mary Christopher and Diana Douglas*, spiritual counselors: "Microangels in Our Cellular Universe," "Coloring Our Cells Clear"
- *Emilie Conrad Da'oud*, founder of Continuum Movement: "The Unbounded Body"
- *Adena DeJoya*, spiritual teacher: "Decension of the Soul: Entering Cellular Consciousness," "Transforming Your Physical Body into a Proper Vehicle for the Soul"
- *Elizabeth Hin*, spiritual teacher and counselor: "Integral Transformation and the Global Era," "Born Awake: Children of the Global Era"
- *Theresa Steinberg, M.D.*, certified clinical hypnotherapist: "Holotropic Breathwork"
- *Leslie Temple-Thurston*, teacher of the divine feminine: "Mother as Matter," "The Divine Mother"
- *Bryan Walton*, photographer, former resident of Sri Aurobindo Ashram and Auroville: "An Evening of Beauty"

The conference will feature a 6:30 a.m. "body prayer" each day, plus morning meditations. Box lunches and buffet dinners will be provided. There will be a special Saturday night musical



performance by Constance Demby, a multi-instrumentalist who plays “contemporary classical space music.”

For registration information, contact Sue Espinosa, 134 Coleen Street, Livermore CA 94550; phone: (5 10) 449-1261, fax: (510) 449-6907.

For conference and presentation information, contact Wayne Bloomquist, Sri Aurobindo Association, 2288 Fulton Street, Suite 310, Berkeley CA 94704; phone: (510) 848-1841, fax: (510) 848-8531.

For a full 1 l-page e-mailed brochure, send e-mail to Prem Sobel (prem@ix.netcom.com) or Kenny Schachat (kennys@netcom.com).

Trip planned to Pondicherry

The Sri Aurobindo Association of America is planning to organize a group trip to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry during the winter of 1996. We invite you to share an encounter with the Ashram’s many facets; perhaps meet some of the sadhaks whose books you’ve read; visit Auroville or other centers of interest in Tamil Nadu such as Gingee Fort, Ramana Maharshi Ashram, Thiruvanamallai, Mahabalipurim.

Travel arrangements and accommodations can be less complicated and more economical for a group, and we hope as well that the sharing of introductions, experience, and insights of the more seasoned members would make a rewarding and well-rounded experience for all. Of course, the needs of the independent-minded would also be completely respected, but the occasional comfort of a familiar face or two in the midst of India’s tumult is always welcome.

If you want to test the waters of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, this is a good way to get your toes wet. Or if you’re already comfortable in the mayhem of Nehru Street, please consider the joy of sharing your gleaned wisdom with others.

This trip is just in the preliminary planning stage. Have you always wanted to go, but didn’t know how to begin? Maybe you have journals full of suggestions, travel tips, friendly names, must-sees, favorite hotels or restaurants? Do you know how to organize a group trip? Get good airline rates? Even if this trip doesn’t interest you, maybe you’d like to let us know what would.

Please forward all contacts to the Sri Aurobindo Association, Pondicherry Trip, 2288 Fulton St., Suite 310, Berkeley, CA 94704; or call Vishnu at (209) 339- 1342 with questions or comments.

-Vishnu Eschner

Passings

It is with great sadness that the Sri Aurobindo Association announces the passing of the Rev. Joseph Martinez in San Francisco on March 22, 1995.

Rev. Martinez was the head of the Spiritual Healing Center

in San Francisco and his last public appearance was at our center on Saturday, March 18, when he spoke on the supramental and transformation of the body. He graciously gave the Sri Aurobindo Center the donations collected that day.

On a personal level, the Rev. Martinez using his spiritual healing was able to help me with what could have become crippling arthritis, had it not been caught in time.

We will miss him very much.

—Surama Bloomquist

Briefs

• **V. Madhusudan Reddy** of the Institute of Human Study in Hyderabad, India, announces that construction of a meditation complex called “The Avatar” was started on February 2 1, 1995. A dome 90 feet in diameter and 36 feet high, which will enshrine a life-size bronze statue of Sri Aurobindo, is being built in a rural setting called Matridarshan. Champaklal laid the foundation stone about 10 years ago.

• Following a day of darshan activities at Matagiri on April 23, **Wendy Roy** and **Julian Lines** were married. Sam Spanier, Eric Hughes, and Robert Aarsse-Prins read from Sri Aurobindo and Mother, and Paul Lisseck read a poem by N.G. Roy. Guests enjoyed the sunlight, the mountains, and the wind.

• Participants in a “yoga trek” in the High Sierra over the Fourth of July weekend, which included campfire readings of *Savitri*, reported an inspirational wilderness experience.

• The 1995 **Auroville International** meeting was held in Merriam Hill Center in New Hampshire the second week in July. See the next issue of *Collaboration* for details.

• A graduate student in psychology seeks to correspond or exchange notes and meditations with anyone practicing psychotherapy or formally studying psychology. Contact **Michael Davis**, 1000 Grove #561, Evanston, IL 60201; phone: (708) 475-7400 #561.

• **Aurodiscuss** and **Auroconf** are two online e-mail discussion groups focusing on Integral Yoga, Auroville, The *Synthesis of Yoga*, and related topics. To participate, send e-mail to ltepper@compatible.com.

• An **Integral Yoga Web site**, consisting of a welcome page and hypertext media devoted to the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and related topics, is available on the Internet’s World Wide Web at the following address: <http://www.webcom.com/~miraura>. An e-mail working group called “Auroarchive” is developing and maintaining the Web site. For more information, send e-mail to David Hutchinson: dbhutchinson@ucdavis.edu.

• **Renu** and **Neeti Roy** have a Sri Aurobindo Center at 4 Greystone Rd., Unionville, Ont. **L3R 8H9**, Canada, (905) 477-2644.

• The **Auroville Liaison Office** may be reached at P.O. Box 8010, Victoria, B.C., **V8W 3R7**, Canada, (604) 383-4699, e-mail: avliaison@auroville.org. The office publishes the electronic newsletter *Attempt*, with emphasis on the Auroville pavilions.



AUROVILLE ALMANAC

Dr. Karan Singh speaks

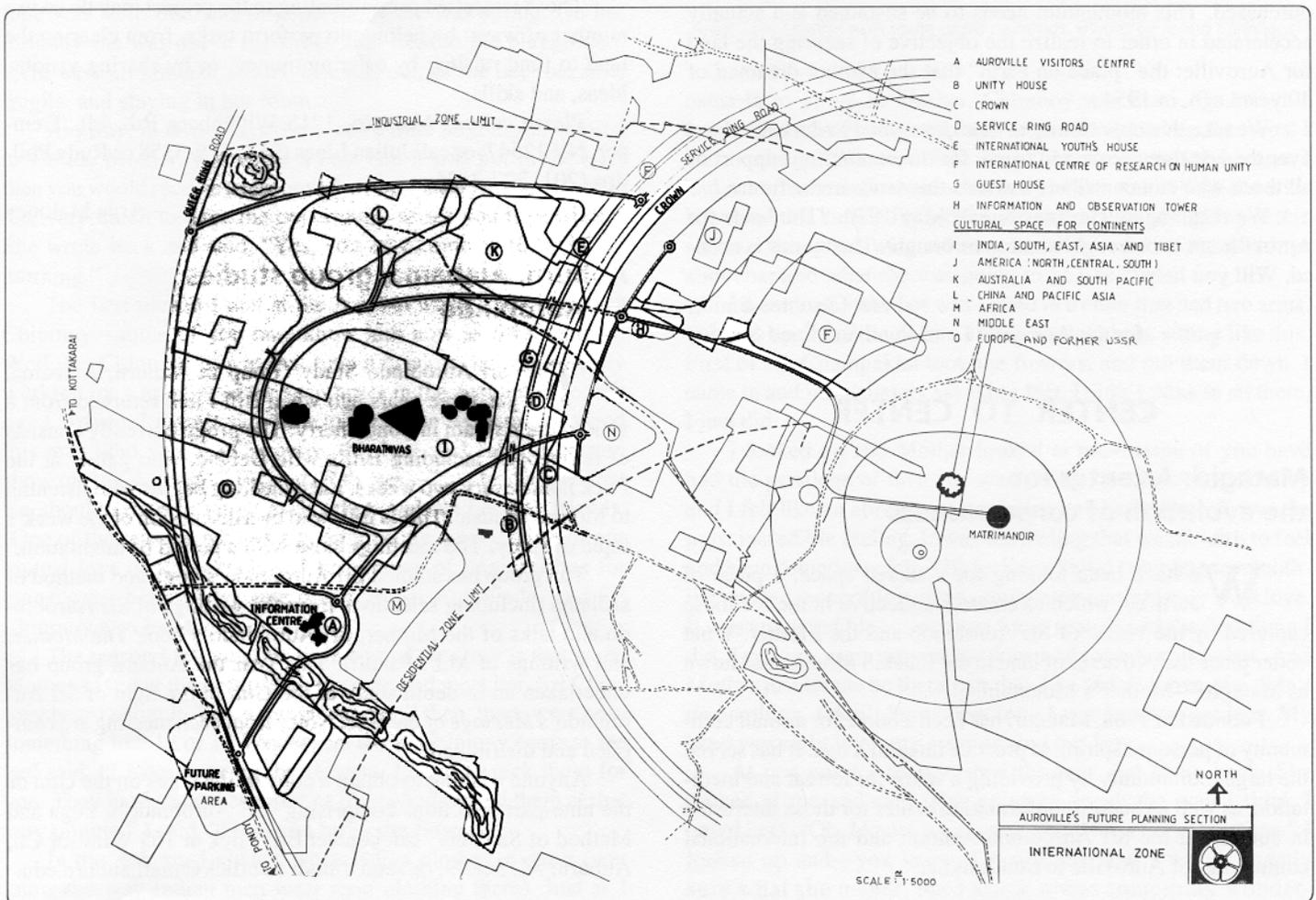
Dr. Karan Singh, whose father was the last Maharaja of Kashmir, brought an Earth Day message of renewal in a talk he gave at the Indian Consulate in New York on Thursday, April 27, 1995. Speaking on "Globalization: Earth's Evolution," Dr. Singh discussed Sri Aurobindo, the poet and nationalist political leader whose vision inspired the creation of Auroville. Dr. Singh detailed the current state of the 27-year-old community and examined the evolutionary trend of globalization.

Dr. Singh served as the youngest cabinet minister under Indira Gandhi and later as India's ambassador to the United States. He has also taken a number of important appointments for the environmental cause, including Project Tiger. For the past four years, he has served as chair of the governing board of Auroville.

What is Auroville?

Auroville is an international community of 1,000 residents in South India that has spent the last 26 years restoring barren earth, planting trees, and developing an ecologically based living environment on 2,500 acres. Auroville has received widespread recognition for its accomplishments in reforestation, ferrocement, biogas, and mud brick architecture. Today Aurovilians work at occupations as diverse as dryland farming, computer design, and dance. Underlying it all is Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's vision of Auroville as a city for the evolution of the whole of humanity and the earth. Auroville has much to teach the world about wasteland regeneration, alternative technology, multicultural cooperation, tolerance, patience, and sensitivity to a higher will.—from Merriam Hill Center's Spring/Summer 1995 brochure and an Auroville Information Office posting

Below: Map of Auroville's International Zone
(Future Plan, February 1995)





Land still needed

To friends of Auroville:
1995 marks 31 years of land purchase for Auroville: the first plot of land on record as having been purchased for Auroville was registered on October 8, 1964.

A recent progress report shows that although substantial progress towards the goal of acquiring the remaining land needed for Auroville was made during the past year, there is still much work to be done. In the city area there are still about 370 acres to be purchased, and several hundred acres more are needed for the consolidation and expansion of the greenbelt.

In order to achieve this, a continuous flow of funds will be needed over the next few years. With the rise in land prices, it is difficult to make a definitive estimate of the total requirement, but it is clear that if we had Rs. 10-20 million each year (U.S. \$350,000-\$700,000) we could really begin to get the job done. (In 1994 we had Rs. 7.25 million.)

Today the need to complete the purchase of the remaining land for Auroville has never been so urgent.

Momentum toward this has been built up over the last three years, during which more than 200 acres (80 hectares) have been purchased. This momentum needs to be sustained and actually accelerated in order to realize the objective of securing the land for Auroville: the "place on earth" that the Mother dreamed of 40 years ago, in 1954.

We take this opportunity to thank everybody who has helped over the last three years and to ask for the continuing support of all those who can contribute towards this work in the future.

We recall again Her message of May 1970: "The lands for Auroville are to be bought and can be bought. The money is needed. Will you help?"

-Peter Clarence-Smith,
for the Auroville Land Fund and Land Service

CENTER TO CENTER

Matagiri: A center for the evolution of consciousness

We have been longing for a sacred space, a piece of earth on which to create a collective home for those captured by the vision of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. What better place than 40 acres of land in the Catskill Mountains known as Matagiri-Mother's Mountain.

Founded in 1968, Matagiri has been a home for a small community of persons aspiring to practice Integral Yoga. It has served the larger community by providing a space for retreat and meditation, as well as being an information center for those interested in contacting the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and the international community of Auroville in South India.

True to the pattern of evolution, forms that once fostered the growth of Matagiri have given way to new forms-bridges to future realizations. Moved by the collective dimension of Integral Yoga, many have dreamed beyond the dream of the pioneers of Matagiri. They have proposed numerous projects, they have wondered about an expanded community, they have envisioned temples on the summit of the mountain ...

All of these dreams have contributed to bringing us to the next step of creating a material base for their manifestation. The Foundation for World Education has given the seed money to obtain custody of Matagiri. This first stage has been accomplished.

The vision, which remains open and fluid to the broader community, is to create an infrastructure on the mountain that includes a meditation center, a kitchen/dining facility, residential units, a conference center, and a library.

The realization of this center will provide a base for exploring future possibilities. Matagiri will exist as a laboratory of evolution-a sacred space to retreat; experience community; explore the interface between mind, body, and spirit in the healing arts; facilitate the dialog between science, spirituality, psychology, and the creative arts; promote research on the transformation of the body; and integrate the wisdom of East and West.

Those interested in contributing to the project may do so in a number of ways: by helping to perform tasks, from clearing the land to fund raising; by offering money; or by sharing visions, ideas, and skills.

Please contact Matagiri, 1218 Wittenberg Rd., Mt. Tremper, NY 12547; or call Julian Lines (914) 679-5358 or Rudy Phillips (201) 327-3236.

—Arya Maloney

Auburn, Alabama, group studies Sri Aurobindo

The Sri Aurobindo Study Group in Auburn, Alabama, began three years ago when Bill Flick returned from a visit to the Ashram in Pondicherry. The group currently consists of ten people, including Bill's wife Debbie, who gather at the Flick home every two weeks. Each meeting begins with listening to Mother's music. This is followed by a discussion of the week's topic of study. The meetings close with a period of meditation.

The group has studied Sri Aurobindo's yoga and method of sadhana (including selections from the writings of Sri Aurobindo and talks of the Mother, Sri Aurobindo's book *The Mother*, and writings of M.P. Pandit). This year the Auburn group has undertaken an in-depth study of the *Gita* in the light of Sri Aurobindo's Message *of the Gita*. Notes from each meeting are compiled and distributed.

Anyone wishing to obtain a copy of the notes on the *Gita* or the nine-part selections comprising "Sri Aurobindo's Yoga and Method of Sadhana" can contact Bill Flick at 163 Windsor Ct., Auburn, AL 36849; or send e-mail to bflick@mail.auburn.edu.



CHRONICLES AND RECOLLECTIONS

The story of Matagiri: Part 1

by Sam Spanier

Sam gave this talk at the July 1994 All USA Meeting (AUM) in Phoenecia, New York, a short distance from Matagiri. Eric Hughes graciously transcribed the tape.

[Opening remarks not recorded]

In 1960 Eric and I went to the apartment of Eleanor Montgomery [who had a Sri Aurobindo center in New York City] for the evening. Part of the evening was a tape, and it was the first time I ever heard the Mother's voice; I was taken in an incredible way. First of all, I said, "My God, I know that voice very well," and I couldn't understand how. I was determined from then on to go and see this woman. Two years later, I had the opportunity.

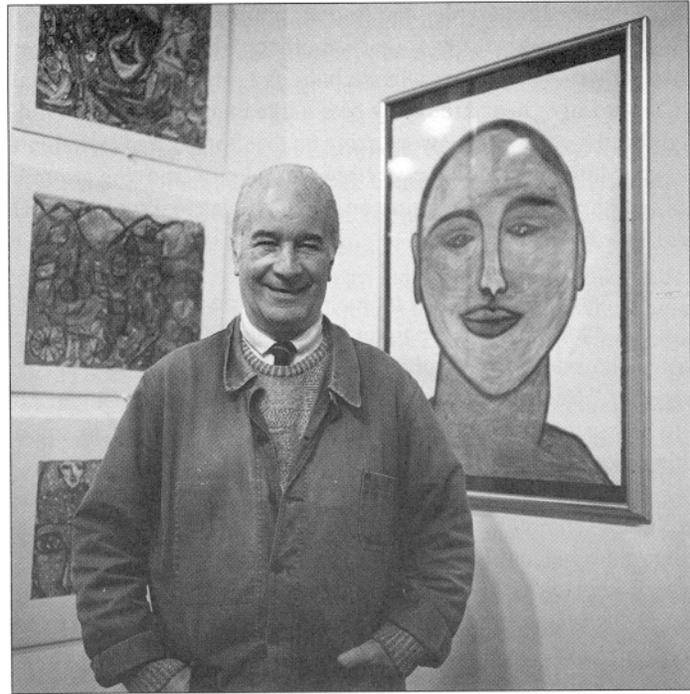
I went to the Ashram in 1962. By the way, the Mother at that time was well. She was in good form, she was strong. On her birthday she was out in the street. She went to the playground, there were all kinds of affairs. She was not, as she later became, fragile, and staying in her rooms.

Anyway, in those days there was a little box. If you wanted to see the Mother, you wrote a note and it was put in the box; then you would receive a response. I wrote, "Dear Mother, I would like very much to have the opportunity to see you if possible." She wrote back and said, "Yes, you may come at 10:00 in the morning."

