

# Collaboration

Fall 1988

Vol. XV No.



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

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

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

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

Printed in the United States of America.

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

**This is our first issue of 1988-89.**  
**Only three issues were published last year:**  
**Fall, Winter-Spring and Summer**  
**Deadline for submissions to the Winter**  
**issue is January 15th.**  
**Please renew your subscription and keep us**  
**informed of address changes.**

# Reading Between The Lines

By Gordon Korstange

Reading the works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, more than any other specific activity, forms the basis for the practice of their Yoga and unifies the diverse group of sadhaks, semi-sadhaks, and aspirants who call themselves Aurobindonians, Ashramites, Aurovilians, or just plain devotees. No other 20th century spiritual teachers, as far as I know, have produced more volumes of literature interpreting their experiences. And then there are the works of disciples!

I remember coming to the Ashram in Pondicherry as an outsider in hopes of a birthday darshan from the Mother, happily ignorant of what that meant. The first question I was asked, and, on the surface, the one thing necessary for admission was to answer affirmatively the question, "Have you read any of the works of Sri Aurobindo?"

**...I still had to deal with the way their words would rise up within me, like a Zen koan demanding action, an exam only I could give and take.**

I went home clutching *Bases of Yoga* and Mother's *Conversations*, read them and understood little, but slowly began to add book after book to my new collection. I covered them with hand-made paper—bright red for *Hymns to the Mystic Fire*, blue for *Savitri*—and gazed with satisfaction at their impressive line-up on the shelf. In truth, I seldom read any book straight through, unable, it seemed, to make it through the endless, compound-complex cadences of Sri Aurobindo but continually dipping into them a few pages at a time.

The more my contact with the Ashram and later, Auroville, deepened, the better I understood the imperturbable prose of Sri Aurobindo and the direct, vibrant words of the Mother, for I could see and talk to people who had taken these words to heart. I began to learn that reading these books was something quite different from my experiences in American higher education, where, most often, I "covered the assignments"—read those eleven Dickens' novels in a ten-week term, or quickly digested a poem that had to be regurgitated for the teacher's satisfaction, then forgotten after the paper or the test. In India my only examination was experience.

If I fell into the habit of scanning Sri Aurobindo and Mother's works, I still had to deal with the way their words would rise up within me, like a Zen koan demanding action, an exam only I could give and take.

In Auroville I found another way to read that alleviated some of that "Self-seeking" tension. I will call it "mantric reading"—using the texts not as tracts to cogitate upon but as sound-experiences of the gurus' consciousness which resonate, especially when spoken aloud, with deeper layers of the being beyond the mental. Reading *Savitri*, especially, became a kind of meditation and invocation, an experience not to be glossed but felt.

Later I found confirmation of this way of understanding the written word from the English-American poet Denise Levertov who taught poetry to her students by having each member of the class, in turn, read the same poem aloud. In her book *The Poet in the World*. (New Directions, 1960) she describes the process this way:

"Usually the first one or two readers stumble and hesitate; the next two read with some confidence and facility; then a period of boredom and irritation set in—probably most participants feeling they can't bear to hear those same words one more time; and then—subtly—that point is passed, and one finds oneself at a different level of response, finds oneself emerging into an intimate, sensuous comprehension of the poem that activates both intellect and imagination." (pp. 169-70)

I have not been with a group which has tried this with the works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, but it would be interesting to combine Levertov's method with one which the Mother herself used in the earlier days of the Ashram. After a period of concentration, each disciple would open the particular book being studied, point without looking to a passage and read it. We tried this recently at a Sri Aurobindo Association retreat and each of us found ourselves with an interesting paragraph or two from *Conversations* to mull over. Here's the part of my passage that seemed "meant" for me:

Surrender means a free total giving with all the delight of the giving; there is no sense of sacrifice in it. If you have the slightest feeling that you are making a sacrifice, then it is no longer surrender. For it means that you reserve yourself or that you are trying to give, with grudging or with pain or effort, and have not the joy of the gift, perhaps not even the feeling that you are giving. (p. 126)

If I were to follow the direction of Robert McDermott in his Afterword to the second edition of *The Essential Aurobindo* (reviewed in this issue), I would make this passage an object of "meditative reflection," re-reading it again and again until I had penetrated to its essence and "seen" its relationship to my spiritual development. McDermott writes: "One could imagine, for example, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother appreciating an attempt to fathom their life and work by meditating on a line such as the following: [The whole wide world is only he and she] (*Savitri*, 63)." (p. 251) He goes on to show how Ruud Lohman did exactly that in his book, *A House for the Third Millennium*.

Perhaps we can focus on a particular text for each issue and make an all-USA study group. Mother's *Conversations* seems like a good place to start. Just concentrate and open a page . . .

I am drawn to this kind of concentration because I cannot drink down words in huge, graduate school gulps anymore. I want to talk back to the writer, tell them how their ideas are affecting me or explore some path their words have opened up in my being. I read less and what I read has to have that responsive effect on my thoughts.

Reading, of course, forms the basis for Sri Aurobindo study groups which often focus on one particular text, say *Essays on the Gita*, and read one chapter each time they meet. There may be discussion afterwards or not, depending on the focus of the group. We attended a session recently at David Mitchell's house in Connecticut where M.P. Pandit's commentary on *The Mother* was read, followed by a meditation made deeper by the atmosphere engendered through the words.