The first person I met at the Ashram when I got there was Chinmoy—some of you may know him now as Sri Chinmoy. Well, Sri Chinmoy was at that time a disciple, he was actually working for a number of the secretaries in the Ashram. The first day I arrived, I wasn't sure how to get to the Ashram. I stopped this man who was Sri Chinmoy, this boy, and said, "Can you show me the Ashram?" He said, "Oh, yes—" . . . he decided that we should come to know each other, and we became friends. (One of the reasons we had a good meeting was because of our mutual love of Ramakrishna. I had known of Ramakrishna for many years before I became drawn to Sri Aurobindo, and Sri Chinmoy also had that.)

The reason I tell you this little part of the story is that when Mother gave me the permission to come and meet her, Sri Chinmoy heard about it. The Ashram was small then, there were only something like 12 or 13 Westerners there. Chinmoy came to me and said, "I have to bring the flowers. I want to pick them for you. They have to be fresh, just as if you had picked them at that very minute." I said, "Fine, you bring the flowers."

In the Ashram I always wore Indian clothes, a *dhoti* (you know the way Indian men wear their clothing there). Just as I



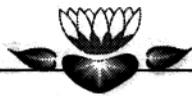
Artist Sam Spanier with some of his paintings. (Photo by John Kleinhaus)

came in to go up to Mother, Chinmoy was there. He had this bowl, a bunch of flowers; I took them and started up the steps. I was thinking, "What will I do there?" I was concerned, because I had never been in front of somebody of the stature that she was. Here was this simple Jewish Brooklyn boy who was going to this saint or this great wise woman, and I'd heard so many things about her and what she was going to be like.

I went in and Mother was seated in a chair that had two arms. She was up on a little dais, a little pedestal place, sitting like this. First of all, Champaklal took the flowers, and put them down. I came in and immediately sat at her feet. I didn't think to sit there, I just did.

I looked up and Mother looked at me—some of you have had the privilege of this, she was sitting like that—I looked up and I felt like an absolute infant in my mother's arms. It was the most incredible feeling. It was the feeling that we all wish to feel and have sometimes felt. The feeling of total completeness, nothing needed, everything given, completely, completely with love. It was an incredible . . . so there I was seated, and the first thing I did, I put my arms around her legs and took her like that. And Mother just let me be there like that. She didn't move, she didn't do anything. I don't know how long I was holding her legs. My head was right here, my arms around her legs.

At one point I relinquished the legs and came back. She looked at me and said (I'm going to speak the way I think I heard her): "Oh, I know your atmosphere for a very long time." I looked up and—you know, I heard this, and I wasn't exactly sure what she meant, but I know it was something wonder-



ful because she said she had known me for a very long time.

Then I grabbed her finger—mothers will know this better than fathers—you know when a baby is lying in a crib and you put your finger in and the baby gets—like that. That’s what I did. I grabbed her finger (she wore a ring on that finger), and I wouldn’t let go. Mother was doing everything, you know, moving around. . . . [portion missing] hanging on to her. It was really very sweet and very special.

Then Mother said to me, “What do you do?” I said, “Mother, I’m a painter.” She said, “Oh,” and with her arms, she said, “Oh, all the more reason for us to come closer together.” Because, if you don’t know, Mother was a painter. So this was a great sweetness and loveliness on her part to say a thing like that.

She said, “What do you paint?” I said, “I paint heads, Mother.” “Ah,” she said, “I said to Champaklal, ‘When I see that man every morning at the balcony, he has all these heads around him.’ Now I know why I see all those heads around you.” I looked at her and was amazed, because it meant in some way she had even recognized me there—there were hundreds of people that came every morning.

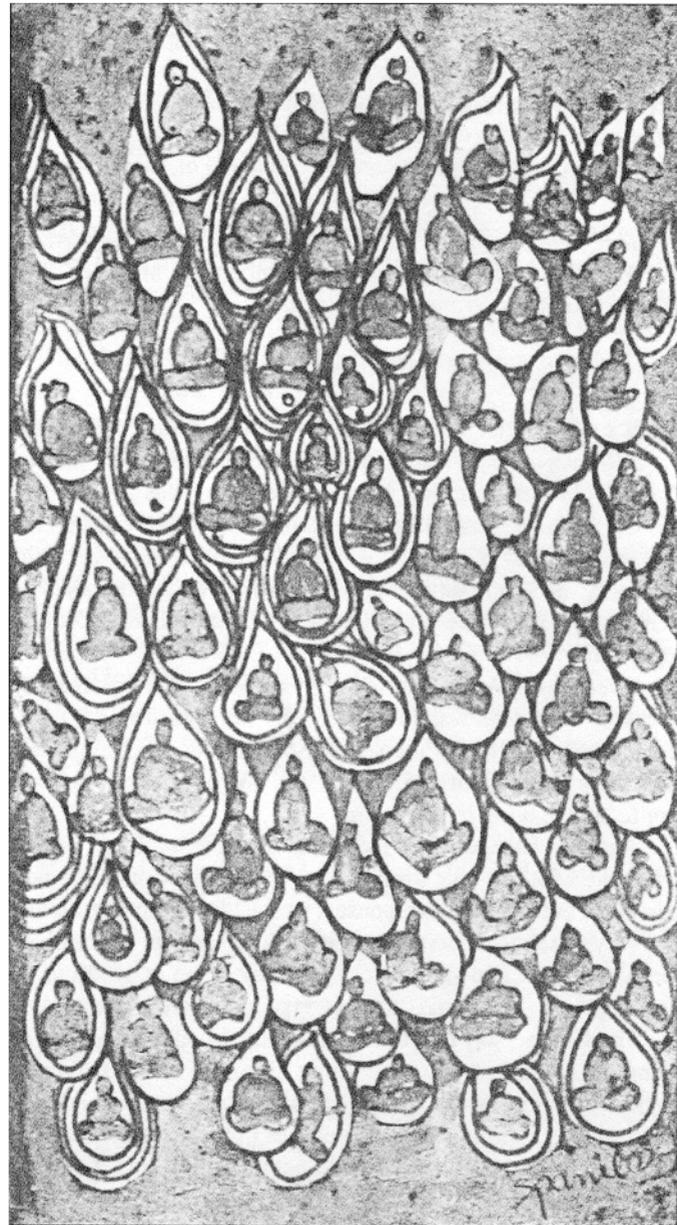
So that was that. Then she went a little bit back into her seat and said to me, “Do you like to travel?” I said, “Oh, yes, Mother”—those of you who know me know that I love to travel. She said, “Ah! Have you ever been to Japan?” I said, “No, Mother.” Of course, two years later, I was in Japan.

Then she said to me, “Would you like to meditate with me?” Mother didn’t often meditate with people. So I said—I was in delight, you know, in this remarkable place of happiness—I said, “Anything you wish, Mother.” And I began to sit into a yogic position. She said, “No! You sit natural but remain *passive*.” With that kind of tremendous power, you know. “*Passive!*” So I remained natural and became passive.

I closed my eyes and began to meditate. I felt myself moving, moving, moving, and beginning to leave this body. I felt myself going up out of this body, way, way up. And at a particular point I stopped, or it stopped, and I experienced something which cannot be put into words. How long that experience lasted I really don’t know.

But at a certain point, like an elevator, I felt myself coming down, down, down, I could feel myself come back into this form and back into the body. And when I was in the body again, the thought in my mind was, “Did she come down too?” I opened my eyes to see if she’d come down too, and she was peering—she had bent over and she was going like this, and her eyes, you know (all of us know that her eyes were quite amazing)—her eyes were very wide and she had this wonderful smile, and there was something remarkable. She said to me, “You can be a link between East and West.” I thought, “Oh, my God!” That was an amazing thing to hear from this very amazing person.

Champaklal had come in to usher me out; he didn’t want me to be there any longer, I had been there long enough. Mother

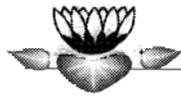


“Hundreds of Buddhas” by Sam Spanier

went like that [*gesture*], and I sat there for a long while. Later I found out it was a great privilege to have been allowed to stay longer than usual.

Anyway, when I had first come to the Ashram, I was extremely happy there. Everyone was kind and loving and generous and welcoming. I loved India. I felt as if I had known it all my life. So I thought, well, I might as well live here for the rest of my life. There’s no reason to go back. I even began to look around to see if I could buy a place, and there was a place, right on the water, which I understand now is a gasoline station.

So I had come in to meet with her with a thought in my head



asking, "Mother could I please remain here for the rest of my life?" And before the thought came out of my head, she said to me, again pointing, "It is not necessary for you to remain here for the rest of your life." I was absolutely startled, because it was real telepathy—of course, I shouldn't have been startled because she was an amazing being. Then she said, "But don't think of leaving at the moment"—you see, it was not to make me feel as if she didn't want me. I wasn't rejected.

There were a few other things which are very private which I will not tell you. . . . She looked at me again just before the meeting was over—she turned, and she had flowers. She handed me a giant white rose and a giant red rose. So I had the white and the red rose in my hand, and I went down in this incredible state, a state of great joy and happiness. And there, of course, was Chinmoy, waiting to hear what had happened. I really didn't want to speak at that moment, because it was so precious and so beautiful . . . I handed Chinmoy the white rose (I had a feeling to do that very much) and I took the red rose.

I went through where the samadhi is and went out. I lived at that time across the park in Castellini [an Ashram guest house]. I was walking with this red rose in this remarkable state, and suddenly I had this strange feeling: "I don't feel I'm on the ground." I looked down and my both feet went pop! like that, and I can tell you, which may sound strange, there was a sense of being above the ground. Now, you know, I couldn't prove it, and I don't have to, but I never told anybody that. I thought they would think I was mad, so I didn't say anything. I went back to my rooms and stayed there all day.

Now, a part of the reason that we're here is because I'm supposed to tell you how Matagiri came into existence.

Two weeks after that, Maggi Lidchi, whom some of you may know (she lived in the Ashram for many years, and was a dear friend of mine even before I came to Pondicherry; I had met her here in America)—Maggi had invited me for dinner one night. She had a little courtyard in a little tiny house. I was seated in the courtyard waiting for the dinner to be finished, and she was in the kitchen area. I was sitting there very casually. All of a sudden, in front of me, was a slide projection going on! One slide, another slide, another slide. And all the slides had to do with what you now know as Matagiri. The pictures were there as if it had been taken—mind you, this was years before it ever came into existence—and so when this happened, there was also with the viewing a certain knowledge that seemed to be given to me to know what this was about. But it put me in a state of wonder.

When Maggi came out, she said, "What's the matter?" I said, "Maggi, you'll never believe it. I just had a slide presentation of a center that I'm supposed to bring into existence. I know everything that's going to happen." She looked at me and said, "Wait." She came out with a piece of paper. "Write it all down," she said, "because tomorrow it's going to be a fantasy. If it's true, Mother will give her blessings. I'll take it up to Mother, and she'll give

her blessings." [At that time, Maggi Lidchi was one of Mother's secretaries.] So I wrote down all that I could possibly remember of everything that was seen. It was sent up to Mother. Mother gave her blessings.

Now I should tell you that I believe Mother gave her blessings to everything. I never ever heard of anything that Mother didn't give her blessings to, unless it was something that might have been unusually strange. But, "I want to open a bakery"—"I give my blessings"; "I want to go here"—"I give my blessings." Anything. But what I realized quite a number of years later, actually, was that the presentation I saw was put into me by the Mother in the personal viewing that I'd had with her when she asked me to join her in meditation. An experiential thing occurred that I can't describe but I felt, which was putting it all in there, and two weeks later it came out. That's what I truly believe occurred.

Anyway, I went home to America, and there was already a small center started by Eric and myself. I came back and told Eric this story. I said, "Now I know what I have to do. I have to start this, this is what has to be done." That's all I knew, but what I said then was, "I don't know where, I don't know how."

Some of you may know me well enough that although I've always felt I had great faith, I never did anything but argue with God. I constantly am expecting proof of the Divine. So I said, "Well, if the Divine wants me to do that, let the Divine show me how."

I waited patiently. One year went by, nothing happened. A second year went by, nothing happened. I became a little impatient, so I thought, I'll go back and see that woman. So I went back to the Ashram in '64. Unfortunately, if you know the history, you know that at the end of '62, Mother became what is known as "not well." The doctors had one opinion, and she had another; if you read the *Agenda*, you know what she thought. In any case, she was no longer to be seen as often. She no longer came down on the balcony. (In '62 I'd had the privilege of seeing her every morning from 6:15 to 6:30. We could all stand below her balcony and she would come out; this is where she had seen the heads around my head.)

In any case, I went back in '64, and having heard that she had not really been well, I felt I could not take her time. She had too many precious things to do, and I didn't feel it was right of me.

Some of you may know Ann Harrison—she was a dear friend, the woman who actually introduced me to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. She was at the Ashram. She said, "Samie, you are a child of the Mother. The Mother is here for her children. You can go and see her, she will want to see you." So I wrote Mother a note and said, "Mother dearest, if you will allow me, I would like to be able to see you." She wrote back, "Yes, you may come, but it will be a silent meeting." I didn't object to that at all. I thought it was a great privilege to be in her presence, silent or otherwise.

I went in to see her, and Mother was very fragile from the two-year period. I mean, she was very much there, but fragile. I



did not sit on the floor, I sat on a kind of low seat. I was looking at Mother, she was looking at me, and I heard her telepathically say, "Now that you are here, if you wish, you may ask me a question." I looked up at her, because I really heard it in my head, and I said, "Mother, I am so grateful to be here. I have nothing to ask of you." And when I finished my statement, which was inside, she smiled, and she gave me that incredible smile again. That was 1964.

In the middle of 1964, Mother began to speak to me inwardly. If you have that experience, you know what it is. If you don't, you'll just have to trust that it can happen. Mother said to me in '65, "You can go buy the property." I said, "But where, Mother? How, Mother?" She directed me, she told me to come up to this area. And I did. I came to this area and looked. I had no money. I had no idea how to buy any property. But since she had decided this was to be, I knew it was to be.

I went out—without sounding foolish, I said to real estate agents, "I'm looking for a very large property, but it can't be more than \$10,000." Now, of course, in '65 that was not as unreasonable as it would be today. But it still was incredibly little.

Notes from Sri Aurobindo

Truly, this shocked reverence for the past is a wonderful and fearful thing! After all, the Divine is infinite and the unrolling of the Truth may be an infinite process or at least, if not quite so much, yet with some room for new discovery and new statement, even perhaps new achievement, not a thing in a nutshell cracked and its contents exhausted once for all by the first seer or sage, while the others must religiously crack the same nutshell all over again, each tremblingly fearful not to give the lie to "past" seers and sages.—*Letters on Yoga*, p. 93

It is quite impossible for the supramental to take up the body before there has been the full supramental change in the mind and the vital. X and other seem always to expect some kind of unintelligible miracle—they do not understand that it is a concentrated evolution, swift but following the law of creation that has to take place. A miracle can be a moment's wonder. A change according to the Divine Law can alone endure.—*Letters on Yoga*, p. 1227

All is not settled when a cause is humanly lost and hopeless; all is settled, only when the soul renounces its effort.—*Thoughts and Aphorisms*

So they showed me \$40,000 places, \$50,000, and we went through the whole . . . finally after two months of looking, I said, "I'm disgusted, why don't you show me the property, Mother? You haven't shown me the property. I'm going home." I said it just like that. No answer, of course, but that's what I said.

The last day I was to remain there, I was coming home from the grocery shop. A man in a car stopped me and said, "Can I give you a lift home?" because I had heavy bags. I said, "That's very kind of you," and got in. He said, "What are you doing in Woodstock?" "Well, I've been looking for property, but it's absolutely impossible." "Oh? I'm a real estate agent. Would you like to go with me tomorrow?" I told him, "But I'm leaving." He said, "Why don't you try?" So I said OK, and he took me again to a million places. Nothing available.

As we were driving home, he said, "Oh, something came in this morning. I haven't seen it myself. It's very large and it would be interesting. Would you like to see it? It's not in town." I said, "All right, why not?" We came to the entrance to Matagiri, which in those days had many more trees. (I'm sad to say a lot of them had to go.) We drove one car length in, not more, and Mother said, "This is it. Tell him you'll take it." So I—it's absolutely true—I turned to the man and I said, "This is it. I'll take it." He turned to me and said, "But Mr. Spanier, you haven't even seen it." I realized he thought I was—you know. I said, "No, I'll take it." "Let me show you the house." "All right, I'll see the house."

So we drove up and there was the little house, which you all may know. It's a little changed now. The house was very sweet. I went in, and I must say the atmosphere inside that place was so pure, it was so lovely, it had such a purity, it was incredible. And to my great delight, I was told that the owner, who had died at the age of 96, had left it. I always like when people live very long lives, and he had lived a long life, a happy life. Everything that he owned was in the house. He had many religious and spiritual books on the shelves, and I found that very good. I found it very touching.

And so I said to the man—I'm telling you secrets about prices, but I'll tell you anyway. I said to the man, "How much do they want?" By the way, it was 50 acres. He said, "Twenty-two thousand dollars." "Ah," I said, "twenty-two thousand. I told you I can't afford more than ten. Twenty-two thousand! Well, I've been seeing a lot of houses, and I've learned a little. I can give you a bid, can't I?" He said, "Yes. Do it." So I said, "Tell him I'll give him thirteen thousand."

He called the son, who was about seventyish, of the old man, he was in his 70s. About a week later I was informed that the son said yes, I could have it for fifteen-five. So that was really quite amazing. But I always have things in my head about numbers, so the five hundred for some reason I wanted to cut off. Not because I thought it was too much, but I liked the idea of just fifteen. There was something sweet about it. So I said to the agent, I said, "Can I have it for fifteen?" He said, "Mr. Spanier, this is so remarkable. Take it. He's going to think you're one of these."



hippies. Don't do that." So I accepted. And so that's the way we then . . . [end of first side of tape]

[The first portion of the second side of the tape was not recorded. Sam was talking about another episode, before the purchase of the property, when he was with another real estate agent, a woman.]

The real estate agent and I were seated in the car. She was driving, and someone hit us from behind. When they hit us, my arm went into the front of the car. She said, "Did you hurt yourself?" "Well, a little, not too bad." "Oh, no, no. I want to take you to the doctor." "I don't need a doctor." She said, "Oh, yes"—she was afraid that I was, you know—so she took me to the doctor.

He said, "What's the matter?" I said, "Nothing, except I have a little numbness in these two fingers." He said, "It doesn't seem like anything, but I must tell you, sometimes nerves can get damaged and you might have trouble," you know, blah, blah, blah. Well, I forgot about that.