Yet another way to read is to write one's own commentary, a method that Jean demonstrates in this issue. Reacting to a passage through writing can require the reader to become actively engaged with the text in a personal way rather than letting the words fly in and out of one's head like Sri Aurobindo's thought-birds. Obviously this is different from mantric or meditative reading.

In fact, the personal commentary, more like a journal entry than an explanation, is part of the way in which writing is being used in schools where a student is asked, in class, to write about the previous night's reading assignment and then share it with others instead of listening passively to the teacher's lecture. I invite our readers to try this method and even to send some of your results to *Collaboration*. Perhaps we can focus on a particular text for each issue and make an all-USA study group. The Mother's *Conversations* seems a good place to start. Just concentrate and open to a page . . .

My old books still stand silently on the shelf most of the time. I sometimes wish that I had a Sri Aurobindo Centenary Library, but I like the way each of my volumes has a unique color, weight and texture. Reading the new edition of *The Essential Aurobindo* has sent me back more regularly to open them up.

I wish that I was becoming a more thorough, disciplined reader, one who would put aside that hour a day, every day, to read *The Life Divine* from cover to cover. But I like to read aloud, like to pronounce the words as clearly as I can, like to ride the sound waves of Sri Aurobindo's rhythms and linger in the space after a word is spoken, in the silence between the lines.

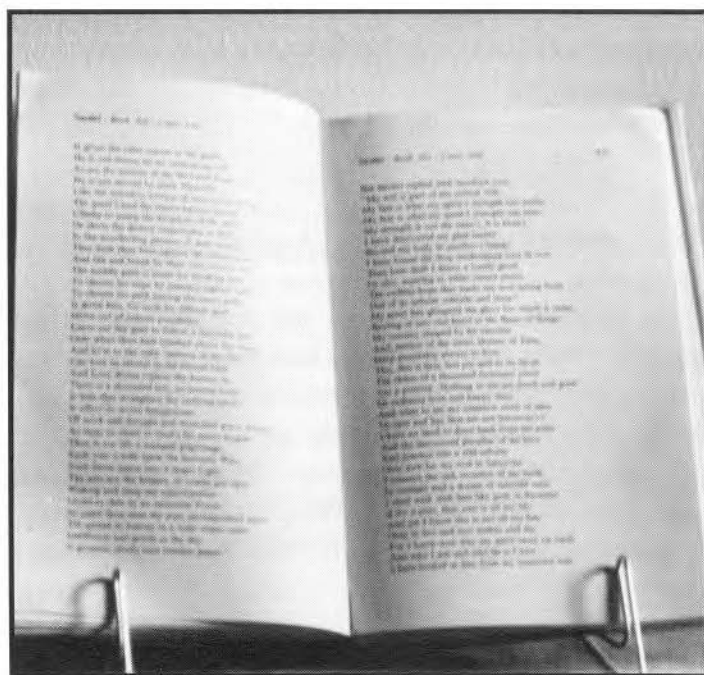


Photo by Gordon Korstange

# Selections on Reading from Sri Aurobindo and Mother

Compiled by Eric Hughes

## Sri Aurobindo:

It is obvious that poetry cannot be a substitute for sadhana; it can be an accompaniment only. If there is a feeling (of devotion, surrender etc.), it can express and confirm it; if there is an experience, it can express and strengthen the force of experience. As reading of books like the *Upanishads* or *Gita* or singing of devotional songs can help, especially at one state or another, so this can help also. Also it opens a passage between the external consciousness and the inner mind or vital. But if one stops at that, then nothing much is gained. Sadhana must be the main thing and sadhana means the purification of the nature, the consecration of the being, the opening of the psychic and the inner mind and vital, the contact and presence of the Divine, the realization of the Divine in all things, surrender, devotion, the widening of the consciousness into the cosmic Consciousness, the self one in all, the psychic and the spiritual transformation of the nature. If these things are neglected and only poetry and mental development and social contact occupy all the time, then that is not sadhana. Also the poetry must be written in the true spirit, not for fame or self-satisfaction, but as a means of contact with the Divine through inspiration or of the expression of one's own inner being as it was written formerly by those who left behind them so much devotional and spiritual poetry in India; it does not help if it is written only in the spirit of the western artist or litterateur. Even works or meditation cannot succeed unless they are done in the right spirit of consecration and spiritual aspiration gathering up the whole being and dominating all else. It is lack of this gathering up of the whole life and nature and turning it towards the one aim, which is the defect in so many here that lowers the atmosphere and stands in the way of what is being done by myself and the Mother. (SABCL, vol. 9, p. 513, *Letters on Poetry, Literature and Art*)

Reading novels is always distracting if you are deep in Sadhana. It is better to avoid it now. (Ibid, p. 513.)

If novels touch the lower vital or raise it, they ought not to be read by the Sadhak. One can read them only if one can look at them from the literary point of view as a picture of human life and nature which one can observe, as the Yogi looks at life itself, without being involved in it or having any reaction. (Ibid, p. 514.)

Question: I concentrate so much on reading that no room is left for Sadhana, thinking with the result that as soon as I come out of that concentration anything can enter in my mind. Is this not an undesirable practice from the point of view of discipline in Sadhana?