A week later I heard a knock at the door, and there was an insurance man. He said to me, "We're representing the man who hit you from behind, and if you sign this little thing for me, I'll give you \$75 for your problem." I said, "Why will you do that?" Because it didn't dawn on me that I . . . he said, "Well, I don't want you to feel that we're not considering you." I said, "Did you think I was going to sue you?" Because that was the first time the idea even entered my head. He said, "Well, that happens." I said, "Well, now, let me think about it." Because I hadn't thought about it.

Then all of a sudden, Mother's voice again came. She said, "Tell him you will sign it for \$400." So I turned and I said, "I'll sign it for \$400." He looked at me and said, "Mr. Spanier, I've been in this business for 30 years. You didn't lose a finger, you didn't lose a toe. Never, we'll never . . ." So she said, "Tell him if he goes to the people and tries, they will give him the \$400." So I turned to him—he didn't know this was going on and I didn't act foolish—and said, "I'm almost sure, positive, if you go to the people, they'll give you the \$400." He said, "All right, I'll try. But it's—I'll tell you, it's not going to . . ." A week



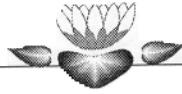
"So we drove up and there was the little house. " Matagiri in the early 70s.

later he came back with a \$400 check. He gave it to me and I signed the papers.

Now the reason for telling this little silly story is this: John Kelly, whom some of you may know (I hope some of you knew John Kelly; he died in India a few years ago, a very wonderful and dear friend)—John Kelly and I went together to do the closing of the property. And as I told you, we had so little money. In fact, the money that paid for the down payment was begged from my own mother, because I didn't have the money to put it down. She loaned me \$3,000—she's still alive. Mommie, you hear me? When I said that I wanted to buy the property, she said, "Where is it?" I told her. She said, "In the wilderness you're going to live? Never will my son live in the wilderness like that." She thought anything that was out of New York City was a wilderness. Anyway, she loaned me a small sum of money.

But the point is that when we got to the closing, just at the very end, the man said, "We're very sorry, but you realize you have a \$400 property tax to pay." I said, "Oh, that's the reason for the whole experience!" That \$400 was all arranged so we'd have it to pay the tax. Now, one can believe that or not, but I know it absolutely was the case. It was really quite remarkable. So that's how Matagiri started.

Sam Spanier is an artist living at Matagiri near Woodstock, New York. He recently opened his own gallery.



Special section: Music and consciousness

SOURCE MATERIAL

The following quotes are taken from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on Music, a 1973 booklet published by the Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

The Mother on music

Music—essentially a spiritual art

The role of music lies in helping the consciousness to uplift itself towards the spiritual heights.

* * *

If you want art to be the true and highest art, it must be the expression of a divine world brought down into this material world. All true artists have some feeling of this kind, some sense that they are intermediaries between a higher world and this physical existence. If you consider it in this light, art is not very different from yoga. But most often the artist has only an indefinite feeling, he has not the knowledge. Still, I knew some who had it; they worked consciously at their art with the knowledge. In their creation they did not put forward their personality as the most important factor; they considered their work as an offering to the Divine, they tried to express by it their relation with the Divine.

Behind the external form of music

What is there "behind" the external form of music?

Music is a means of expressing certain thoughts, feelings, emotions, aspirations. There is even a region where all these movements exist and from there, as they are brought down, they take a musical form. One who is a very good composer, with some inspiration, will produce very beautiful music, for he is a good musician. A bad musician may also have a very high inspiration; he may receive something which is good, but as he possesses no musical capacity, what he produces is terribly commonplace, ordinary, uninteresting. But if you go beyond, if you reach just the place where there is this origin of music—of the idea and emotion and inspiration—if you reach there, you can taste these things without being in the least troubled by the forms; the commonplace musical form can be linked up again with that, because that was the inspiration of the writer of the music. Naturally, there are cases where there is no inspiration, where the origin is merely a kind of mechanical music. It is not always interesting in every case. But what I mean is that there is an inner

condition in which the external form is not the most important thing; it is the origin of the music, the inspiration from beyond, which is important; it is not purely the sounds, it is what the sounds express.

* * *

There are musical pieces which have no inspiration, they are like mechanical works. There are musicians who possess a great virtuosity, that is, who have thoroughly mastered the technique and who, for example, can execute without making a mistake the fastest and most difficult things. They can play music but it expresses nothing: it is like a machine. It means nothing, except that they have great skill. For what is most important is the inspiration, in everything that one does; in all human creations the most important thing is inspiration. Naturally, the execution must be on the same level as the inspiration; to be able to express truly well the highest things one must have a very good technique. I do not say that technique is not necessary; it is even indispensable, but it is not the only indispensable thing, it is less important than inspiration.

The essential quality of music depends upon where the music comes from, upon its origin.

Different origins of inspiration

From what plane does music generally come?

There are different levels. There is a whole category of music that comes from the higher vital, which is very catching, somewhat (not to put it exactly) vulgar, it is something that twists your nerves. This music is not necessarily unpleasant, but generally it seizes you there in the nervous centres. So there is one type of music which has a vital origin. There is music which has a psychic origin—it is altogether different. And then there is music which has a spiritual origin: it is very bright and it carries you away, captures you entirely. but if you want to execute this music correctly you must be able to make it come through the vital passage. Your music coming from above may become externally quite flat if you do not possess that intensity of vital vibration which gives it its splendour and strength. I knew people who had truly a very high inspiration and it became quite flat, because the vital did not stir. I must admit that by their spiritual practices they had put to sleep their vital completely—it was literally asleep, it did not act at all—and the music came straight into the physical, and if one were connected with the origin of that music, one could see that it was something wonderful, but externally it had no force, it was a little melody, very poor, very thin; there was none of the strength of harmony. When you can bring the vital into play, then all the strength of vibration is there. If you draw into it this higher origin, it becomes the music of a genius.

For music is very special; it is difficult, it needs an intermediary. And it is like that for all other things, for literature also, for poetry, for painting, for everything one does. The true value of one's creation depends on the origin of one's inspiration, on the



level, the height where one finds it. But the value of the execution depends in the vital strength which expresses it. To complete the genius both must be there. This is very rare. Generally it is the one or the other, more often the vital. And then there are those other kinds of music we have—the music of the *café-concert*, of the cinema—it has an extraordinary skill, and at the same time an exceptional platitude, an extraordinary vulgarity. But as it has an extraordinary skill, it seizes you in the solar plexus and it is this music that you remember; it grasps you at once and holds you and it is very difficult to free yourself from it, for it is well-made music, music very well made. It is made vitally with vital vibrations, but what is behind is frightful,

But imagine this same vital power of expression, with the inspiration coming from far above—the highest inspiration possible, when all the heavens open before us—then that becomes wonderful. There are certain passages of César Franck, certain passages of Beethoven, certain passages of Bach, there are pieces by others also which have this inspiration and power. But it is only a moment, it comes as a moment, it does not last. You cannot take the entire work of an artist as being on that level. Inspiration comes like a flash; sometimes it lasts sufficiently long, when the work is sustained; and when that is there, the same *effect* is produced, that is, if you are attentive and concentrated, suddenly that lifts you up, lifts up all your energies, it is as though someone opened up your head and you were flung into the air to tremendous heights and magnificent lights. It produces in a few seconds results that are obtained with so much difficulty through so many years of yoga. Only, in general, one may fall down afterwards, because the consciousness is not there as the basis; one has the experience and afterwards does not even know what has happened. But if you are prepared, if you have indeed prepared your consciousness by yoga and then the thing happens, it is almost definitive.

A few supreme notes

There is a domain far above the mind which we could call the world of Harmony and, if you can reach there, you will find the root of all harmony that has been manifested in whatever form upon earth. For instance, there is a certain line of music, consisting of a few supreme notes, that was behind the productions of two artists who came one after another—one a concerto of Bach, another a concerto of Beethoven. The two are not alike on paper and differ to the outward ear, but in their essence they are the same. One and the same vibration of consciousness, one wave of significant harmony touched both these artists. Beethoven caught a larger part, but in him it was more mixed

with the inventions and interpolations of his mind; Bach received less, but what he seized of it was purer. The vibration was that of the victorious emergence of consciousness, consciousness tearing itself out of the womb of unconsciousness in a triumphant uprising and birth.

If by yoga you are capable of reaching this source of all art, then you are master, if you will, of all the arts.

European and Indian music

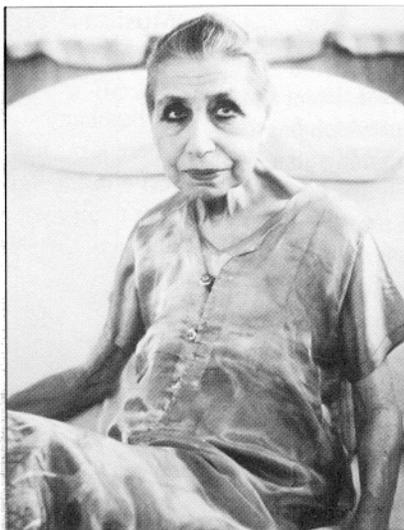
What is the cause of the great difference between European and Indian music? Is it the origin or the expression?

It is both but in an inverse sense.

This very high inspiration comes only rarely in European music; rare also is a psychic origin, very rare. Either it comes from high above or it is vital. The expression is almost always, except in a few rare cases, a vital expression—interesting, powerful. Most often, the origin is purely vital. Sometimes it comes from the very heights, then it is wonderful. Sometimes it is psychic, particularly in what has been religious music, but this is not very frequent.

Indian music, when there are good musicians, has almost always a psychic origin; for example, the *ragas* have a psychic origin, they come from the psychic. The inspi-

ration does not often come from above. But Indian music is very rarely embodied in a strong vital. It has rather an inner and intimate origin. I have heard a great deal of Indian music, a great deal; I have rarely heard Indian music having vital strength, very rarely; perhaps not more than four or five times. But very often I have heard Indian music having a psychic origin; it translates itself almost directly into the physical. And truly one must then concentrate, and as it is—how to put it?—very tenuous, very subtle, as there are none of those intense vital vibrations, one can easily glide within it and climb back to the psychic origin of the music. It has that effect upon you, it is a kind of ecstatic trance, as from an intoxication. It makes you enter a little into trance. Then if you listen well and let yourself go, you move on and glide, glide into a psychic consciousness. But if you remain only in the external consciousness, the music is so tenuous that there is no response from the vital, it leaves you altogether flat. Sometimes, there was a vital force, then it became quite good. . . . I myself like this music very much, this kind of theme developing into a play. The theme is essentially very musical: and then it is developed with variations, innumerable variations, and it is always the same theme which is developed in one way or another. In Europe there were musicians who were truly musicians and they too had the thing: Bach had it, he used to do the same sort of



The Mother



thing. Mozart had it, his music was purely musical, he had no intention of expressing any other thing, it was music for music's sake. But this manner of taking a certain number of notes in a certain relation (they are like almost infinite variations), personally I find it wonderful to put you in repose, and you enter deep within yourself. And then, if you are ready, it gives you the psychic consciousness: something that makes you withdraw from the external consciousness, which makes you enter elsewhere, enter within.

How to listen to music

Mother, when one hears music, how should one truly hear it:

For this—if one can be completely silent, you see, silent and attentive, simply as though one were an instrument which has to record it—one does not move, and is only something that is listening—if one can be absolutely silent, absolutely still and like that, then the thing enters. And it is only later, some time later, that you can become aware of the effect, either of what it meant or the impression it had on you.

But the best way of listening is this. It is to be like a still mirror and very concentrated, very silent. In fact, we see people who truly love music... I have seen musicians listening to music, musicians, composers or players who truly love music, I have seen them listening to music... they sit completely still, you know, they are like that, they do not move at all. Everything, everything is like that. And if one can stop thinking, then it is very good, then one profits fully... It is one of the methods of inner opening and one of the most powerful.

Sri Aurobindo on music

Music and other arts

I do not know what to say on the subject you propose to me—the superiority of music to poetry—for my appreciation of music is bodiless and inexpressible, while about poetry I can write at ease with an expert knowledge. But is it necessary to fix a scale of greatness between two fine arts when each has its own greatness and can touch in its own way the extremes of aesthetic Ananda? Music, no doubt, goes nearest to the infinite and to the essence of things because it relies wholly on the ethereal vehicle, *sabda* (architecture by the by can do something of the same kind at the other extreme even in its imprisonment in mass); but painting and sculpture have their revenge by liberating visible form into ecstasy, while poetry though it cannot do with sound what music does, yet can make a many-stringed harmony, a sound revelation winging the creation by the word and setting afloat vivid suggestions of form and colour,—that gives it in a very subtle kind the power of all the arts. Who shall decide between such claims or be a judge between these godheads?

Importance of music in education

Music deepens the emotions and harmonises them with each other. Between them music, art and poetry are a perfect education for the soul; they make and keep its movement purified, self-controlled, deep and harmonious. These, therefore, are agents which cannot profitably be neglected by humanity on its onward march or degraded to the mere satisfaction of sensuous pleasure which will disintegrate rather than build the character. They are, when properly used, great educating, edifying and civilising forces.

Music as part of yoga

Art, poetry, music are not yoga, not in themselves things spiritual any more than philosophy is a thing spiritual or science. There lurks here another curious incapacity of the modern intellect—its inability to distinguish between mind and spirit, its readiness to mistake mental, moral and aesthetic idealisms for spirituality and their inferior degrees for spiritual values.

It is mere truth that the mental intuitions of the metaphysician or the poet for the most part fall far short of a concrete spiritual experience; they are distant flashes, shadowy reflections, not rays from the centre of Light. It is not less true that, looked at from the peaks, there is not much difference between the high mental eminences and the lower climbings of this external existence. All the energies of the Lila are equal in the sight from above, all are disguises of the Divine.

But one has to add that all can be turned into a first means towards the realisation of the Divine. A philosophic statement about the Atman is a mental formula, not knowledge, not experience; yet sometimes the Divine takes it as a channel of touch; strangely, a barrier in the mind breaks down, something is seen, a profound change operates in some inner part, there enters into the ground of the nature something calm, equal, ineffable. One stands upon a mountain ridge and glimpses or mentally feels a wideness, a pervasiveness, a nameless Vast in Nature; then suddenly there comes the touch, a revelation, a flooding, the mental loses itself in the spiritual, one bears the first invasion of the Infinite. Or you stand before a temple of Kali beside a sacred river and see what?—a sculpture, a gracious piece of architecture, but in a moment mysteriously, unexpectedly there is instead a Presence, a Power, a Face that looks into yours, an inner sight in you has regarded the World-Mother.

Similar touches can come through art, music, poetry to their creator or to one who feels the shock of the word, the hidden significance of a form, a message in the sound that carries more perhaps than was consciously meant by the composer. All things in the Lila can turn windows that open on the hidden Reality.

Still so long as one is satisfied with looking through windows, the gain is only initial; one day one will have to take up the pilgrim's staff and start out to journey there where the Reality is for ever manifest and present. Still less can it be spiritually satis-



SAMPLES

Music: A means to higher experience

Music as a world art exists because it is one of the primary heightened experiences of human culture. The very existence of music depends upon its role as a means to higher experience.—from *Music: A Living Language*, Tom Manoff (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1982)

* * *

Peter Sellars, theater director: . . . music is the most specific language that exists. It can say things that no other language has words for. It can put its finger on moments of human feeling that go largely unacknowledged in a verbally dominated culture like our own, where for most people the only reality is a verbal reality. You know, if you can't write an essay about it, if it can't be quantified, then it can't be sold and therefore doesn't exist. Most people's lives are, again and again, reduced to what they can talk about. And that's a very narrow band of the world! The time you spend with music is time spent in that larger realm.

Bill Moyers, TV journalist: But why does music open the emotions? The question intrigues me because music is a mathematical operation, yet somehow touches a spring in us that has nothing to do with mathematics.

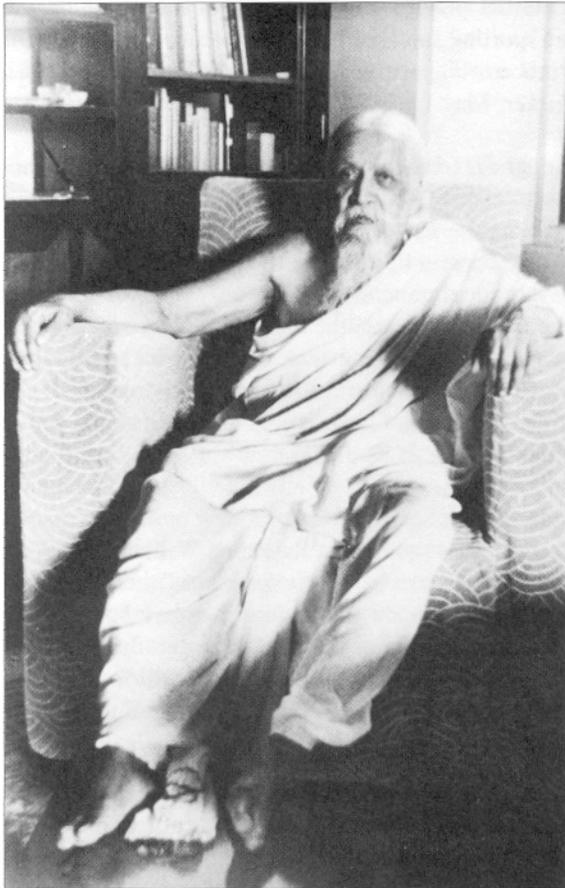
Sellars: It's a unification of a Pythagorean sense of perfection which in its mathematical exactitude recalls what is divine. We realize that the world has been ordained, that it is ordered, that it does make sense, that it has been thought of, and behind every imperfect form that we see, there is a perfect form that has been badly imitated in our mortal world. We look at the imperfect mortal form, we peel off its surface, we ask what's underneath it, what's behind it, what would be inside this imperfect body. And inside this imperfect body is a perfect soul. Hiding.—from *Bill Moyers: A World of Ideas* (New York: Doubleday, 1989)

* * *

Accept that music is not sealed to passion, nor to piety, nor to feelings; accept that it can blossom in spaces so wide that your image cannot project itself within them, that it must make you melt within its unique light!—Louis Dandrel

* * *

Every music lover knows intuitively that music embodies a certain truth, but few go so far as to obey this intuition and search for truth by way of music. Most people accept that truth belongs by rights to science, religion, or philosophy, while the arts, vital as they are to a fully human life, are still only matters of opinion and taste. We propose on the contrary to take literally Beethoven's dictum that "Music is a higher revelation than all wisdom or phi-

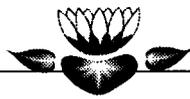


Sri Aurobindo (Photo by Henri Cartier-Bresson)

ying to remain with shadowy reflections, a search imposes itself for the Light which they strive to figure.