**It is lack of this gathering up of the whole life and nature and turning it towards the one aim, which is the defect in so many here that lowers the atmosphere and stands in the way of what is being done by myself and Mother.**

Sri Aurobindo: I should say ... that if you could divide your attention between reading and Sadhana, thought and concentration more, it might be better from the point of view you mention. I mean that there should be sufficient concentration to create in your mind a Sadhana atmosphere which you can bring up to the surface as soon as you leave reading or whenever it is needed to set right an invading movement. Otherwise the subconscious forces have free play and gain power. Besides the condition becomes subconscious, i.e. inert and like a drift. At least that is what I have seen recently in my dealings with my own subconscious, so I pass on the hint to you. (SABCL, vol. 26, pp. 361-2, *Sri Aurobindo on Himself*)

Question: Is it important in our Sadhana to give up reading newspapers? I find that almost all the Sadhaks, including the best ones, read them and you also. Moreover, if one does not read them one remains uninformed and blank.

Sri Aurobindo: These things depend on oneself and one's own conditions—there can be no general rule. It is true that I read newspapers, but Mother never does unless her attention is called to a particular item. I dare say if X stopped reading papers for a year, it might be very good for him. One has to see what is one's necessity for Sadhana. If the newspapers disperse the mind or ex-





consciousness. This makes me think whether it is possible by reading her books to make one's consciousness so intense as to identify it with hers and as a result to elevate the vital and other parts also.

**Sri Aurobindo:** It is possible to intensely identify oneself with the Mother's consciousness through what you read—in that case the result you speak of could come. It could also have an effect on the vital up to a certain point. (*SABCL*, Vol. 25, p. 369, *Letters on the Mother*)

**The Mother:**

(to students in the Ashram school)

**Question:** Sweet Mother, you have said that I do not think well. How can one develop one's thought?

**Mother:** You must read with great attention and concentration, not novels or dramas, but books that make you think. You must meditate on what you have read reflect on a thought until you have understood it. Talk little, remain quiet and concentrated and speak only when indispensable.

\*\*\*

ternalize the consciousness too much, they should be avoided. If on the other hand one is dawdling over the Sadhana and having no particular inner endeavour one can read newspapers—it is no worse than anything else. On the other hand if the newspapers do not affect the formed or forming inner consciousness in any way (by dispersion, lowering, externalization, etc.) one can read them. I read the newspapers mainly because I have to see what events are happening which might any day have an effect on my work, etc. I do not read for the interest of reading. (*Ibid*, pp. 510-11)

The inability to read books or papers is often felt when the consciousness is getting the tendency to go inside. (*SABCL*, vol. 23, p. 1015, *Letters on Yoga*)

**Question:** When I read the Mother's *Prayers and Conversations* I often feel as if I come in contact with her

Y has just written to me about the great number of novels that you read. I do not think that this kind of reading is good for you—and if it is to study style, as you told me, an attentive study of one good book by a good author, done with care, teaches much more than this hasty and superficial reading.

\*\*\*

**Question:** What is the value of literature?

**Mother:** It depends on what you want to be or do. If you want to be a litterateur, you must read a lot of literature. Then you will know what has been written and you won't repeat old things. You have to keep an alert mind and know how to say things in a striking manner.

But if you want real knowledge, you can't find it in literature. To me, literature as such is on a pretty low

level—it is mostly a work of the creative vital, and the highest it reaches is up to the throat centre, the external expressive mind. This mind puts one in relation with outside things. And, in its activity, literature is all a game of fitting ideas to ideas and words to one another. It can develop a certain skill in the mind, some capacity for discussion, description, amusement and wit.

I haven't read much of English literature—I have gone through only a few hundred books. But I know French literature very well—I have read a whole library of it. And I can say that it has no great value in terms of Truth. Real knowledge comes from above the mind. What literature gives is the play of a lot of common or petty ideas. Only on a rare occasion does some ray from above come in. If you look into thousands and thousands of books, you will find just one small intuition here and there. The rest is nothing.

I can't say that the reading of literature equips one better to understand Sri Aurobindo. On the contrary, it can be a hindrance. For, the same words are used and the purpose for which they are used is so different from the purpose for which Sri Aurobindo has made use of them, the manner in which they have been put together to express things is so different from Sri Aurobindo's that these words tend to put one off the light which Sri Aurobindo wants to convey to us through them. To get

to Sri Aurobindo's light we must go inward and stay in a receptive silence and turn it upward. Then alone we get something in the right way. At the worst, I have seen that the study of literature makes one silly and perverse enough to sit in judgement on Sri Aurobindo's English and find fault with his grammar! (*Mother's Collected Works [MCW]* Vol. 12, p. 147)