But since this Reality and this Light are in ourselves no less than in some high region above the moral plane, we can in the seeking for it use many of the figures and activities of life; as one offers a flower, a prayer, an act to the Divine, one can offer too a created form of beauty, a song, a poem, an image, a strain of music, and gain through it a contact, a response or an experience.

And when that divine consciousness has been entered or when it grows within, then too its expression in life through these things is not excluded from yoga; these creative activities can still have their place, though not intrinsically a greater place than any other that can be put to divine use and service. Art, poetry, music, as they are in their ordinary functioning, create mental and vital, not spiritual values; but they can be turned to a higher end, and then, like all things that are capable of linking our consciousness to the Divine, they are transmuted and become spiritual and can be admitted as part of a life of yoga. All takes new values not from itself, but from the consciousness that uses it; for there is only one thing essential, needful, indispensable, to grow conscious of the Divine Reality and live in it and live it always.



osophy.” Accordingly, to penetrate the mysteries of music is to prepare for initiation into those fathomless mysteries of man and cosmos.-from **Cosmic Music: Musical Keys to the Interpretation of Reality**, ed. Joscelyn Godwin (Rochester, Vermont: Inner Traditions, Int’l., 1989)

* * *

Philosophically, I think that composing is trying to get a pure stream in a faucet that connects with some cosmic pool of music somewhere. I think that’s what the great composers like Mozart had, some huge powerful stream as if you are tuning in your radio. There was no static on his station, he got it really pure in a channel into the source.-Ragtime composer and pianist Scott Kirby in “An Interview with Scott Kirby,” David Reffkin, **The Mississippi Rag**, June 1995

* * *

I know that some people see music as merely sound for sound’s sake. I disagree. There can be moments when you are in contact with the experience from which the music came. And there are audiences who listen at that level. They’re not listening to say that this guy has a fantastic technique or fantastic **sound**—they’re really getting the message of the music. When that happens, the ritual of concert-giving is at its highest. ...

Beethoven thought that through his music he could change the world. Today, rock musicians are virtually the only ones who think that. Beethoven believed that there is a soul. Today, most people don’t believe that there is a soul. Although he wasn’t religious in a traditional sense, Beethoven believed in God. Today, most people don’t believe in God. When you perform Beethoven, you have to transform yourself and commit yourself. You have to believe that God exists, that there’s a soul, and that you can change the world. ...

... I would listen to recordings of Schnabel, Kempff, and Serkin playing the last [Beethoven] piano sonatas, and would be struck by many things—for instance, by the trills. These are no ordinary trills; they are searching, reaching out toward the ideal. ... The musical language of the last two cello sonatas is terse. At one moment, it’s turbulent and assertive; then he interjects something that’s just heaven, and you get a glimpse of a better world. That’s where you find the cinemalike montage. but even when the music is fierce it’s not just violent. He’s doing more than shaking his fist at destiny; there’s nobility, there’s heroism within the drama—a sense of exaltation. ... The slow movements of both sonatas are intensely introspective. After that, you’ve earned your freedom. The finales have to do with a divine comedy; they

are a celestial play, not in the realm of human endeavor. The gods are sporting among themselves.-concert cellist Yo Yo Ma in “A process bigger than oneself: Yo Yo Ma,” David Blum, **New Yorker**, May 1, 1989

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The **effects** of rock ‘n’ roll—those thrilling, dangerous crescendos of release, rebellion, and all-night ecstasy—are as old as the first time the first man pounded out a syncopated riff on a hollow log. Therein lies the key to rock’s origins and its unique relationship to religion.

One can almost hear the chorus of boos and hisses rising like steam at the very suggestion. Rock ‘n’ roll is supposed to be about fun, not the somber verities of the hereafter. It runs no deeper than a passing fancy; it’s as enduring as the age of sixteen. Rock’s virtue is its disposability. Pop and profundity just don’t mix.

But music and mystery do. ...

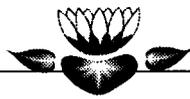
If music is, as sociologist Raymond Williams asserts, a way of “transmitting a description of experience,” then its use to transmit the most significant and enduring experience in the whole human catalog, the religious experience, naturally follows.-from **Stairway to Heaven: The Spiritual Roots of Rock ‘n’ Roll**, David Seay and Mary Neely (New York: Ballantine Books, 1986)

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In what might be termed the punk art wing of modern rock, the sonorous resonating properties of feedback-sustained guitar textures have assumed an explicitly spiritual association through their development by bands and performers such as Lou Reed and the Velvet Underground, Tom Verlaine and Television, and more recently Sonic Youth. To attend a show by one of these groups is to immerse oneself in a clanging, droning **sensurround** of guitar harmonics, to enter a precisely demarcated, ritually invoked sonic space. This is the movable church of the sonic guitar, a vast, high-vaulted cathedral vibrating with the patterns and proportions of sound-made-solid. Perhaps the most appropriate analogue for this invisible but highly audible sacred architecture is the Gothic cathedral, designed according to traditions of mystical mathematics, such as the proportion of the golden mean. And they were designed to resonate music, specifically the chanting of monks. One finds the same sonic concerns in the sacred architecture of Islam: the courtyard of one medieval mosque was designed to resonate any sound made within it seven times, in overlapping waves of slap-back echo. And of course there are the legendary acoustical properties of Eastern structures

Piano

The image shows a musical score for piano. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff on top and a bass clef staff on the bottom. The music is written in a common time signature (C). The treble staff begins with a piano (p) dynamic and a *legato* marking. It features a series of eighth notes with slurs, some of which are beamed together. There are also some sixteenth notes. The bass staff has fewer notes, including some octaves and rests. The score is divided into measures by vertical bar lines. Some notes have fingerings indicated by numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.



osophy.” Accordingly, to penetrate the mysteries of music is to prepare for initiation into those fathomless mysteries of man and cosmos.-from **Cosmic Music: Musical Keys to the Interpretation of Reality**, ed. Joscelyn Godwin (Rochester, Vermont: Inner Traditions, Int’l., 1989)

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Philosophically, I think that composing is trying to get a pure stream in a faucet that connects with some cosmic pool of music somewhere. I think that’s what the great composers like Mozart had, some huge powerful stream as if you are tuning in your radio. There was no static on his station, he got it really pure in a channel into the source.-Ragtime composer and pianist Scott Kirby in “An Interview with Scott Kirby,” David Reffkin, **The Mississippi Rag**, June 1995

* * *

I know that some people see music as merely sound for sound’s sake. I disagree. There can be moments when you are in contact with the experience from which the music came. And there are audiences who listen at that level. They’re not listening to say that this guy has a fantastic technique or fantastic **sound**—they’re really getting the message of the music. When that happens, the ritual of concert-giving is at its highest. ...

Beethoven thought that through his music he could change the world. Today, rock musicians are virtually the only ones who think that. Beethoven believed that there is a soul. Today, most people don’t believe that there is a soul. Although he wasn’t religious in a traditional sense, Beethoven believed in God. Today, most people don’t believe in God. When you perform Beethoven, you have to transform yourself and commit yourself. You have to believe that God exists, that there’s a soul, and that you can change the world. ...

... I would listen to recordings of Schnabel, Kempff, and Serkin playing the last [Beethoven] piano sonatas, and would be struck by many things—for instance, by the trills. These are no ordinary trills; they are searching, reaching out toward the ideal. ... The musical language of the last two cello sonatas is terse. At one moment, it’s turbulent and assertive; then he interjects something that’s just heaven, and you get a glimpse of a better world. That’s where you find the cinemalike montage. but even when the music is fierce it’s not just violent. He’s doing more than shaking his fist at destiny; there’s nobility, there’s heroism within the drama—a sense of exaltation. ... The slow movements of both sonatas are intensely introspective. After that, you’ve earned your freedom. The finales have to do with a divine comedy; they

are a celestial play, not in the realm of human endeavor. The gods are sporting among themselves.-concert cellist Yo Yo Ma in “A process bigger than oneself: Yo Yo Ma,” David Blum, **New Yorker**, May 1, 1989

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The Grateful Dead: A special quality of energy

June 1995 was the 30th anniversary of the Grateful Dead, a rock and roll band from the San Francisco Bay area. The following excerpts describe the spiritual power of their music.

On August 9, Jerry Garcia, the band's lead guitarist, died. The Internet and print media were swamped with eulogies, reminiscences, and messages of condolence. Some of these are included in the sidebar, "Fare you well, Jerry Garcia," on p. 26.

The Grateful Dead embody not only the cultic potentials historically inherent in rock 'n' roll, but the entire submerging linkage between rock and religion. . . . The Dead are, in short, the most complete amalgamation of music and mysticism in modern times and, perhaps, of all time. . . .

"Rolling thunder," was what critic Ralph Gleason, an early supporter of San Francisco rock, would call their sound. "A picture window onto the true landscape of the worlds hidden just behind the real one," wrote one reviewer. "Mammoth epiphanies," stammered another. What was obvious immediately about this particular rock 'n' roll band was that it wasn't a rock 'n' roll band. Not really. . . . "The Dead," remarked *Musician* magazine, "are a living, evolving phenomenon . . . capable of acting as channels for the special quality of energy that can transform an ordinary concert into a transcendent event." —from *Stairway to Heaven: The Spiritual Roots of Rock 'n' Roll*, David Seay and Mary Neely (New York: Ballantine Books, 1986)

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Sandy Troy, attorney: . . . there's a notion that when the Grateful Dead's music is in sync that you feel that you're being transported to a different place or different level of consciousness. Nicky Scully, involved with the Grateful Dead scene since the 60s: I don't think so much that we're transported but that we expand to include much more of the possibilities and potential of life. After those experiences, one is no longer content with the ordinary or mundane. One wants to learn how to move through life with that level of consciousness, with that awareness that there is more. And my struggle was how to bring that into my ordinary reality. At concerts I would have these incredible, wonderful, intense experiences of knowing, of being at one with the whole of creation, of being awakened, of tickling areas of the universe that have never been explored by human consciousness. Now how do I bring that into my daily life? How do I keep from having to be like a yo-yo, struggling with the materialism and the conflicts of day-to-day actions . . . and still maintain the memory of those experiences which are so far from the ordinary?—from *One More Saturday Night*, Sandy Troy (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991)

Mickey Hart, one of two Grateful Dead drummers, on seeing the band for the first time in 1968 and wanting to join: It was magnificent . . . The feeling was incredible. I couldn't tell where they were going; it was so unusual. . . . I thought it had great spiritual content. Whatever hit me at that moment wasn't within the realm of logic or understanding . . . It felt like some kind of force field from another planet, some incredible energy that was driving the band and pulling you in at the same time. This was what music should be like. I knew that it was very special—not your normal entertainment fare.

Show business was no consideration. When you see something good and you know it's good, you don't have to be told in any ways but the ways that you value things.

It was prayer-like music; it wasn't music that was going into the music business.—from *Conversations with the Dead*, David Gans (New York: Citadel Press, 1991)

Phil Lesh, Grateful Dead bass player: I've always felt, from the very beginning . . . that we could do something that was, not necessarily extramusical, but something where music would be only the first step. Something maybe even close to religion . . . in the sense of the actual communing. We used to say that every place we play is church.—from *Conversations with the Dead*, David Gans (New York: Citadel Press, 1991)

* * *

Bob Weir, Grateful Dead rhythm guitarist: With the Dead onstage there are those moments of electricity . . . and the audience is very much a part of those moments . . . it's maybe even beyond electricity . . . just moments when everybody hears the same thing instantaneously and it becomes something very transcendental. It goes beyond emotion or intellect at that point . . . actually it's a marriage between emotion and intellect. I liken it to the Divine—really, a moment of divineness. It's real inspirational, real palpable inspiration . . . with us we strive for that moment a lot onstage.—from *The Aquarian* magazine, April 1978

* * *

Jerry Garcia: When we get onstage, what we really want to happen is, we want to be transformed from ordinary players into extraordinary ones, like forces of a larger consciousness. And the audience wants to be transformed from whatever ordinary reality they may be in to something that enlarges them. So maybe it's that notion of transformation, a seat-of-the-pants shamanism, that has something to do with why the Grateful Dead keep pulling them in.—from *Rolling Stone* magazine

David Gans, radio producer: All the other bands just turned into bands. . . . This one turned into something else . . .

Who can stop what must arrive now?
Something new is waiting to be born.

—Grateful Dead lyric by Robert Hunter



Tony Serra, attorney (model for the James Woods character in the film *True Believer*): The Dead are still paving new paths. That's the beauty of them. . . . Some of the riffs are musical genius, obviously. I could get into that and that would be sufficient and that would last forever. But what they are doing is something much bigger than that. What I like most is about halfway through the second set where they'll get into what I'll call non-representational content, abstract sounds, space sounds, metaphysical sounds, and I like that most of all. That's open-ended. . . . I'm totally in awe, a lost pilgrim of metaphysical realms. They guide you where you need guidance. You are taking your consciousness and handing it over, and it's shattered, like a thousand feathers and it's floating there, little pieces of your mind, feelings, sensations, and understanding. And whatever crystallizes, explodes, and it carries back to some linear form and you remember where you are, who you are, and what you are.

They are still space traveling, on the hot lip of creation in terms of musical awareness. They're doing something that no one has done before. You get the feeling that you're going into areas with them, what I would call non-representational sound, metaphoric noise, cacophony which is open in harmony. You're traveling with them and going new ways and on new paths. That's what I like.

I enjoy the sentiment and the old familiar refrains; they bring tears to your eyes, you think about old places you've been, all the people you've known, and things you've done in instant flashback. I love that, and that would be enough, but the point to be made is why they're enduring, why they're vital, why they're significant, why they're growing, why greater honors are being bestowed on them. It's because they are still paving the future direction of music . . . That's what really draws my consciousness in.—from *One More Saturday Night*, Sandy Troy (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991)

Jerry Garcia on consciousness

The change has already happened, and it's a matter of swirling out . . . unfortunately, it's very slow, amazingly slow and amazingly difficult . . . although it's going faster now than it has ever before . . . That is to say that the news that there has been a change of consciousness on the planet and that everybody is going to get into it eventually, is slow in getting out. That's essentially it. It's still trying to get out . . . it's getting out, just here and there, just real slow.—from *Garcia: A Signpost to New Space*, Charles Reich and Jann Wenner (San Francisco: Straight Arrow Books, 1972)

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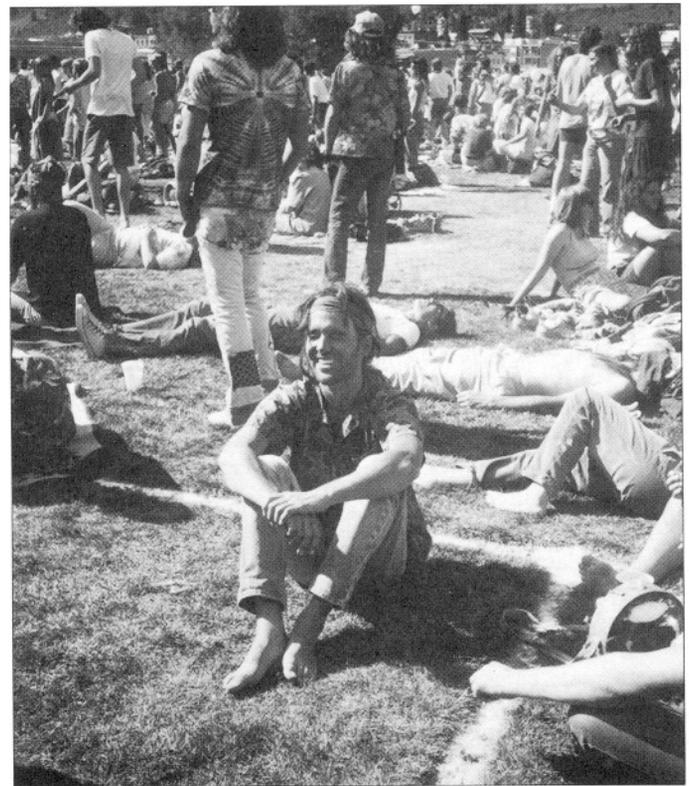
There are bigger and better things as far as human consciousness is concerned. There's someplace to go, something to look for. I think of our audience as people who are out looking for something. We've sort of gamely stuck to those initial possibilities and maybe they pick up on that and it gives us some kind of validity . . .—from *New West* magazine, December 1979

My way is music. Music is me being me and trying to get higher. I've been into music so long that I'm dripping with it . . . music is a yoga, something you really do when you're doing it. Thinking about what it means comes after the fact and isn't very interesting. Truth is something you stumble into when you think you're going someplace else, like those moments when you're playing and the whole room becomes one being, precious moments, man.—*Ibid.*

* * *

David Gans: . . . [This] brings to mind the book *Altered States* [by Paddy Chayefsky]. . . . the book was much more involved than the movie in the union of theology and science. It raises the possibility that there is much information about our history encoded in our genes.