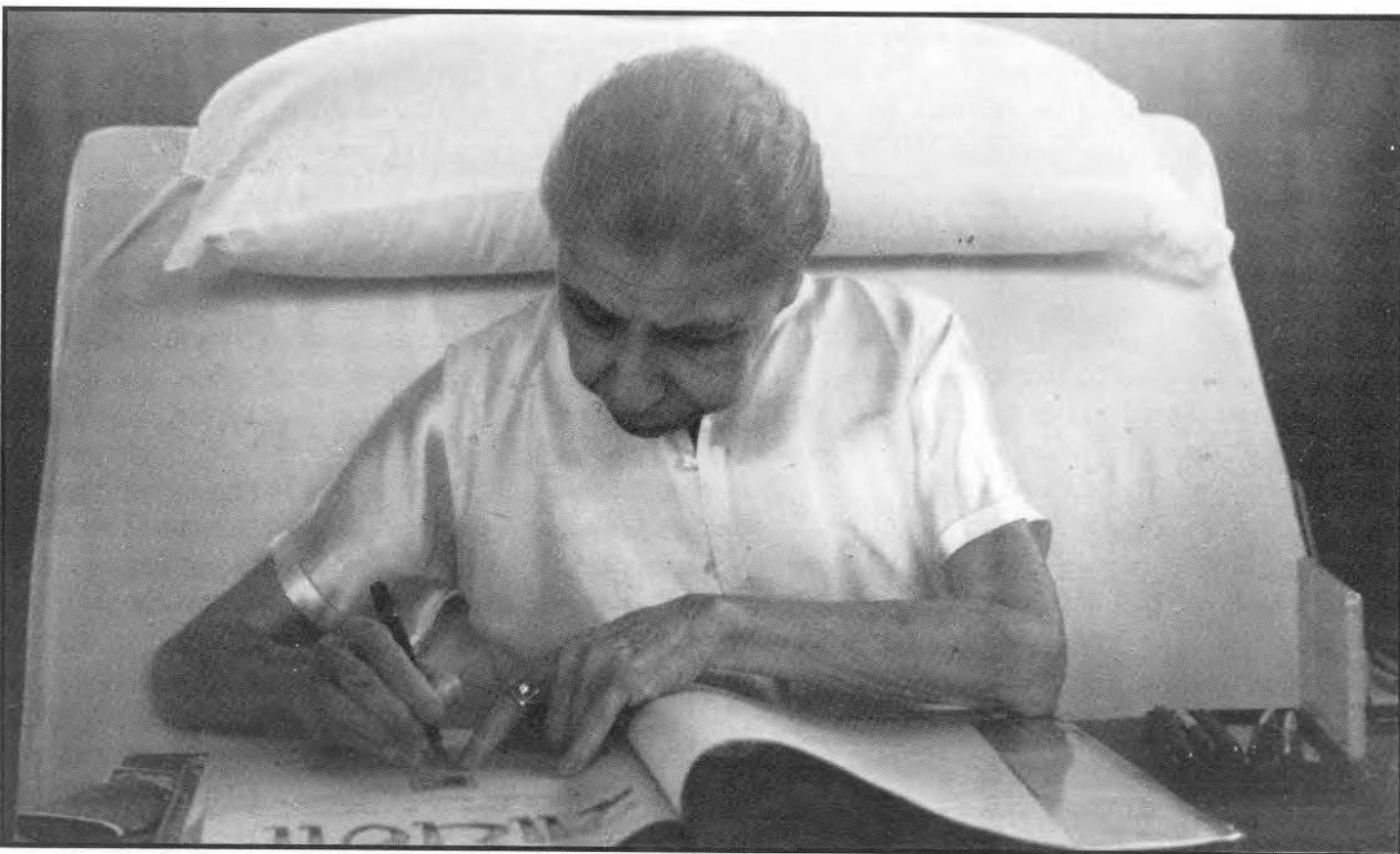
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Question: How can one know what is happening in other countries, and even in our own, if we do not read papers? At least we get some idea from them, don't we? Or would it be better not to read them at all?

Mother: I did not say that you must not read papers. I said that you must not blindly believe in all that you read. You must know that truth is quite another thing.

\*\*\*

Written on a slip placed in a copy of *Prieres et Meditations de la Mere*: Do not read this book unless you have the intention of putting it into practice. (*MCW*, vol. 12, pp. 148-49)



**You came to earth to learn to know yourself. Read Sri Aurobindo's books and look carefully within yourself as deeply as you can.**

**Question:** In the initial stages of Yoga, is it well for the Sadaka to read ordinary books?

**Mother:** You can read sacred books and yet be far away from the Divine; and you can read the most stupid productions and be in touch with the Divine. It is not possible to get an idea of what the transformed consciousness and its movements are until you have had a taste of the transformation. There is a way of consciousness in union with the Divine in which you can enjoy all you read, as you can all you observe, even the most indifferent books or the most uninteresting things. You can hear poor music, even music from which one would like to run away, and yet you can, not for its outward self but because of what is behind, enjoy it. You do not lose the distinction between good music and bad music, but you pass through either into that which it expresses. For there is nothing in the world which has not its ultimate truth and support in the Divine. And if you are not stopped by the appearance, physical or moral or aesthetic, but get behind and are in touch with the Spirit, the Divine Soul in things, you can reach beauty and delight even through what affects the ordinary sense only as something poor, painful or discordant. (*MCW*, vol. 3, p. 25)

If you want to understand a book with a deep teaching in it, you must be able to read it in the mind's silence; you must wait and let the expression go deep inside you into the region where words are no more and from there come slowly back to your exterior consciousness and its surface understanding. But if you let the words jump at your external mind and try to adapt and adjust the two, you will have entirely missed their real sense and power. There can be no perfect understanding unless you are in union with the unexpressed mind that is behind the centre of expression. (*Ibid.*, p. 25)

There is one thing certain about the mind and its workings; it is that you can understand only what you already know in your own inner self. What strikes you in a book is what you have already experienced deep within you. Men find a book or a teaching very wonderful and often you hear them say, "That is exactly what I myself feel and know, but I could not bring it out or express it as well as it is expressed here." When men come across a book of true knowledge, each finds himself there, and at every new reading he discovers things that he did not see in it at first; it opens to him each time a new field of knowledge that had till then escaped him.

**By studying carefully what Sri Aurobindo has said on all subjects one can easily reach a complete knowledge of the things of this world.**

But that is because it reaches layers of knowledge that were waiting for expression in the subconscious in him; the expression has now been given by somebody else and much better than he could himself have done it. But, once expressed, he immediately recognizes it and feels that it is the truth. The knowledge that seems to come to you from outside is only an occasion for bringing out the knowledge that is within you. (*Ibid.*, p. 52)

\*\*\*

**Question:** Sweet Mother, how should one read your books and the books of Sri Aurobindo so that they might enter into our consciousness instead of being understood only by the mind?