Jerry Garcia: That's one of the things I'm interested in . . . there's been an interesting book by Michael Murphy, the Esalen guy. *Jacob Atabet* has to do with . . . you know how yogis are reputed to have control over their nervous system? That idea is expanded to where you have control over your whole physical shape, and that is the next moment in evolution, or whatever: that consciousness wants to be able to freely make decisions about your body. It's interesting.—from *Conversations with the Dead*, David Gans (New York: Citadel Press, 1991)



Grateful Dead concert, 1987: "Moments when everybody hears the same thing instantaneously and it becomes something very transcendental . . ." (Photo by Lynda Lester)



Fare you well, Jerry Garcia: Friends and fans remember

The magic was real. I've gone to about 50 or 60 shows in the past eight years and watched, listened, and felt the forces which held us all together in awe. . . . Besides peace, love, and unity, the Grateful Dead stood for higher consciousness. Something Jerry taught us through the music was that there exists a higher consciousness, and his music used to bring us closer to this.—Mark Guzzardo

Favorite memory. March, 1983. The old Compton Terrace, outdoors in Tempe Arizona. The sky had been cloudy all day, and as showtime approached, a light mist began to fall, threatening to grow. The band came out, Jerry stepped up to the mike, looked at the sky, and said, "I don't know whether we're gonna get wet or not, but we're gonna try this anyway." With the first chords, the sky began to clear rapidly—till only a single cloud was left, shaped like a question mark, with the full moon as the dot. . . . We looked at that cloud, and we looked at one another, and the goose bumps raised, and we knew we were in the presence of a power. It turned out to be one of the most powerful nights of our lives.—Michael Bartlett

He could play an audience. I can tell you that for nothing. He could get all those souls rippling like waves and for a moment, a slice of heaven, we were all one. We all knew love as one, and as a million different souls. For me it was love at first . . . connection.—Les Abernathy

What Jerry knew throughout his life, and expressed through his music, is that there is a tangible, joyful, subtle, electrical energy behind this physical world that we can listen to if we try . . . This large, wonderful, gray-haired, black-shirted man in a rock-n-roll band has always been to me someone who has constantly listened to and tried to imitate in this limited world a higher "astral" music—a music full of "iridescent joy" and "liquid peace."—Michael Coombs

If some part of that music
is heard in deepest dream,
or on some breeze of summer
a snatch of golden theme,
we'll know you live inside us
with love that never parts
our good old Jack O' Diamonds
become the King of Hearts.

—from "An Elegy for Jerry,"
by Grateful Dead lyricist Robert Hunter

SALON

In "Salon," Collaboration readers address 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 include "Aging," "Rejection," and "Leaving."

Readers discuss "Music"

Music, music everywhere

We can't get away from music; it's everywhere. We put the radio on in the morning and listen to music while having breakfast and reading the morning paper. Music is played in restaurants, cafes, elevators, on the car radio. We have stereos, CD players, and Walkmans. It doesn't matter what we listen to; we are tuned in all the time.

From childhood I can't remember a moment without music. My mother always had the radio on in the morning and we listened to music while having breakfast before leaving for school.

My father had a pleasant voice and sang in a Welsh choir, although he was not Welsh. My mother sang at church. At school we had singing classes twice a week and were taken to the Standard classical radio broadcast in downtown San Francisco once a year. The San Francisco Symphony had matinees on Saturday afternoons which my family attended regularly. My father bought a large radio phonograph, but recordings were expensive, so I went once a week to the San Francisco main library and brought home as many albums as I could carry. The recordings were often scratchy and the fidelity on our phonograph was really not very good. I liked the fact that I could be instantly transported to the world of Bach or Mozart without leaving the house.

I quite blissfully ignored all other music until one evening listening to the radio quite late I heard a recording of jazz at Massey Hall. I had discovered JAZZ! After that all I could think about was Diz, Bird, Lester, Miles, and Billie Holiday. Jazz recordings weren't readily available at the library, so I spent all my allowance on any recordings I could find. This went on for years until rock came in and I was forced to listen to music in another



way. I enjoyed it but slowly drifted back to classical and jazz.

Now, I like nothing more than coming home and stretching out on the couch and putting on something of Mahler's and drifting off into another world. I still listen to jazz, but usually while I'm fixing dinner in the kitchen.

The wonderful thing about music is that we all hear something different. We can't put into words what we hear because we each have our own experiences.

—Surama Bloomquist, Berkeley, California

A rendezvous with music

I got a late start in music, but it could have been different. In grade school in the 1940s, my friend Vance took up the Hawaiian guitar (the guitar sits flat and you use a steel slide bar). I wanted to learn to play the guitar, but my mother said no. She was probably right. Baseball was more important.

At my fraternity at the University of Illinois in Champaign, Illinois, I was singing in the chorus for a skit when the director noticed something amiss. This was my first exposure to a novel concept—singing in key. I was sent packing. This was in the early 1950s.

In the 1960s I took guitar lessons, hoping to learn some classical music. As I traveled around California on business, I would practice on the guitar in my motel room. I liked my teacher, who was from San Salvador. But then he dropped his students, except for a few bright ones, and sent me to his brother. Disaster. I did my own packing that time.

I liked quiet music then. I had to keep reminding my daughter to turn down the radio; the music was too loud. Then something happened in 1968. My protective cocoon developed some holes. I listened to the snappy rock music every chance I could. And loud! I couldn't get enough of it. I took dance lessons and met a nice girl from Sweden. We'd go to Bill Graham's Fillmore West in San Francisco. The music was loud and piercing but I loved it. My Rip Van Winkle days were over. And then after six months it too was over as I started getting heavily into meditation and studies.

In November 1973 in Pondicherry, Surama and I would go to the classical music program every week at the Sri Aurobindo library. The lights were turned off. It was generally balmy. The palm trees swayed in the breeze. I could hear the ocean crash against the rocks. It was the first time I really sat and listened to music.

One evening, after Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*, a gigantic full orange moon hovered over the horizon. Surama said to me, "You know that current you talked about in the spine—well, something just happened to me!"

I read somewhere the voice is the purest instrument. I'm into voice now. I like operatic arias and Emmylou Harris and silence.

Wayne Bloomquist, Berkeley, California

Entering the New Year gracefully

Rarely do I go out on New Year's Eve among a crowd, but this year I decided to try something new. I heard that Grace Cathedral was putting on a late-night organ recital on New Year's Eve for the public, and the idea struck the top of my head like the resonant pulse of a tuning fork.

Grace Cathedral is located in San Francisco among the typical sites, yet every time I come upon this huge Gothic structure, I'm struck by how intensely it contrasts with its surroundings. Like some strange mystical fortress guarding a secret from the past, to me Grace symbolizes the same paradox of spirit in matter that exists in the heart of man.

Setting out on New Year's Eve, I struggled with the usual traffic and parking dilemma of coming into the city; however, once inside, all this seemed to matter little. With the 100-foot-high ceiling and stained glass windows stretching up the wide walls, there is an unworldly feeling of vast expanse. Surprised by the few number of folks who turned out, I walked around the circumference of the walking meditation circle and then the art display to explore the inner sanctuary.

Moving closer to the front, I found a seat among the numerous pews. I sat quietly with my mind musing on the many conversations as they seemed to mix and softly reverberate upwards. I felt a gentle feeling of anxious anticipation in my chest and remembered how going out first thing in the morning on a warm summer's day used to bring up this same feeling.

Suddenly someone stepped up to the podium in front of me and announced that those who were interested could come up front and sit in the choir seats next to the organist for the recital. This was something I had always longed to do. My body seemed to jump out of the seat on its own, as if I had been sitting on a spring.

Finally the organist came out, and after a short introduction began to play. Starting with the *Nutcracker Suite* and ending with some of Bach's most famous work, the music was indescribable in its breadth and detail. Sitting directly behind the organist, I could see the two banks of choir seats facing one another with the beautiful brass organ pipes spanning the walls on three sides. Everyone looked spellbound as I occasionally gazed at those across from me. I remember at the moment thinking of Ramakrishna in his latter days and how the littlest things would send him into a bliss that would render him nearly physically unconscious. Would I ever develop the capacity to hear the "music of the spheres" in my day-to-day life? I felt grateful for another year to try.

John Powell, Menlo Park, California

It does not help for spiritual knowledge to be ignorant of things of this world.—Sri Aurobindo



The healing power of Vedic mantra

As one listens to the chanting of the Vedic mantras, their vibrations enter one's being. One can actually experience these vibrations dancing in one's inner space. They dance in the outer atmosphere, they dance in the inner atmosphere. And if one listens very closely, one can hear them ringing on in one's own subtle consciousness.

I lived in an ashram in India for several years, and one of my favorite activities was the chanting of Sri Rudram, which is considered to be the cream of the Vedas. It is originally from the *Krishna Yajur Veda* and is a symbolic representation of many philosophies.

To this day, I continue to chant the Rudram regularly. While doing so, I experience the chakras spinning and vibrating in different ways, and bliss wells up from within. It's as though the Divine is tuning and refining my consciousness through the melodious vibrations of Sri Rudram. It's a beautiful experience, and certainly a purification on many levels.

Since sound can have such a purifying effect on one's consciousness, it's quite fascinating to consider its profound effect on the body and mind as well. It seems possible that as the vibrations enter one's consciousness, they reach places where ordinary medicines cannot. It has been said that by chanting the Rudram, all negative feelings become positive, enemies are turned into friends, and jealousy disappears. Whoever chants the Rudram will have their difficulties removed, be protected from disease, and experience peace of mind.

These are not empty words. There is a great science behind this. Indeed, the chanting of Vedic mantras has a subtle effect upon one's psychic centers and entire nervous system. I have already described my own experience of the mantras vibrating in the chakras. Through this Divine tuning, this purification, mental and physical health do follow. No wonder today so many new age healing therapies emphasize chakra balancing. But they have really only hit the tip of the iceberg. If the chakras are purified and finely tuned, what follows may very well be good mental and physical

health, but ultimately what follows is much more extraordinary.

Sri Rudram is a great medicine, purifying the entire body. In the past, the Ayurvedic doctors had always chanted the Rudram 11 times while grinding their medicinal herbs. This gave their medicine full power to cure. Nowadays the medicines are made in factories without the Rudram, and thus are much weaker. The medicine of the Rudram and the ancient Vedic mantras have always had the power to enter and deeply fine-tune the physical and subtle bodies. It is this power of sound that is so subtle and yet so powerful that it can enter one's consciousness, purify one's body and mind, and ultimately transform one's consciousness.

—Lisa Rachlin, Boulder, Colorado

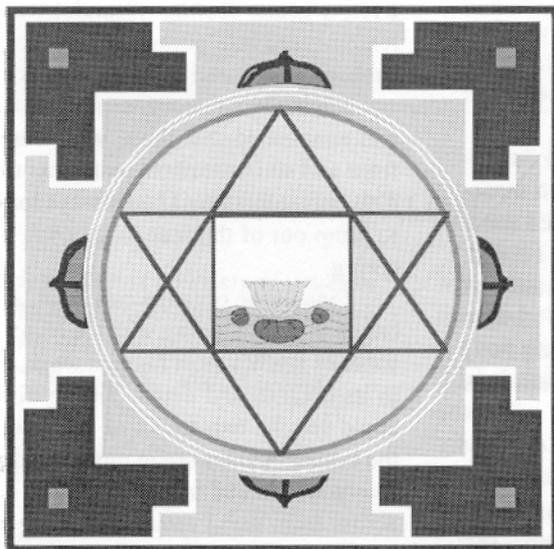
Gifts beyond measure

Far too many to list are the realizations the Divine has brought to my life through music. What has become important to me is the knowledge of what I owe the Divine in return.

When I was younger, and my family's household was in constant inner and occasionally outer turmoil, I would often retreat into music, isolated in my room with the additional isolating factor of headphones. Music at that time brought me harmony, emotional expression, form, and resonance. When I began to play and write music, there was the beginning of a connection to creative energy; and from practicing, a sense of the energy available through discipline. In fact, music saved my life.

Later, as my musical interests deepened and broadened, music helped bring me out of isolation and into contact with many extraordinary people. In musical situations, I experienced a sense of community, oneness, and the benefits of working in a true group. (One of the remarkable experiences was in a group of 33 guitarists, improvising together, when it seemed as though we were a flock of birds, changing course as with one mind—the group mind.) As my career has developed, because of music I have traveled around the world, and sometimes experienced the unique communion of music, musician, and audience that a performance situation can offer.

As a teacher, I have learned many times over the value of silence, of calling for help, of the varieties of humans and our experience of life, and our interconnectedness. Through practice, performance, and teaching, I have learned about struggle, perseverance, ease, letting go, compassion for oneself and others, seriousness, lightness, joy, and the importance of even a "small" experience of quality. And I have learned that the gift of



Yantra by Vishnu Eschner



music is available to anyone, if we allow ourselves to hear it knocking and learn to open the door!

Before a performance, lesson, practice session, or recording session, I take some time to be quiet, to enter a state of relaxed attentiveness, to ask for help from the Mother, and to remember what part of my audience I wish to communicate with through what part of me. For the sake of the Divine's work, the music must be constructed in forms which welcome and invite the spirit; I must practice so that my physical instrumentality is as transparent as possible—the fingers will do what they are called upon to do at any moment (whether they've done it before or not!); and I must have enough attention available to the music, the audience, and myself to respond should the spirit move. I cannot guarantee the outcome, but I can use the tools I have, my work, and my aspiration to help create the conditions where something is possible.

Through it all, with the help of guides and teachers, I have been led to the beginnings of understanding of the larger significance and workings of the energies I have encountered. And I have begun to see that my task is to somehow take what I have received through music, synthesize it, and release it into the world. Again, I cannot guarantee anything, but if only five people get some sense of the world of potentials and the infinite mercy of the Divine through "my" music, that is a 500 percent increase.

I haven't always had such a clear sense of the work I am being led to (now my life is much easier). For many years, I believed that if I worked hard enough at music, eventually music would owe me a living. As a result of a personal crisis, I recognized that it is not so: music owes me nothing. It has already given me undeserved gifts beyond measure (and I know I have missed many of its offerings, as well). It is I who owe so much, my life indeed, to music, to the Mother's joy and sorrow and love made audible.

—Tony Geballe, New York City

Noteworthy implications

Several years ago, I spent two days meditating in Yosemite National Park during one of the quieter seasons—early spring. The outdoor meditation was nothing less than exhilarating, and although spiritual renewal was the goal, there was a side benefit that has always left me wondering what would happen if Pavarotti (and maybe he does) or anyone that can really sing would meditate outdoors for somewhat lengthy periods of time. My own voice is OK, but for two hours after I left Yosemite and drove back to Sacramento, I could hit notes that I never thought possible. I'm sure there is a "chorallation" between these experiences. Do we know if there are any vocalists who meditate for long periods of time? Tonally speaking, the implications could be noteworthy.

—Dian Kiser, Spokane, Washington

saw Her standing there

Way back in 1987, Mother's centenary year, Paul Winter released his *Common Ground* album, one of the first to use authentic animal calls as an integral part of the music (in this case, eagle, wolf, and whale). Not only was this a ground-breaking venture in musical ecology, but also in world music, involving musicians and music from Africa, Brazil, and Guinea.

Shortly afterwards, the Paul Winter Consort gave a performance at the Berklee Performance Center in Boston. My wife Amy and I went, even though we hardly ever splurged on live concerts, because we loved the album so much we couldn't pass it up.

That night, there was magic in the air! The Consort performed much of the music from the album, with the animals putting in recorded versions of their performances (perhaps lip-synching from their various perches or habitats!). Paul Winter even brought a live wolf up on stage, with trainer, and encouraged us to howl for him to get him to howl back. (He never did howl, but the TV cameras in the audience picked up our efforts for the evening news—and Amy and I were caught in the act!)

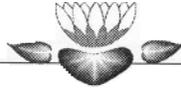
But as they played, and performed the music, the spirit of the music became more and more rich and compelling, as the entire audience was caught up in the mood. By the middle of the concert, I felt like I do at the most powerful meditations—filled with sacred energy, lifted and enlarged and refined in my being until there was practically no center, but all was Center. And then I saw Her—it could only have been Mahalakshmi—dancing over the stage, over the musicians, filling them and the whole hall with Her bliss and divine harmony.

After the concert, Amy and I practically floated home. We've been to one or two other concerts with similar vibrations, but this one was special. This one was Graced.

—Will Moss, Watertown, Massachusetts

Onward and upward

A state arrives in which man goes beyond the mere subtlety and fineness of the intelligence and reaches to a rich and manifold largeness of soul. Even then though he has now the wide law of his being which is our right foundation, he needs a force greater than his to lead him; for largeness and multiplicity of soul-force and knowledge are not enough, there must be the divine truth in thought, word and act. For we have to attain beyond the enlarged mental being to the beatitude of a state beyond mind.—Sri Aurobindo, *The Secret of the Veda*, p. 401



INSIGHTS

On the shores of Lake Winnepasakee

by Gordon Korstange

"Music isn't supposed to be a social event."—Keith Jarrett

I'm under some kind of bush—lilac perhaps. Next to me is David R with his vina and David N with his mridangam. Around us there's an Indian-American wedding and a country club and, across the way, the expanse of Lake Winnepasakee, New Hampshire. We are playing South Indian classical music.

No one is listening.

I'm distracted. I keep looking at all of these white, yuppie Americans armored with their drinks. I forget the *kriti* (song) I'm playing. The sound of the flute barely competes with cocktail chatter. Does it matter?

No one is listening.

Finally, the only woman there in a sari comes over and actually listens.

She's South Indian. She knows something about this music, and I should be playing better. But I still can't focus. When we're done, she asks the usual questions: Where did you learn? How long have you been playing? Like most South Indians she finds it hard to believe that Americans would devote themselves to a music so foreign, so complex. Part of me still finds it strange too.

In the van afterwards on the long ride back through the hills of New Hampshire and Vermont, I'm griping about our having wasted most of a day on this affair. David N won't buy it.

"You have to be true to the music, man," he says in his hip drummer style. "When you're sitting down to play you've got to block out everything that's happening out there—ignore those suckers—pretend they don't exist—the only thing is you and the song."

I think about the 25 years I've been learning Carnatic music. I've had to become a musician without any background in western music; have constantly felt ignorant of things Indian musicians take for granted; have constantly wondered whether my

music is authentic; and have spent most of my time hidden away in my practice room with a tanpora and photos of famous singer-saints on the walls alongside those of Sri Aurobindo and Mother. Does it sound a little like doing Their Yoga in the USA? Yes, a similar sense, often, of dislocation, of gap between inner and outer lives, of manifold insecurities in the face of a materialistic culture—a culture which is us. My quavering aspiration sends flute sounds floating out on Lake Winnepasakee, but who's really listening?

"You got to stand behind your horn so that when someone hears a note they know it's you." —Keith Jarrett

It was December 27, 1970, Madras, 9:30 p.m. I was in the Peace Corps and unhappy. I sat on the short wall of the dried-up tank of the Kapilesvara Temple in Mylapore. Exhaust-belching buses, barely stopping in their drivers' haste to finish the last run, roared up and away from the stop in front of me. Around the tank the flower sellers, temple trinket stalls, and vegetable market were closing down. Madras was already partly asleep in the coolness of the evening.