**Mother:** To read my books is not difficult because they are written in the simplest language, almost the spoken language. To draw profit from them, it is enough to read with attention and concentration and an attitude of inner goodwill with the desire to receive and to live what is taught.

To read what Sri Aurobindo writes is more difficult because the expression is highly intellectual and the



language is much more literary and philosophical. The brain needs a preparation to be able truly to understand and generally a preparation takes time, unless one is specially gifted with an innate intuitive faculty.

In any case, I advise always to read a little at a time, keeping the mind as tranquil as one can, without making an effort to understand, but keeping the head as silent as possible, and letting the force contained in what one reads enter deep within. This force received in the calm and the silence will do its work of light and, if needed, will create in the brain the necessary cells for the understanding. Thus, when one re-reads the same thing some months later, one perceives that the thought expressed has become much more clear and close, and even sometimes altogether familiar.

It is preferable to read regularly, a little every day, and at a fixed hour if possible; this facilitates the brain-receptivity. (MCW, vol. 12, p. 206)

\*\*\*

Question: Sweet Mother, what is the true method for studying Sri Aurobindo's works?

Mother: The true method is to read a little at a time, with concentration, keeping the mind as silent as possible, without actively trying to understand, but turned upwards, in silence, and aspiring for the light. Understanding will come little by little. And later, in one or two years, you will read the same thing again and then you will know that the first contact had been vague and incomplete, and that true understanding comes later, after having tried to put it into practice. (Ibid, p. 206)

Written on a slip placed in a copy  
of *Prieres et Meditations de la Mere*:

*Do not read this book  
unless you have  
the intention  
of putting it  
into practice.*

## Book Review:

### *The Essential Aurobindo*

Edited by Robert McDermott.

The Lindisfarne Press, 1987, 274 pages.

Reviewed by Robert N. Minor

An observer of the current movement that finds its inspiration in Aurobindo notes almost at the outset that what seems to bind its members together is not so much the *thought* of its founder but its general ambiance, fellowship, and approach to the world and to issues of spirituality. Aurobindo as an inspiring personality, a *guru*, is of more interest than his thought. This is, of course, not completely out of touch with Aurobindo's intentions, especially as lived by and mediated through the Mother. But since the Mother's passing, Aurobindo's thought seems to have moved even more to the background. It is only generally known at best, and hardly ever studied with any intensity. Besides generally keeping essential Aurobindo texts available, this is another reason to support the reissue of Robert McDermott's collection of excerpts from Aurobindo's writings, entitled appropriately enough *The Essential Aurobindo*, and originally published in 1973.

The new edition is identical to the first, except McDermott has added a new "Afterword." In most ways this is fortunate, for the selections in the original, organized around topics, provided a good basis for understanding Aurobindo's complex manner of presentation as well as a solid introduction to his multi-faceted thought. The only unfortunate aspect of this new edition is that its bibliography is now fifteen years behind the Aurobindo literature. Updating it for this edition would have been immensely helpful, for much of value has been written.

The selections from Aurobindo's works are organized in four parts, each with short, helpful introductions. The first, "Man in Evolution," includes excerpts discussing the stages of evolution in cosmic and individual terms from his *magnum opus*, *The Life Divine*; the shorter, *The Hour of God*; and his last work, *The Supramental Manifestation*. The selections under "Integral Yoga," from *Essays on the Gita* and *The Synthesis of Yoga*, introduce the general principles of Aurobindo's yoga. Part Three, entitled "Toward a Spiritual Age," looks toward the future ideal Aurobindo envisioned,

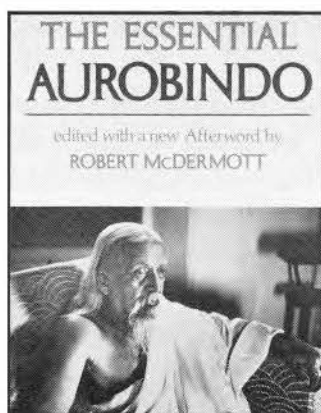
using selections from *The Supramental Manifestation*, *The Hour of God*, *The Human Cycle*, and his epic poem *Savitri*. The fourth section contains selections on education and Auroville from both Aurobindo and the Mother with an added 1987 photo of the Matrimandir.

The general introduction is an appreciative analysis of Aurobindo's life and thought. McDermott rightly notes: "What appears to have been a conflict between political and spiritual activity is better understood as a dramatic instance of Sri Aurobindo's conviction that the historical form will adapt to the prior spiritual realization." (p. 14) Likewise McDermott correctly points out that few if any modern Indian thinkers surpass Aurobindo in "range of topics, precision of argument, or richness of detail," while emphasizing that "the primacy of yogic discipline and achievement" is crucial. (p. 23) But the following, written, remember, in 1973, was almost a prophetic warning: "The urgency of the question of succession, a question invariably raised by observers and largely ignored by the disciples, depends upon the extent to which the disciples sustain Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's discipline and vision." (p.34)

**The new "Afterword" is still more reflective. It attempts to answer the question: "Why have relatively few Westerners discovered Aurobindo?" The answers to such questions usually tell more about the respondent than anything else.**

The new "Afterword" is still more reflective. It attempts to answer the question: Why have relatively few Westerners discovered Aurobindo? The answers to such questions usually tell one more about the respondent than anything else. Following William James' pragmatism, McDermott reflects upon three issues in Aurobindo's teaching: the nature of religious experience, Aurobindo's theories of cosmic and human evolution, and the goals of Aurobindo's spiritual methods.

McDermott first seeks to decipher what is disclosed in the writings of Aurobindo and the Mother regarding the nature and results of their experiences: "... the fruits of Aurobindo's experience range over his life story, his philosophy of spiritual evolution, his yoga teachings, karma and re birth, and his vision of a transformed world



— the further manifestation of which is the Mother's vision of Auroville, the most perfect expression of which is the Matrimandir," (p. 254). Following Ruud Lohman's essays on the Matrimandir, he concludes that Aurobindo and the Mother were "coavatars" who represented the union of "He and She," and to understand the meaning of this "requires a lifetime (or more) of study." (p. 257)

Secondly, McDermott focuses upon Aurobindo's theory of evolution which is centered in the Divine with the experience and expression of maximum *ananda* as its goal. It is Aurobindo's experience and concept of the Supermind in which the interplay of mind, emotions, matter and spirit are integrated, in which karma and rebirth are not rejected but affirmed, and the evolution of one's own soul and all humanity are mutually advanced. Here traditional concepts of karma and rebirth are criticized as inadequate for they deny the integral affirmations of Aurobindo's vision.

Finally, McDermott affirms that Aurobindo's Integral Yoga "combines a profound affirmation of the positive features found in traditional spiritual teachings with a radically new insight concerning recent developments in human evolution." (p. 271) He concludes that the spiritual basis of evolution in Aurobindo's thought offers insight for other religious positions, particularly Christian ones. In doing so McDermott joins those Westerners who look to the East for a spirituality that can "provide a spiritual base and goal for America's commitment to the material." (p. 274) Whether this will do so depends on the nature of previous individual commitments and a willingness of individuals to commit to the effort required to test the truth of the thought reflected in these excerpts, intellectually, religiously and experientially.

Robert N. Minor  
Department of Religious Studies  
The University of Kansas

# Extracts From the Afterword of *The Essential Aurobindo*

By Robert A. McDermott

Of the approximately ten thousand individuals who purchased this book since it was published in 1973, and the many others who presumably read the three thousand copies sold to libraries, how many of these readers were able or inclined to judge whether Sri Aurobindo (and the Mother) is “such a great soul?” Or for how many Western readers did Aurobindo remain an Indian author of Victorian English, a spiritual visionary in a time characterized by materialism and utilitarian practicality? Perhaps the extraordinary claims in this book, and the manner in which Sri Aurobindo describes and defends them, provide all the reason necessary as to why relatively few Westerners have “found” Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Or perhaps relatively few Westerners know how to look for or know whether they have found a great soul. (p. 250)

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The idea of a spiritual collaboration, of the uniting of two souls, requires the kind of meditative reflection which Ruud Lohman brought to *Savitri* and to the Matrimandir (c.f. *A House For the Third Millennium*). How are we to understand the consciousness of the Indian-male-mystic-poet-yogi becoming identical with the consciousness of the French-female-artist-occultist? One way to start is to establish that they are not united on the level of Aurobindo Ghose and Mira Richard: the souls of these personalities are presumably no more capable of such a union of consciousness than are our souls at our level of spiritual attainment. Rather, their union is at the level of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, as coavatars. Is this not the signature of the avatar status—that they are capable of taking on the consciousness and the destiny of another? (p. 255)

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Until the overmental descent, Sri Aurobindo presumably did not know—at least not sufficiently to announce or to act upon—that his consciousness and the Mother’s expressed the divine will for themselves and for their disciples. Furthermore, the death of Sri Aurobindo on

December 5, 1950, did not signify the death of the spiritual reality, psychic entity avatar, which lived through the personality Aurobindo Ghose; the death of the Mother, at age 95, on November 17, 1973, did not terminate the active spiritual force, *shakti* or Mother, behind the double task of spiritualizing matter and creating a new world for which Auroville is intended as a living laboratory. The possibility of Sri Aurobindo cooperating with the Mother for the descent of Supermind in 1956, six years after his death, or the Mother’s cooperation with Aurovilians on behalf of the work underway at Auroville (e.g. the creation and subsequent force of the Matrimandir, the Mother-temple), are subjects on which not only disciples but all spiritual seekers are invited to meditate. (p.256)

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To understand what manifested through Buddha or Christ requires a lifetime (or more) of meditative study; to understand Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in their avatar roles requires a similar effort—with no guarantee of success, though the effort itself is its own reward. The essence of yoga, after all, is to do what is required—in this case, to penetrate to the inner meaning of the life and mission of Sri Aurobindo-Mother, without regard to the fruits of such effort. (p. 257)

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This definition of creativity, including birth and rebirth, as self-manifestation of potentiality, all of which is of and from the divine, can either be passed over as an intellectual theory or can be made the object of meditative reflection. Aurobindo presents this theory, as he presents all his theories, as an aid to spiritual insight and practice. While it is easier not to bother with such a metaphysical, if not mysterious and unanswerable, question as “why the world at all?”—Aurobindo would have us brood on this question for its spiritual content and

**Nowhere is the battle between matter and spirit coupled with an unconscious commitment to evolution, more obviously in the balance than in the youthful, materialistic yet religious culture of the United States. Aurobindo was not alone in seeing the great spiritual significance of the American experiment, the American errand into the wilderness. (p. 273)**

challenge. It is an exercise in *jnana* - or knowledge-yoga to grapple with a thought such as: "the Absolute can have no purpose in manifestation except of manifestation itself" (*The Life Divine*, 834). (p. 260)