But not me. I had just heard a flutist named Mali (T.R. Mahalingam) and my head was filled with the sound of his flute. He played a small one, almost a piccolo, but through overblowing and what my music teacher would later call "God's gift," Mali created a liquid sound that seemed to hang longer in the air than a flute note should. His music slipped and slid hauntingly around the hall, surrounding us. At times he created a few minutes of improvised melody that made me hold my breath with its beauty and longing, that it might not stop and the entire audience might be transported into ecstasy.

Then, suddenly, he would stop. Then would be silence—or conventional combinations of scale patterns that would make us sigh with, perhaps, relief at the return to the banal? or stifled disappointment that he couldn't sustain such inspiration.

I wanted to try making a sound like Mali's, a sound that was air turned liquid, let loose to tumble like a stream. That's all it was in the beginning. Secretly, hopelessly, in a small back room of my romantic young mind, I wanted to sit up on stage too, trading notes with the violin and drummer, summoning up melodies out of nothing.

The next day I bought a five-rupee flute at Musee Musical on Mount Road. I brought it to my lips, blew, and heard the hiss of air being let out of a tire.

"The whole stream of your life, already musical, is simply waiting for you to hear it." —W.A. Mathieu

Nine months after buying that cheap flute I was teaching in Auroville, learning Carnatic music in Pondicherry, and had fallen in love with Jeanne. From those events the rest of my life has



Gordon Korstange



risen up out of what was a lassitude and depression. I still teach, still go to Auroville, still love, and my fingers always faintly ache for the curve of my bamboo flute.

“ . . . the notion that practicing scales and exercises is a religious act somehow strikes a Westerner as odd.”—Donna Wulf

At first it was something of a cultural lark: bicycling under the blistering sun to my teacher’s room; waiting outside his door in the soggy afternoon heat for him to finish his nap; then playing together with him the rudimentary scale of my first raga, Harikambhoji, the one that requires all of the holes of the flute to be covered.

We always played together, even the most basic exercises. Perhaps he couldn’t bear to hear my hissing. Perhaps he figured that he might as well get some practice in too. But I now believe that this was the teaching he knew—only by merging my pitiful sound with his strong resonant one, my faltering rhythms with his precise tala, would I become his true *sishya* (disciple).

Indeed, practicing music in India is a form of yoga, whether it be an exercise or a complex *kalpana svara* (improvisation) pattern. In my first music book he inscribed “Sree Manakkula Vinayagar Sahayam,” homage to Ganapati, the remover of obstacles (the Sri Manakkula Vinayagar temple is next to the Ashram). The book and the flute were to be revered like *murtis*, objects capable of embodying divinity.

I soon became “obsessed.” If Sri Aurobindo’s yogic practice was tailored to each individual, then practicing scales, struggling through the first *gitams* (songs), learning to master the art of *gamakas* (partially covering the holes of the flute to produce grace notes) was my yoga. Unlike meditation, I never nodded off during the sitting. The flute would be my instructor in *pranayama* (breath control), the search for the true note my quest for oneness, and Carnatic music became my “field” of yoga.

Like the the Sri Manakkula Vinayagar temple and the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, my study of Carnatic music coexisted side by side with my life in Auroville without overt connection between them. I wasn’t sure whether I was in Auroville in order to study the flute or whether learning the music kept me in Auroville, but I probably couldn’t have done one without the other.

My teacher wrote all my exercises and songs, using the Tamil alphabet, in a small notebook. Lucky for me that he could. I was totally dependent on reading the notes, even though I couldn’t read Western notation. What I could and needed to do, since I had no tape recorder, was to remember the melodies and gamakas. I had an ear, even though I couldn’t trust it enough to forego notation like an Indian learner would.

The cycle ride back in Auroville, after a lesson, after *idlis* and coffee, was easier than the one in. The songs wouldn’t leave my head. I had taken up the bamboo flute with the vague idea that, having learned the basics of fingering, I would use it to play Western tunes. Now I found myself deep in a system of raga, tala, and sadhana that wouldn’t let me go. When I sat cross-legged

Poem to my bamboo flute

“My best friend! This time no more promises. Quickly run to my lord and call him here.”—Tamil song by the Ponniah brothers

Best friend, play for me
when I press you with my lips,
for my life glistens and wavers
like a song.

Take my breath
and whirl it through you to dim perfection.
Let my hands be your lost branches
until our song is done.

O friend,
the drum demands my hands
to dance upon your smooth skin
again and again,
to make you sing
to that silent one listening
somewhere.

Find the way, friend, for my heart to call
that silence here to stay.

Be my flame until our song is done.

—GK

on the mat near the *wadai* (gully) south of Aspiration, I could almost forget my awkward American self and become lost in the force of concentration necessary to master even a simple gitam with the correct embellishments. Even today, when the practice is good, I will suddenly realize that I have been staring at the pine trees outside my window for 20 minutes and have not seen them.

“If the first sound is wrong, sometimes the whole concert can’t be saved.”—Keith Jarrett

One year after I began learning the flute, I was in Madras at my teacher’s uncle’s house for a recital. I was supposed to play with my teacher, but he had been detained in Pondy. I was frantic. When the time came, I sat there next to my teacher’s father who was accompanying me on violin.

Accompanying? I hissed and missed my way through the song like a lame runner.

Somehow I finished. Afterwards everyone was kind. South Indians are always very kind to westerners who take a sincere, beginner’s interest in their culture. Once that interest becomes serious, however, they haul out the standards. I was mortified. I didn’t play again in public for 12 years.



In between I listened. And listened. And listened. All India Radio was on constantly in our Auroville huts. And I didn't stop practicing. Through a succession of teachers I finally came to a sense of the raga (the life that must be breathed into the scales). Then I bought a metronome and started on tala. Patterns. Patterns of fives and sevens and threes within a underlying beat of four—or six, or seven. So this was what they meant by wading into the ocean of Carnatic music.

I persisted. I found a good teacher, T. Viswanathan, and some other Americans. We wanted the real thing—none of that fake fusion stuff where the tala falls apart and the improvisation just goes on and on into virtuosity for its own sake. I kept thinking of Flute Mali and his ecstatic improvisation whose only virtuosity was in his inventive, melodic imagination, not in speed contests. He was famous as much for not playing as for playing. I like to think that he was waiting for those melodies to emerge glistening out of a pool of silence and that he wouldn't be satisfied with anything less than pure beauty. I prefer to ignore the fact that he was usually drunk when he performed.

So we play only South Indian music—which means that we don't play much and when we do it tends to be relatively brief (the average Carnatic music concert lasts at least two and a half hours) and for audiences that are appreciative but unaware of nuances in the music and its cultural context.

It is tempting to try and make it easier for them. Last summer we began working out a version of Dave Brubeck's "Take Five." We have yet to play it in concert.

"If I don't hear the silence, nothing will happen."—Keith Jarrett

After 25 years I am still a beginner in South Indian music. My knowledge of rhythmic patterns is rudimentary, my ragas lack subtlety, and I'm not really part of the Hindu tradition which gave birth to it. But two weeks after that Lake Winnepesaukee wedding we gave a real concert and, for the first time, I found myself relaxing enough to "enjoy" the music, to play it the way I really feel, not the way I "think" it should be played.

Perhaps it is finally becoming "my" music in the sense that I can listen past the notes and patterns, past the critical voices questioning my sounds, past the "foreign" culture in which I must play—that I can let go of some of these things and hear and feel the silence behind it all, ignoring the audience for awhile, waiting for an inner listener to nod imperceptibly and give grace to the notes.

Gordon Korstange lives in Saxtons River, Vermont. He is managing editor of the Fall 1995 Collaboration.

Those who are ready for the transformation can do it anywhere and those who are *not* ready cannot do it wherever they are.—The Mother, *Champakal Speaks*, p. 279

Soldier Daddy . . . and the music found

All poetry references are from Savitri by Sri Aurobindo, except for the excerpts taken from his poems "In the Battle" and "The Rishi."

by Seyril Schochen

The essential quality of music depends upon where it comes from, upon its origin.

—The Mother, *Conversations*



The Mother playing the organ

1995. Fifty years since the end of the darkest Night of the Soul she had ever died through. A night of years and tears in which she could find no key—sharp or flat—to the celestial harmonies she had dreamed of hearing since she was a child in Lakewood, Ohio, pumping away on an old upright player piano rolls of songs ranging from "Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm" to "When Johnny Comes Marching Home" . . . with a few highly spiced arias from *Il Troubadour* and *Aida* to pacify her secret hunger.

1945. End of World War II, which was called "The Mother's War" by Sri Aurobindo (she learned 20 years later as He led her soul out of its night . . . at last to find its saving music. But until that blessed time—)

1941. Barely saved from despair by a little boy-child waiting with her for his Soldier Daddy to come marching home from the funeral pyres and graves *Over There*. No celestial music *Over There* or *over here*. In fact, in the years before his birth in '41 when she and the gentle, fun-loving, witty, fabulously talented singer-actor who was to be his Daddy lived in New York, she had been stricken deaf and numb by the brass bands of the Children of Wotan marching down Manhattan's German Yorkville section American Nazi style. They were drumming up human blutwurst for the delicate essen of the holocaust already being spread *Over There*. Even up Fifth Avenue Wotan's Children goose-stepped blaring deafeningly for "that Jew in the White House Roosevelt" to bring US into the War on the side of the Axis.



To a presto of bomb and shell and the aeroplanes' fatal humming
We march, lit by Truth's death-pyre, to the world's satanic age.

1938. Sri Aurobindo, already working on the spiritual plane for defeat of the asuric forces marching "to make of earth a hell and call it heaven," had been attacked on the eve of the November 24th Darshan. Nirodbaran, one of the physicians called to attend him after the accident involving an impacted fracture of the right femur above the knee, describes the scene in *Twelve Years with Sri Aurobindo*:

... 2 a.m. . . . the emergency bell rang from the Mother's room. Purani rushed up and found the Mother at the top of the staircase. She said, "Sri Aurobindo has fallen down. Go and fetch Dr. Manilal." Fortunately he had come for the Darshan from Gujerat. Soon he arrived and saw Sri Aurobindo was lying on the floor in his bedroom . . . He had stumbled over a tiger skin . . . (and fallen) with his right knee striking the head of a tiger. Perhaps there was jubilation among the adverse forces crying, "Our enemy has fallen!"

Not *perhaps*. In protecting the Mother against the mockers of God, whose fuehrer was "master of fate, medium of her mysteries" building a new world order "On the bodies of perishing nations, mid the cry of the cataclysm coming" and over "The Mother of God" who lay bleeding in their black and gold sunrise, Sri Aurobindo had not protected Himself.

Yet that event was to open the strict seclusion of Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's evolutionary work, for conversations with the team of attendants upstairs . . . and to give not only disciples there but all over the world guidance in our continuing war with the satanic forces: "The inner war without escape."

1995. New Year's Day in Savitri House—gift of Grace of the Eternal who had led her safely through so many near inner-death experiences into the sunlit paths of Baca Grande, Colorado. She contemplates the New Year greeting card she had so hopefully sent out from Swarthmore College where she was teaching at the end of the Second World War:

A photo of four-year-old son Peter, all smiles because his longed-for Soldier Daddy was expected back some time that year; next to the photo, the greeting she had printed:

THAT THE WORLD'S
CHILDREN MAY SMILE
THIS NEW YEAR 1945
Martin, Seyril, Peter

Memories of Soldier Daddy's return to the States blur her vision. The old tears starting again. For Martin, the joyously singing tenor had come back from the war mute and withdrawn, a changed man. Physically unwounded. But deeply scarred emotionally, psychically, by his own war memories. His soul's song silenced . . .

When General Patton's army liberated the hell-scoured concentration camp areas, Major Martin Rubin was put in charge of freeing prisoners of the Buchenwald Camp. As its commandant, his duties included providing its corpse-like inmates with clean blankets to cover their nakedness and enable them to return home from their cells in the hell and Nazi-operated gas chambers. Home to—where? To No Where—

Major Soldier Daddy never really recovered from that descent into the dark abyss. Something in him had died with the barely moving skeletons tottering out of hell to blink and huddle against the forgotten sunlight, paralyzed by the calculated process of dehumanization that turned them into semblances only of once-human beings . . .

1985. Boulder, Colorado. On his own death-bed in Boulder (where they had settled to be near the Spaniers' *Auroville Voice* and Sri Aurobindo center), Soldier Daddy lay in a state of almost total paralysis. Witness of the unspeakable horrors of the Nazi camps, he could speak only with his eyes . . . another victim of the supermen dreamed by Nietzsche: "A cross of the beast and demoniac" bringing in "the world's satanic age."

1995. Memories . . . memories . . . As if to cover her nakedness from their onslaught, she hugs close Sri Aurobindo's *Collected Poems . . . Savitri . . . Letters . . .* "We consider the war as a fight between two forces, the Divine and the Asuric (demonic) . . . The victory of one side (the Allies) would keep the path open for the evolutionary forces; the victory of the other side would drag back humanity, degrade it horribly and might lead even, at worst, to its eventual failure as a race, as others in the past evolution failed and perished."

In the Battle

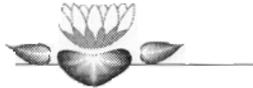
Often in the slow ages' long retreat
On Life's thin ridge through Time's enormous sea,
I have accepted death and borne defeat
To gain some vantage by my fall for Thee. . . .

All around me now the Titan forces press;
This world is theirs, they hold its days in fee;
I am full of wounds and the fight merciless.
Is it not yet Thy hour of victory?

Of course! We are to be warriors of the Light in today's battle between the Divine and the demonic forces! Hasn't our Rishi urged us to enter the mighty game, the glorious strife "Until the goal predestined has been won"?

The Rishi

Not on the cliff
To be shattered has our ship set forth of old
Nor in the surge
To founder. Therefore, King, be royal, bold
Press on for ever laughing at the blows



Of wind and wave.
 The haven must be reached; we rise from pyre,
 We rise from grave,
 We mould our future by our past desire,
 We break, we save,
 We find the music that we could not find—

And the origin of this “music found”? She puts on an audio tape of Mother playing the organ and gratefully, eagerly, continues reading:

Grieve not for wounds nor fear the violent storms,
 For grief and pain
 Are errors of the clouded soul; behind
 They do not stain
 The living spirit—

Origin and source of the saving music is the *living spirit!* . . . She can hear it in Mother’s organ music whose theme on this tape is—“Compassion of the Divine”: “Quiet Power” climaxing in “Joy” . . .

Emerging from its spell she stares at the New Year 1945 card with its prayer “**THAT THE WORLD’S CHILDREN MAY SMILE THIS NEW YEAR—**” 1995!! But the world’s children are even now, every anguished moment, living—no, not living but dying—in the neo-satanic age of today. Every issue of the *Christian Science Monitor* on her reading table bears testimony to it.

March, 1995: *Global Report*: Under a photo of a child fleeing Russian attacks in Grozny: “Children under 15 have fought in at least 24 armed conflicts or have been forced into military service including in Liberia, Somalia, Angola, Sudan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran and Mozambique . . . 12 million children have been left homeless and more than 1 million separated from their families in wars during the past decade, according to the United Nations. More than 1.5 million have been killed and up to 5 million maimed. Documented cases exist of child soldiers sacrificed on the front lines, forced to traverse minefields or to kill their own relatives. The situation has grown so severe that the U.N. Secretary General commissioned a special study to come to some global solution.” The study was launched by the former first lady of Mozambique, Graca Machel, at the start of this year.

Soberly, with an intense inner appeal to Mother for guidance, she reaches for *Savitri*: How is one to find the music of the spirit in the world of genocide, hatred, falsehood now raging over Mother Earth?

She opens to Book Nine, Canto I: “Towards the Black Void.” *Savitri*, the lifeless body of her beloved in her arms, must prepare to face Death. To be in truth a Warrior of the Light, of the Spirit—How!?

Then suddenly there came on her the change
 Which in tremendous moments of our lives
 Can overtake sometimes the human soul
 And hold it up towards its luminous source . . .
 Only the spirit sees and all is known.
 Then a calm Power seated above our brows
 Is seen, unshaken by our thoughts and deeds,
 Its stillness bears the voices of the world:
 Immobile, it moves Nature, looks on life.
 It shapes immutably its far-seen ends . . .
 To mate with the Glory it sees, the spirit grows: .

As into a heaven of strength and silence, thought
 Is ravished, all this living mortal clay
 Is seized and in a swift and fiery flood
 Of touches shaped by a Harmonist unseen.

A new sight comes, new voices in us form
 A body of the music of the gods.

The music of the spheres . . . of the living spirit its sources . . . formed and found . . . within.

Shaken, but now by the joy of the Divine, its quiet power of compassion heard in Mother’s music, she opens all her being to its promise: of how she too, “The passionate instrument” of the aeonic Will, can help the world’s children to smile . . . This New Year. And the next. Linking Time’s years to Infinity.

Seyril Schochen lives in Baca Grande, Crestone, Colorado. Her play The Immortal Fire was recently performed in Hollywood.

Eighty-eight gurus

by David Hutchinson

The study of piano can be a lifelong sadhana, offering all the benefits of more traditional spiritual paths: inner awareness, transcendence, beauty, skill in means, flexibility, a meeting with eternity in the here-and-now. Every day brings fresh inner perceptions, skills and challenges, integration of the past with the present. This sadhana is also prone to serious aberrations: loss of perspective, slavish imitation of a method, dogmatic adherence to one school, compulsive or debilitating practice.

Piano lends itself to complete absorption. There is so much to learn! Even the mechanics of how to sit, how to hold the arms and hands, how to run the fingers over a simple scale demand attention. And so much more for the mind: how to read the notes, staves, markings, chords, phrases.

People often say that you must learn piano as a child—that an adult simply can’t achieve the same level of integration of these physical and mental skills. But this isn’t true. Children simply have by nature a capacity for one-pointed absorption and con-



centration. Look at a toddler building a stack of blocks. You will see lip-biting, eye-straining, breath-stopping concentration. This is what is needed in the study of piano—and in the spiritual life. Complete and utter absorption in the task.

A child works naturally to become a mature adult, with the average physical and mental skills that adulthood requires. The study of piano is of a higher order, an attempt to integrate beauty, skill, and esthetic sense in one activity.

Beauty is not difficult to find; it arises from the strings at a simple touch, and is wondrous beyond imagining. Piano gives you access to a higher aesthetic mind; you can then translate the inspirations from that realm through your playing.

Learning to play the piano is not a passive perception of higher truths, however. It calls for a detailed physical and mental integration. You are maneuvering both hands in complex independent motions and reading two staves of music on the page. This requires the ability to follow many things at once. To achieve this you need to practice a wide concentration, an attention to multiple levels of your being. The study of piano is thus an excellent practice in discerning, splitting, and then reintegrating multiple components of awareness.

As you advance in technique, you learn to detach yourself from mechanics. After many weeks or months of work on a piece or a technique, you graduate up to a sense of the piece as a whole. Music is powerfully emotional: it evokes strong feelings with a single note. Because of this, practicing music (as opposed to listening passively) is an education in emotional detachment. You may sit down at the keyboard in a sour mood, but the piece calls for quiet simplicity; or you are contemplative, and the piece requires tempestuous energy. You learn to generate different emotional states at will, and express them through the music.

Whether you wish to learn or not, the practice of piano teaches you the influence of emotions over action and the mind. You soon find that anxiety, depression, torpor, anger—any vital turbulence or confusion—all dissipate your concentration and reduce your ability to play, while happiness, calm, or joy enhance it. If you are open to these lessons, you will learn much that transcends the keyboard.

Because it is so difficult, piano teaches perseverance. You have to work at it for months or years, regularly and with concentration, but progress eventually will come. And that progress can extend over a lifetime. Few areas of life offer such an unbounded horizon. Relationships become flat, occupations become routine, the same mail arrives day after day. But there is no limit to achievement on the piano.

The art of the piano, like that of the spiritual path, entails infinite complexity and difficulty. To achieve any degree of progress requires immense presence of mind. You must develop a detailed insight into the parts of your being. Only when that is obtained can you be a clear channel through which music can flow.



The study of piano can offer all the benefits of more traditional spiritual paths: inner awareness, transcendence, skill in means, a meeting with eternity in the here-and-now. (Photo by Lynda Lester)

To study piano you should have a teacher with qualities that match your needs. Flexibility in a teacher is critical. A good teacher knows that in any long-term effort, there will be periods of fast advance alternating with stagnation or even regression. He shows sensibility in the slow times, works on the basics, and waits for motivation to strike the student once again. And most importantly, he recognizes when the student is ready for the next advance, and gives the tools to help achieve that leap forward.

As with the spiritual path, faith is necessary. No one sits down and plays perfectly the first or the fiftieth time. You have to believe that you are capable of the beauty you hear from an established pianist. You must also have a working belief in your day-to-day practice. Weeks may go by in which seemingly nothing has changed, no progress has been made. You sit down at the keyboard (or in meditation) and . . . nothing. So even as you concentrate and perfect the small details of technique you need to keep your inner eye trained on the goal. Remember that if Bach can attain such heights, so can you.

Sooner or later, usually on a frustrating day when you least expect it, an internal synthesis occurs. The skills that you have been practicing in isolation fuse into a whole, and suddenly you can play a piece that only a few days before was unthinkable. The music emerges from your fingers as if by magic. You have transcended technique—and yourself. You have brought a piece of eternity, of beauty and truth, down into the world.

The eighty-eight have spoken.

David Hutchinson moderates an online Synthesis of Yoga discussion group called Aurodiscuss. His e-mail address is dbhutchinson@ucdavis.edu.



Book review:

The mysticism of music, sound, and word

by Vishnu Eschner

I carved my vision out of wood and stone;
I caught the echoes of a word supreme
And **metred** the rhythm-beats of infinity
And listened through music for the eternal Voice.
-Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri*, p. 405

The Sufi Message, Volume II: The Mysticism of Music, Sound, and Word, by Hazrat Inayat Khan, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 273 pp.

Along with scores of devotees scattered amidst the pillars and archways, a visitor to evening meditation at Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Delhi branch, will be taken inward by the warm, resonant voice of Sri Karunamayee, which drifts through the twilight like rich smoke curling off some celestial incense. A devotee of Sri Aurobindo and Mother, Sri Karunamayee is also a respected artist, scholar, and highly acclaimed master of the rare Kirana Gharana style of classical Indian music. For the past 27 years, she has resided at the Delhi Ashram and overseen its music department.

It was during my very first music lesson with her that she recommended *The Mysticism of Music, Sound and Word*, Volume II of the definitive, nine-volume text on Sufism, *The Sufi Message*, by the revered **Sufi** master Hazrat Inayat Khan. Since the stated object of the **Sufi** movement is harmony, and Sufism traditionally uses music as a means of transmitting the essence of mystical insight, it was obviously the ideal resource for gaining a spiritual understanding of music.

Sri Aurobindo recognizes Sufism as one of a number of “Mahomedan Yogas,” and it bears similarity to his yoga in that it seeks to transform everyday life into religion, so that every action may bear some spiritual fruit. Sufis say simply that any person who has a knowledge of both outer and inner life is a Sufi.

Hazrat Inayat Khan was an accomplished musician, who ultimately surrendered his beloved music to the Divine and in 1910 brought the Sufi message to the West, telling the newly awakening audiences of Europe and New York in the 20s, “if I do anything, it is to tune souls instead of instruments; to harmonize people instead of notes.”

The Mysticism of Music turned out to be one of those required books in my proverbial desert island emergency kit. A brief look at several of the multitudinous facets of this gem reveals it to be the spiritual hiker’s encyclopedia-cum-guidebook to the entire river of consciousness.

The book begins with the original activity of consciousness, which is not unexpectedly, vibration. Then we’re taken nonstop through its descent over the myriad planes of existence, until by

the end we’ve gained insight into a surprisingly vast range of life experiences, with enough substance to outweigh a few racks in any new age bookstore.

Hundreds of topics (such as: places that sing aloud the legend of the past, the magical influences within all things, the influence of works of art, the musical aspects of memory, will, reason, mind, heart, intuition, inspiration, moods, inclinations) give evidence that nothing is beyond the wise scrutiny of the author, nor outside the scope of his subject. The author indeed looks upon all of life as music.

On family life, he has this to say: “In music the law of harmony is that the nearest note does not make a consonant interval. This explains the prohibition of marriage between close relatives because of their nearness in quality and blood.”

Not your typical music textbook.

By the end of Book 1, my impulse to understand music had been deflected into the quest to find harmony between my soul and body. The basic philosophy is given in a wide context which relates both to the seen and the unseen worlds. He speaks simply and profoundly: “The attainment of harmony in life takes a longer time to acquire and a more careful study than does the training of the ear and the cultivation of the voice, although it is acquired in the same manner as the knowledge of music.” And he goes on to prove it with simple, yet fascinating discourse.

In one chapter there’s an overview of the Indian conception of the science of **Raga**, the psychological science of music created by Lord Siva, which explains the need to prescribe music psychologically and mystically in order to elevate the soul.

Rigor and scholarship, however, are never given over to simplistic spiritualisms or dogmatic platitudes. His insight springs from every major world religion and from many languages; he draws them together elegantly with fascinating cross-reference and keen insight into the customs, words, and invention of the world’s great spiritual books.

What amazes one is the absolute timeliness of the insights. His comments on jazz could easily apply to much of current music. And the Upanishadic conception of the physics of sound from which he draws, seems to be the conventional scientific wisdom of today.

And as for its purported topic, one would be hard pressed to find so diverse a catalog of musical information, especially Indian music, in any other single volume.

With humble depth, the author speaks directly to the heart so that the reader is stimulated to a new understanding of the spiritual life. “The whole of life in all its aspects is one single music; and the real spiritual attainment is to tune one’s self to the harmony of this perfect music.”

You just may find new depth to the everyday world and begin to understand, with Hazrat Inayat Khan, that life is music which the soul has entered into the body to experience.

Vishnu Eschner, an artist and musician, is a member of Sri Aurobindo Sadhana Peetham in Lodi, California.



THE POETRY ROOM

Four and

And you say each finger has its own consciousness,
 Does it not take the five to form the one hand,
 So the fingers question the hand.
 Says fingers: Why must I stretch?
 Why must I bend?
 What for the means?
 And what for the ends?
 Says hand: Fingers never understand the fulfilling program.
 These common actions produce strong grip.
 We're not here to see through one another,
 But to see one another through.

—Routheni

I really missed this house of a thousand rooms.
 Few I did visit, fewer I recall.
 There are times I reopen some doors
 that I thought to be barred.
 I am led by a scent or by some word,
 by the sound of the voice I loved the most.
 Some rooms I could just glimpse,
 filled with light, with no limits.
 Someday I'll be allowed to inhabit them.
 I know in a strange partial way
 the people who live there,
 the only way I know them.
 The lady of the house, she sits in every chamber.

—Carlo Chiopris (translated from the Italian)

How often I have been there to see you,
 bitter at times or desperate,
 blaming you for having taken me from a normal life
 to initiate me instead, year after year,
 to the incurable suffering of the world.

How many times you won me
 and unveiled my true heart.

And then I said: forgive me,
 I didn't understand,
 I'm here, I'm here, I'm yours.

I asked you something I cannot write down,
 you answered in a way
 I do not even try to find words for.

I went on saying: I know, I know, I know.

—Carlo Chiopris (translated from the Italian)

Flute-song

A slow flute-song ancient as Eastern hills
 Draws its long and plaintive note,
 Winds languidly encircling my soul
 Stirring remembrances mellow with deep pain
 And visions too frequent
 Of loved ones too often lost,
 And the haunting-depth of too long a life.
 What deep purposes lurk in the reed
 As the player's breath gives it life, gives it a tone
 Beyond the mere cycle of bamboo's growth and rot.
 The evening sun bleeds into the sky,
 The evening star is too hesitant,
 Each steadied into the profound slowness of a message
 musically unspoken.

Flute-song . . . answer to every mother's ache
 For children gone before their time, speak
 For all the unspoken, the true.
 Flute-song . . . too pure for mere poignancy,
 Too sheer even for pain . . .
 Voice of silence

—Arvind R. Habbu

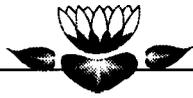
Folded bent
 This creative shape
 I saw a dream
 I saw the moon
 I went in rocket
 I saw the stream
 They said I lived
 I said I died

I see the sky
 The mad man monk
 His armor steel
 I saw the eye
 It glistens truth
 It showed me shapes
 It showed me life and breath
 I saw the moon
 In life and strength
 It was half, it was full
 I caught the glimpse
 Of wedded earth
 You know my being
 Take me and be me

The leaf of life
 An unending stream
 The crystal breath
 A life and death
 A sugar moment
 Of prised wealth
 I saw the sky
 I saw the moon
 I saw the clouds
 They entered in
 You are God
 You are child
 You are mine
 You are yours
 Take my time
 Let me free
 I will walk
 I will be

—Chitra Neogy

—Chitra Neogy



NOTES FROM THE FIELD

In search of community

by Sa vitra

In 1969, I left the States to meet the Mother. I hitchhiked from London to India. Nothing else then could have satisfied me. Nothing else could have moved me to such a journey. Not India. Not the Ashram. Not even Auroville. No, the lure for such a journey, though I never thought of it that way at the time, had to be That One we seek behind all our journeys.

I was a very introverted kind of guy then, in many ways unrecognizable to those who have known me since except for my seriousness of purpose. After She came into my life, cutting me loose from all the earlier dead-end spiritual paths that I had thrown myself into in such dire earnest, nothing could hold me back. I knew where I had to go.

When I left San Francisco and the 60s behind, I was clearly on a quest for personal realization. But when I finally met Her that day that first time, the meaning of the word “personal” expanded beyond definition, coming to include “collective” within it.

And so it was that on that most personal of quests, this shy fellow would walk through an innermost door and find himself turned toward a radically altered “outside.” Find himself irreversibly cast forth from his accustomed insulation, no longer able to fully withdraw into his former inner world, no longer fulfilled with his individualized brand of *sadhana*.

Thus, unsought and unexpected, began my awkward transition-conversion, I would call it—from loner to self-in-relation. Began my search for Her Community.

Not that I was innately averse to community. On the contrary, it was indelibly part of my childhood dream to belong to some larger, more beautiful and harmonious collective in which all of us were embraced in a trust of light and love. But that child was to find himself all-too-quickly exposed to a world bristling with bullies and sharp points, where sensitivity learned to conceal or contract itself to numb the pain and harshness, the venomous jokes, betrayals, and outright brutality.

But now, She had brought me back to that dream. And I could begin the search again in India. . . gently at first within the sweetness and protection of the Ashram; then more daringly a year later when I asked Her if I could live in Auroville, that mysterious place I had heard of before leaving the States but which would never by itself have attracted me without Her lure.

I remember dimly those early days walking down Nehru Street (when one could still wander leisurely down the middle of the road), venturing forth from the safety net of incense bordering the Ashram compound to the **fish-and-god-knows**-what-other-smells of the Central Bazaar. I still see myself in my starched pale-blue **kurta** pajamas, Prosperity-issued, staring

voyeurishly into the Indian Coffee House at the assorted Westerners, most long-haired and bearded, often shirtless in **lungis** or dhotis—the men, that is. The womenfolk, just as inscrutable, were garbed like gypsy queens, little Rajasthani mirror-work vests draped over **butterfly** blouses.

Who were these hybrids? I wondered then as I watched one of them, hair matted in a bun, only wild eyes visible through his jungly beard as he drove his little bullock cart down the main street of Pondy with his wife and daughters in tow.

It was sort of like an East-West cowboy town then, the Coffee House being the Saloon where desperadoes met over *beedis*. On the surface, it was hard to see anything in common with this raw first-of-the-new-species or last-of-the-old. But something more dangerous than curiosity, more tidal than full moons was pulling on me, drawing me away from the blessed order of the Ashram where I seemed to fit in to this Auroville where I didn't.

I would wind up spending 21 years there (and who knows how many more in some next future?), trying to fit into an Auroville that was still too large for this small world of ours.

The first years on that barren red plateau, difficult as they were in material terms, everything unreliable, still in flux, were the honeymoon years. Even with all the outer insecurities—the scarcity of shelter, running water, electricity, the plethora of parasites, strange fevers, boils, vipers and scorpions and mildewed monsoons—what did it matter? She was there in Her room and all was right in the world.

There we were, for all our foolish innocence, voyaging off in our shaky communal raft of palm thatch and bamboo. And though I am sure time retouches the negative, putting a halo over the past, still there was a sense of real comradeship in the yoga we shared together then before our cynicism and ideologies caught up with us. Before She left us on our own. A comradeship protected by Her Presence or our own naivete, but one which seemed to erode over the decades, giving way to the coercion of political and ideological group affinities.

I reminisce over the good old days that were never as good as we like to recall them. But human as I am, it is a relief to remember times when we stood together with no one on the other side, supporting one another, appreciating each other's work and contributions, sharing a more genuine understanding of each other's hardships and limitations. A time when we looked forward to forming that human chain as we passed along the *chettis* of concrete, watching the darkness fade under the glare of construction lights, feeling our fatigue give way to the joy of working together into the dawn. A time when we would sit around in the evenings sharing stories of our inner lives rather than lobbying one another over the latest hot issue or hot gossip, rather than losing ourselves in our chosen indulgence. A time when mutual trust had not yet been replaced by committee approval.

But as in all our halfway **Edens**, gravity overtakes us, the apple falls, the honeymoon ends, and we begin to repeat the patterns of our parental egos all the way back to the first ones, trading our childhood dreams for power dramas, reverting back to



reflexes of blame and denial and revenge, retreating into our corners to lick our wounds. And the smiles exchanged along the road stiffen or disappear altogether; the jokes get cruder, more barbed; the behavior more like that of the world we were trying to put behind us.

And the deeper bond and code of conduct that had prevailed gives way to substitutes for that Grace; gives way to all the tools and techniques we have developed since then to compensate for our gracelessness: the more structured meeting forums and governing bodies, the communications workshops and computer link-ups, all of which, while contributing to a more conscious process of interaction, still cannot *create* community. No, for that, we must be willing to live it, to work through the humble day-to-day resolution of our lives where community is actually lived.

And then one day in 1990, as unplanned and unchoreographed as the day I arrived, I left Auroville for reasons I don't fully comprehend even now. Reasons that I still find myself stopping in mid-stride or mid-sleep to fathom, to reconcile. Yes, why did I leave then, and did my departure mean I had abandoned Her Community? Or had we all abandoned it then, our friction and disunity full-blown, our rudderless collective hardly resembling a community worthy of His Name?

I trust we have all grown in the interim, more aware of the magnitude of the transformation and resistances that Auroville fronts. But as I regrouped then in Berkeley, my exodus was not a matter of reflection but of survival and new beginnings. The intensity of discord and distrust had simply become too painful to sustain, even with all the positive things that Auroville still rep-

resented for me. I humbly realized that whatever human goodwill and collective savvy I still had left, it was no match for the enormous dysfunctionality of our resident-family then.

Drained of inner and outer resources, I had withdrawn, acknowledging on the one hand defeat, while on the other taking it as an opportunity—no, a necessity—to recover and renew a relationship with Her that had gotten obscured in that churning battlefield of red clay; recognizing that I would now have to work—freed of peer pressure and peer approval—on that more immediate field She had given me to change: myself.

Perhaps I had also finally purged myself of the illusion of turning a corner. In Auroville, it was not uncommon over the decades to hear the collective sigh: “At last, we have turned the corner.” Only to discover a second or a season later the same scenario replaying itself. It seems that there are no corners after all, only endless curves in what can either be a spiral or circle depending on our determination.

“It is in work done as an offering to the Divine that the consciousness develops best,” She had told us in '71. That along with the personal message She had given me that same year had become fundamental compass points to recenter me in my earlier solos Westward in a process that would eventually become my primary “work”: A liaison process in which I found myself struggling to build bridges and resources across terrifying gulfs when there was hardly anything resembling a network of support in the States.

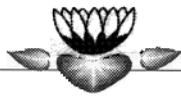
Still driven in 1990 by those energies, expectations, and perhaps a fair dose of guilt, I tried to continue to actively serve Auroville from here; tried in all earnest to pick up and build off my former role and extensive experience in liaison with the States. But try as I did in good faith, pulling out all the stops for over a year as our “dowry” (I was no longer flying solo) burned like a rope bridge behind us, that was not to be.