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Ironically, it is precisely the ordinary self which is typically desperate for knowledge of karma and rebirth. Aurobindo affirms the value of the ordinary self—the physical, vital, and mental parts of the human being, or levels of consciousness—but he sees it as an instrument of the soul, not as an end in itself. Neither the human body, nor the emotions nor the individual mind—the three components which I regard as "me"—are reborn. Their effects are written on the soul, but in themselves their existence is limited to one earthly life. (p. 265)

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In Aurobindo's Integral Yoga, *tantra* refers to the union of the yoga practitioner with *shakti*, the energy of the divine Mother, in order to effect a transformation of material life. Tantric yoga, or simply tantra, serves an important function in Aurobindo's total spiritual teaching because it focuses on the contemporary opportunity and need to serve and to help manifest the divine will, particularly in union with the supramental force now functioning through individuals of high spiritual attainment such as Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Aurobindo's yoga teaching, however, is not based either on tantra

or on the Gita, but on both, as well as on his, or their, contemporary Indian and Western spiritual experience. (p. 270)

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Aurobindo's third point (in a message to New York disciples in 1949) . . . is simply that the deep experience and knowledge of spirit which is still alive in the East could, and should, be seen as the true goal of the commitment to evolution characteristic of the West. The intelligence and energy with which the West struggles on behalf of evolution must be made to acknowledge and to serve the evolution of consciousness, not merely its expression in the material world. If the West could see behind its commitment to matter and nature, to the spiritual source and goal of the evolutionary process, the combination would be the richest possible. (p. 274)

**The Second Edition of  
*The Essential Aurobindo*  
is available from the  
Sri Aurobindo Association  
P.O. Box 372  
High Falls, NY  
914-687-9222  
\$12.95 plus \$2 P & H**



# "In the Silence and Not in the Thought We Shall Find the Self . . ."

Sri Aurobindo

By Jean Korstange

I have attempted to create a conversation around the experience of reading chapter VIII, The Release From the Heart and the Mind, in the *Synthesis of Yoga*. I was going through a time of intense emotion and sought to understand how I could distance myself from these emotions without being indifferent to them or without repressing them. I thought to share this with readers in hopes that they might send similar essays and interactions with Sri Aurobindo's writings to Collaboration.

*As the universal Divine Being, all-embracing and all-possessing, acts, moves, enjoys purely for the satisfaction of divine Delight, so the individual life acts, moves, enjoys and suffers predominantly for the satisfaction of desire. Therefore the psychic life-energy presents itself to our experience as a sort of desire-mind, which we have to conquer if we mean to get back to our true self.*

Sri Aurobindo says that the Universal Divine Being moves for the satisfaction of Divine Delight, and that the individual life moves for the satisfaction of desire. Thus Divine delight is to the Universal Divine being as desire is to the individual life. Reading this leads me to stop feeling the necessity of rationalizing all my actions. I say to myself, "Hey, be like the divine, delight in the action! This constant seeking for a higher purpose of action is unnecessary. Accept that the life force moves you to do what you are doing."

*Desire is at once the motive of our actions, our lever of accomplishment and the bane of our existence. If our sense-mind, emotional mind, thought-mind could act free from the intrusions and importations of the life-energy, if that energy could be made to obey their right action instead of imposing its own yoke on our existence, all human problems would move harmoniously to their right solution. The proper function of the life-energy is to do what it is bidden by that indwelling Divine and not to desire at all. The proper function of the sense-mind is to lie open passively, luminously to the contacts of Life and transmit their sensations and the rasa or right taste and principle of delight in them to the higher function; but interfered with by the attractions and repulsions, the acceptances and refusals, the satisfactions and dissatis-*

*factions, the capacities and incapacities of the life-energy in the body it is, to begin with, limited in its scope and, secondly, forced in these limits to associate itself with all these discords of the life in Matter. It becomes an instrument for pleasure and pain instead of for delight of existence.*

Here Sri Aurobindo tells me that the sense-mind is made to transmit the sensations and *rasa* of delight. This is its function. And because of the dual nature of the senses it will lead a life of duality. There seems to be an inherent tension rather than a pure delight in existence.

**My mind knew that she had left,  
but this was not a reality for me.  
I could feel her presence. She wasn't  
gone and yet I had to accept this news.**

*Similarly the emotional mind compelled to take note of all these discords and subject itself to their emotional reactions becomes a hurtling field of joy and grief, love and hatred, wrath, fear, struggle, aspiration, disgust, likes, dislikes, indifferences, content, discontent, hopes, disappointments, gratitude, revenge and all the stupendous play of passion which is the drama of life in the world. This chaos we call our soul. But the real soul, the real psychic entity which for the most part we see little of and only a small minority in mankind has developed, is an instrument of pure love, joy and the luminous reaching out to fusion and unity with God and our fellow-creatures. This psychic entity is covered up by the play of the mentalised Prana or desire-mind which we mistake for the soul; the emotional mind is unable to mirror the real soul in us, the Divine in our hearts, and is obliged instead to mirror the desire-mind.*

Sri Aurobindo says that the real psychic entity is seldom seen in "the drama of life in the world." That "only a small minority of mankind has developed or become an instrument of pure love, joy and the luminous reaching out to unity with God and our fellow-creatures."