It was a rude and unexpected awakening, watching two decades of a real working process come to an abruptly gut-wrenching halt as that door slammed in my face. It took me a moment to get my throbbing fingers out of the door, to recover from the shock. Then I turned back to Her, the One to whom I had offered the work, who had set me forth on it to begin with. The same One, I reluctantly realized then, who had slammed the door in my face.

Yes, behind every slammed door is a Grace. And another door opening. In this case for me, I was being forced to withdraw even more than I had anticipated. There would be no intermediate collectives to cushion the transition. No familiar outer works to slip into. Even if I wanted to. Now it was just me and Her again. Me and Her and my



“A time when we looked forward to forming that human chain” (Photo by Indra Poddar)



partner Soleil. A community of two struggling to become a Community of One.

And so I turned to the only thing I could do when all else was taken away from me: writing. That now became my work, my service, my path to Her. I would find Her in the writing.

And thus began an impossible manuscript, three years and three versions in the labor. A living process that brought me closer to Them than anything I could have imagined. Except for Sundaure (pronounced Sun-dor), our leap year's child whose birth would bring us to Oregon and expand our Community to three.

August, 1994. A year after the last version of the manuscript had been written. Sundaure was nearly 21 months. And our withdrawal from the collective circuits had reached its most distant orbit. Other than a few letters from friends, we hardly heard any direct news from Auroville. And other than from letters sent out to their mailing lists, we received no communications from the Auroville-related groups here. For all intents and purposes, the world had become our collective context, our place of exile, and the small, remarkably receptive town of Ashland, our transit community.

Then out of the blue came a phone call from Lynda Lester. Would I consider writing something for *NexUS*? "What's *NexUS*?" I asked, hearing jumbled in my brain, "What's next for us?" That parallel inner and outer conversation and the June issue which she sent us seemed to trigger off the subversive possibility of reconnecting. Tentatively at first: A visit with Lynda on an exploratory trip to the Southwest where we had heard of some conference around Sri Aurobindo's birthday in Baca, Colorado. It would also be a first test of travels with Sundaure.

The Baca part of it never really coincided with the group event, arriving as we did on the eve of its conclusion. But the moment there did lead to some intensive personal time which broke something open in me, resulting in a rather radical "coming out" article on Satprem for the last *NexUS*. The brief visit with Lynda, crammed with its late-night conversations, furthered that opening, recalling the high of more interactive times.

But there was no immediate collective "descent." More a destined touching-in with individuals. Yet there was a renewed sense of reaching out for that lost tribe of ours still missing, still eluding the more contrived collective traps and nets we had set for it thus far.

How would we, I wonder now, as the year draws to a close, find that living *sangha* of Hers that seemed to be "just around the next corner"? How many of us in fact truly consider Community as a heart-felt need, as more than Virtual Community in the Internet or reservations for the next AUM? And though it is obvious that we cannot expect to replicate a live-in Auroville, spread out as we are over here, how many of us want to be part of more than just an Auro-club or Auro-network?

For, after the Weekend, after the e-mail, then what? Isn't real community something that happens beneath the gloss and

hyperbole of spiritual class reunions and cyber-forums (valuable and inspiring as they may be)—in the actual working out together in our lives-as-a-whole all that still remains unresolved between us, all the distortions in our past that we have left unhealed and unaddressed for fear of the awesome responsibility we would have to assume with one another? Isn't it easier just to leave things (persons) and move on, not bothering to take the initiative, to make that phone call that might expose too much vulnerability? Or worse yet, to hang up in the middle?

But these escapes and intermediaries—so second-nature to a culture such as ours which hides behind a technology that claims to enhance communication even as it so conveniently allows us to cut-and-run—are unavailable to us in *real* community. There, we cannot problem-solve by proxy; by simply burying the past with all its unresolved corpses that were once comrades in the yoga; or by gathering together for some annual collective fix to sanctify us and get us through the next stretch of isolation.

"As for experiences," Sri Aurobindo's quote jumped out at me in the Fall *NexUS*, "they are all right but the trouble is that they do not seem to change the nature, they only enrich the consciousness . . . That is why we insist on the psychic transformation as the first necessity—for that does change the nature . . ."

Yes, aren't we really looking to feel ourselves part of a community of individuals more interested in changing natures rather than just ex-changing experiences? Individuals willing to confront in ourselves those primeval competitive instincts that undermine our own and each other's works, offerings, and lives.

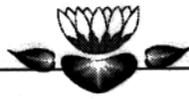
If so, what does this imply for us? What responsibility do we have to Her and one another to heal our pasts—not just paste over them—so that we might become a truer, more supportive and effective vehicle for Her Future, Her Community, joined together by more than just our Auro-prefix or our cellular passwords to access the party or program?

And what might we find if we took up that humbling work, digging back for that basis of trust on which the success of all our other projects and organizations depends? Who might we become if we re-formed that human chain, passing the *chettis* from one to another, letting that offering of concrete goodwill clear us of all our unresolved stories, threading between us as a bond far stronger, more reliable, creative, and joyful than the fickle attractions and repulsions that presently join us or divide us?

Yes, what might we find and who might we become?

I turn to our two-year-old son, the Dream still fully alive in his eyes. His smile disarms me as he takes my hand, saying: "Papa and Sunny go for a walk." And so revived, I resume our journey . . . —December 1994

Savitra received his name from the Mother. His liaison work for Auroville included soliciting and obtaining the first U.S. foundation grants that started AV's afforestation, endorsements for the township from illuminaries such as Margaret Mead, and articles in publications such as The Whole Earth Review.



ESSAY

Savitri and the mystic hero's journey

by Rod Hemsell

This is the last article in a four-part series exploring the ramifications of Sri Aurobindo's epic *Savitri* as mantric poetry.

Part 4. The Journey

Everything depends on the Word. For it is the word of creation, the very sound that brings to birth the worlds, the luminous goddess-form of the Supreme:

*Tat savitur varam rupam jyotih parasya dhimahi
yannah satyena dipayet.¹*

and it shall illumine us with the Truth. For as Sri Aurobindo affirms often enough in *Savitri*, "She is the golden bridge, the wonderful fire . . . She is the Force, the inevitable Word."

It is arguable, perhaps—the seer having received this boon of *drsti*, *sruti*, *smrti* in a clairaudient trance, as the simultaneous inevitable revelation of the truth of his realization, thence to be delivered forth by him as mantric verse for the subsequent illumination of fit hearers—that this sacred word might best be read, and received, by the listening heart of a clairaudient silence. And for those gifted with clairaudience (as we know from Sri Aurobindo's diaries that he was) and disposed to receiving the supramental revelation, this might well be true. But Sri Aurobindo's theory of mantra, the text of *Savitri* itself, and our experience, seem to support rather emphatically the notion that it is the audible sound, with its dynamics of pitch, rhythm, image, and conceptual spiritual content that has a unique potential and power to effect in the fit outward hearer the experience of which it speaks, and of which it is the living symbol.²

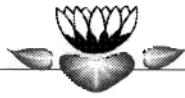
It is to demonstrate the truth of this hypothesis, at least in part, that we have undertaken the *Savitri/Agenda* experiment—a series of immersion workshops in which we simply allow the Word to be heard and absorbed, in as clear and deep a manner as we can manage at the present time.³ And in the context and atmosphere thus created by *Savitri*, we turn to the Mother's *Agenda* with the aspiration to hear and know as profoundly and intimately as possible her experience of transformation. The effect of this attempt thus far has been overwhelmingly gratifying. And it has made dramatically clear the fact that the experience of transformation narrated by Sri Aurobindo in *Savitri* and by the Mother in her *Agenda* are one and the same. The two together create a resonance that seems to literally dissolve the membrane that separates our worlds and unite us with them in a remarkably vivid and tangible sense.

This of course will not seem too surprising to those who are familiar with their work. But what can be surprising is the degree to which one finds oneself brought face to face with their experience and into a deeply luminous identity with Sri Aurobindo, the Mother, and the work of transformation. And that of course is the point, whatever else may be said.

It is tempting, however, to take this a step further, or in fact several steps further—to grasp the extraordinary quality of the experience in its total reality, and somehow establish its importance on solid ground for ourselves and for any who might wish to pursue such a process, enter the worlds of *Savitri* and Satyavan with eyes open, and as the Upanishad says, "to truly find our foundation." And yet, perhaps it is only the experience itself that can achieve these goals, which certainly exceed anything that



"An emptiness and stillness, instantaneously deeper than meditation."
(Photo by Paul Lisseck)



mind as we know it can analyze. Its validity is to be found only in the revelation itself, which proceeds from the Truth. And this finding is the process that Savitri narrates and establishes in us. She is the supramental force as She issues forth in goddess-form from the Divine Mother, as She descends into the consciousness and speech of the supramental Avatar, as She enwraps the subtle body of the Earth and takes physical birth in the body of the Mother, to reveal the soul and tapasya of the transformation of Death and the evolution of immortal life, and as She enters our space in the form of mantric vibration. One must simply become a channel for the sound that is Savitri and receive Her without reservation.

There are innumerable instances in *Savitri* that illustrate, comment upon, and reveal this truth. Perhaps a negative argument in support of this notion can be made at this point, bearing in mind that the written page is dumb, and the only real proof is in the hearing. To attempt an example, nonetheless, let us look at the first few lines of the canto titled "The Adoration of the Divine Mother."

A stillness absolute, incommunicable,
Meets the sheer self-discovery of the soul;
A wall of stillness shuts it from the world,
A gulf of stillness swallows up the sense
And makes unreal all that mind has known,
All that the labouring senses still would weave
Prolonging an imaged unreality.

I don't know how one can have the experience of the elongation of the "All" in the next to the last line, and then of the lengthening, depending, and slowing of sound that occurs with "still would weave" culminating in the extremely elongated and heavy "Prolonging," which qualifies in an indescribably accurate way the sense of the final term "unreality," without reading these lines aloud, instrumentally. The net result of reading instrumentally is to invite that stillness absolute into the spaces we are so accustomed to being filled with sensational unrealities. And *that experience* of stillness is a prerequisite of all that follows. It is not difficult to understand this conceptually; it is fundamental to most spiritual discipline. But *Savitri* has the power to actually bring about such an emptiness and stillness, instantaneously deeper than meditation usually can achieve even with considerable effort. And then we are prepared for the uplift that follows:

But where is the Lover's everlasting Yes,
And immortality in the secret heart,
The voice that chants to the creator Fire,
The symbolled OM, the great assenting Word,
The bridge between the rapture and the calm,
The passion and the beauty of the Bride,
The chamber where the glorious enemies kiss,
The smile that saves, the golden peak of things?

I know that "the golden peak of things" has a golden ring when read aloud that heightens the vibration of the whole being; that "the rapture" and "the calm" are audibly, experientially distant from each other on the spectrum of spiritual qualities and require a special bridging influence that only the swift, delicate force of Savitri can accomplish and reveal in an instant of perception; and that "the chamber where the glorious enemies kiss" is the chamber of the body when it is filled with the absolute powers of Love and Death, because these qualities are conveyed to me directly by the sound on which they arrive into audible space. I do not get the same sense of these words when I read them silently or reservedly. And when this section ends, it conveys a power and dynamism that cannot sit silently on the page:

In absolute silence sleeps an absolute Power.
Awaking, it can wake the trance-bound soul
And in the ray reveal the parent sun:
It can make the world a vessel of Spirit's force,
It can fashion in the clay God's perfect shape.

This is not merely a prophetic statement. This is precisely where Savitri reveals Her true potential. She is the power that can suddenly awaken us and make our clay feel like a vessel of God because She pours that radiant substance into us and into the space around us that is filled with Her sound and substance. ("This known as in a thunder-flash of God, The rapture of things eternal filled his limbs; Amazement fell upon his ravished sense; His spirit was caught in her intolerant flame.") She IS the *stillness* and the *word*. She IS the *sweetness* and the *might* that characterize the supramental atmosphere and being and power in this modified mantric form.

And the extent of both Her sweetness and Her might are conveyed, mystically, powerfully, and undeniably home to the soul who hears, by Her dynamic, physical embodiment in sound. That this is the intention of Sri Aurobindo's verse is made overtly apparent when, in a closely related canto a few pages on in this same book, titled "The Vision and the Boon," after a long and grievous, heroic chant of invocation to the Divine Mother to heal all this chaos, in which the might of the great Aswapathy becomes difficult for us to contain and to bear, the Mother answers him in the most incredibly sweet and mellifluous tones, with an affirmation and description of the one whom she shall send to accomplish what he has asked:

One shall descend and break the iron Law,
Change Nature's doom by the lone Spirit's power

A music of griefless things shall weave her charm;
The harps of the Perfect shall attune her voice,
The streams of Heaven shall murmur in her laugh,
Her lips shall be the honeycombs of God,
Her limbs his golden jars of ecstasy . . .



Let us only say here, in closing, that to hear these lines in the continuous natural succession in which they occur, in their circumambience of light and sound, is to experience those streams, that laugh, and to taste that honey with those lips. When, later on, She takes birth and becomes conscious on Earth, finds Her human counterpart and thus becomes mortal, subject to the vicissitudes of matter and life and mind, and rises to Her full stature in Him at the moment of his death, we know that She is the soul of this yoga, that She is there to do this work in us, that She was the consciousness in that body at the moment of death to accomplish the work She was sent to do, and that She will always be so, forevermore. For we have heard, and this is the divine truth-force, Savitri:

A seed shall be sown in Death's tremendous hour,
A branch of heaven transplant to human soil;
Nature shall overleap her mortal step;
Fate shall be changed by an unchanging will.

As Mother says in the *Agenda* in 1961,

But all of that is wonderfully, accurately expressed and explained in *Savitri*. Only you must know how to read it! The entire last part, from the moment she goes to seek Satyavan in the realm of Death (which affords an occasion to explain this), the whole description of what happens there, right up to the end, where every possible offer is made to tempt her, everything she must refuse to continue her terrestrial labor . . . it is my experience EXACTLY.

Savitri is really a condensation, a concentration of the universal Mother—the eternal universal Mother, Mother of all universes from all eternity—in an earthly personality for the Earth's salvation. And Satyavan is the soul of the Earth, the Earth's *jiva*. So when the Lord says, "he whom you love and whom you have chosen", it means the earth. All the details are there! When she comes back down, when Death has yielded at last, when all has been settled and the Supreme tells her, "Go, go with him, the one you have chosen," how does Sri Aurobindo describe it? He says that she very carefully takes the SOUL of Satyavan into her arms, like a little child, to pass through all the realms and come back down to earth. Everything is there! He hasn't forgotten a single detail to make it easy to understand—for someone who knows how to understand. And it is when Savitri reaches the earth that Satyavan regains his full human stature.⁴

As a flame disappears in endless Light
Immortally extinguished in its source,
Vanished the splendour and was stilled the word

Then a line moved on the far edge of calm:
The warm-lipped sentient soft terrestrial wave,
A quick and many-murmured moan and laugh,
Came gliding in upon white feet of sound.

Notes

1. Let us meditate on the most auspicious form of Savitri, on the light of the Supreme which shall illumine us with the Truth.—Sri Aurobindo's translation, Sri Aurobindo Centenary Library, vol. 26, p. 513
2. See the last issue of *NexUS* for a summary of Sri Aurobindo's theory of mantra.
3. These one-week workshops have taken place primarily at Savitri Solar Dome in the Baca, Crestone, Colorado, in August '94, March '95, and August '95.
4. This conversation immediately precedes the one of January 24, 1961, in which the Mother describes the descent of the supramental consciousness into her body. It is a perfect complement to "The Vision and the Boon."

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APROPOS

Once, the mountains held within their silver walls a forest so high and so gracefully forgotten that it rode above the troubles of the world as easily as the blinding white clouds that sometimes catch on jagged peaks and musically unfurl. Cold lakes scattered in the greenery ran so deep that soundings were of no avail, and the meadows along the tree line, suspended in the light, were as smooth and green as slabs of jade. ... And though empires and kingdoms below might nervously claim it, the forest was in its own way inviolable—a domain of hearth smoke in unwavering columns against a flawless blue sky, of mountains clad in wind-buffed ice, of the thinnest air, of rivers running white and bursting with oxygen.

Perhaps you have felt the presence of such places when, in a darkened concert hall, the music makes the moon rise, perfectly fresh and bright, as if the roof has opened up above you, or when the trees shudder in a sudden wind and the sun unexpectedly lights the undersides of their rustling leaves. They do exist, although they are so hard to find that it is tempting to believe they are illusions.—Mark Helprin, Swan **Luke**

Let me take the whole universe and put it on the tips of your eyelashes.—Yun-Men (?-949)

An appreciation of the 1960s would be better served by allowing that decade's lessons to be enacted, not simply packaged and sold back to us as a sitcom. Those lessons are simple and important: the belief that we are not simply individuals but part of a larger culture that requires our most earnest efforts and ideas; the conviction that the worlds within and outside ourselves are subject to transformation, that our actions can shape the future; that what we choose to do matters deeply; the insistence that America has a place for our best selves, and to the degree that it doesn't, it must be changed; the notion that music can help formulate a vision toward which we can aspire.—Anthony **DeCurtis**

When I say that at the conclusion of this transformation, if we survive, we will be unimaginably different—please don't mistake that for new age goo. The pious platitudes of the new agers are pathetic incantations hoping to tame the untamable. Our transformation will leave humankind *different*, not necessarily better. It's just that all of us collectively have decided that it's time for the big change—though individually most of us wish it were happening to somebody else in some other **space-time**.—Michael Ventura

Each friend represents a world in us, a world possibly not born until they arrive, and it is only by this meeting that a new world is born.—Anais Nin, 1903-1977

Life is not having been told that the man has just waxed the floor.—Ogden Nash, 1902-1971

There's one question scientists are mostly scared to discuss. What is the nature of self awareness? Dare we utter the **C-word**—consciousness? What is the nature of consciousness? What kind of threshold of complexity is there for consciousness? What does consciousness mean? Well, you're not thought to be very scientific if you use words like that. Even the word "mind," the **M-word**, is one that can get a scientist into **trouble**.—Murry Gell-Man

You must have a **room**, or a certain hour or so a day, where you don't know what was in the newspapers that morning, you don't know who your friends are, you don't know what you owe anybody, you don't know what anybody owes to you. This is a place where you can simply experience and bring forth what you are and what you might be. This is the place of creative incubation. At first you may find that nothing happens there. But if you have a sacred place and use it, something eventually will **happen**.—Joseph Campbell, 1904-1987

No words, acts.—The Mother

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