I remember being touched by the real psychic entity, that instrument of pure love and joy. It was during a meditation with Haridas Chaudhuri in San Francisco. I had just arrived in the USA from Auroville. It was November 1973. I had been travelling and had heard of Mother's passing while in Japan. I was still in a state of shock in regards to the news that Mother had left her body. My mind knew that she had left but this was not a reality to me. I could feel her presence. She wasn't gone and yet I had to accept this news. We went to the Center for Integral Studies. Haridas closed the evening with a short meditation. In that silence I felt an embrace of pure love. I acknowledged it as a gift and a guide into the unity with the Divine that Mother was absolutely one with.

**I value my emotions.  
I get involved in them.  
I fear that without them  
I won't feel and if I don't feel  
how do I understand the world?**

*Therefore the mental Purusha has to separate himself from association and self-identification with this desire-mind. He has to say "I am not this thing that struggles and suffers, grieves and rejoices, loves and hates, hopes and is baffled, is angry and afraid and cheerful and depressed, a thing of vital moods and emotional passions. All these are merely workings and habits of Prakriti in the sensational and emotional mind." The mind then draws back from its emotions and becomes with these, as with the bodily movements and experiences, the observer or witness. There is again an inner cleavage. There is this emotional mind in which these moods and passions continue to occur according to the habit of the modes of Nature and there is the observing mind which sees them, studies and understands, but is detached from them. It observes them as if in a sort of action and play on a mental stage of personages other than itself, at first with interest and a habit of relapse into identification, then with entire calm and detachment, and, finally, attaining not only to calm, but to the pure delight of its own silent existence, with a smile at their unreality as at the imaginary joys and sorrows of a child who is playing and loses himself in the play. Secondly, it becomes aware of itself as master of the sanction who*

*by his withdrawal of sanction can make this play to cease. When the sanction is withdrawn, another significant phenomenon takes place; the emotional mind becomes normally calm and pure and free from these reactions, and even when they come, they no longer rise from within but seem to fall on it as impressions from outside to which its fibres are still able to respond; but this habit of response to the passions which it has renounced hope and fear, joy and grief, liking and disliking, attraction and repulsion, content and discontent, gladness and depression, horror and wrath and disgust and shame and the passions of love and hatred fall away from the liberated psychic being.*

Sri Aurobindo equates the emotional mind with the desire that loses itself in emotion, while he equates the Purusha with the master who observes and sanctions or withdraws sanction to liberate the mind from desire and thus liberate the psychic being.

I value my emotions. I get involved in them. I fear that without them I won't feel and if I don't feel how do I understand the world? As a child, I read that the sea was salty. I experienced that fact as an adult when I stepped into the Bay of Bengal and tasted the salt water and exclaimed, "Hey, the sea is salty!"

This withdrawal, this separation from the desire-body to know through the senses seems to cut me off from the world of physical delight. While I desire to be calm and silent I fear this dissociation from my body. How do I find love and delight if I separate myself from my desire-body? A purely mental delight is too abstract for me. It feels sterile, indifferent, cut off from the physical world.

**What takes their place? It may be,  
if we will, an entire calm, silence and  
indifference. But although this is a stage  
through which the soul has usually to  
pass, it is not the final aim we have  
placed before us.**

*What takes their place? It may be, if we will, an entire calm, silence and indifference. But although this is a stage through which the soul has usually to pass, it is not the final aim we have placed before us. Therefore the Purusha becomes also the master who wills and whose will it is to replace wrong by right enjoyment of the*

psychic existence. What he wills, Nature executes. What was fabric-stuff of desire and passion, is turned oneness. The real soul emerges and takes the place left vacant by the desire-mind. The cleansed and emptied cup is filled with the wine of divine love and delight and no longer with the sweet and bitter poison of passion. The passions, even the passion for good, misrepresent the divine nature. The passion of pity with its impure elements of physical repulsion and emotional inability to bear the suffering of others has to be rejected and replaced by the higher divine compassion which sees, understands, accepts the burden of others and is strong to help and heal, not with self-will and revolt against the suffering in the world and with ignorant accusation of the law of things and their source, but with light and knowledge and as an instrument of the Divine in its emergence. So too the love that desires and grasps and is troubled with joy and shaken with grief must be rejected for the equal, all-embracing love that is free from these things and has no dependence upon circumstances and is not modified by response or absence of response.

Sri Aurobindo speaks of unconditional love. I understand it in its perfect sense, I don't understand it in its practical sense. Life's pain and suffering and inequalities are difficult to rationalize. Certainly to give up these contradictions for love makes life simpler. My question is; "If the problem is not resolved how does the mind let go?"

*Equality, not indifference is the basis. Equal endurance, impartial indifference, calm submission to the causes of joy and grief without any reaction of either grief or joy are the preparation and negative basis of equality; but equality is not fulfilled till it takes its positive form of love and delight. The sense-mind must find the equal rasa of the All-Beautiful, the heart the equal love and Ananda for all, the psychic prana the enjoyment of this rasa, love and Ananda. This, however, is the positive perfection that comes by liberation; our first object on the path of knowledge is rather the liberation that comes by detachment from the desire-mind and by the renunciation of its passions.*

Sri Aurobindo repeats that detachment from the desire-mind is the first step. But we are also required to take a leap into love because it is the positive form of liberation.

*The Purusha, having used the thought-mind for release*

*from identification with the life and body and with the mind of desire and sensations and emotions, will turn round upon the thought-mind itself and will say "This too I am not; I am not the thought or the thinker; all these ideas, opinions, speculations, strivings of the intellect, its predilections, preferences, dogmas, doubts, self-corrections are not myself; all this is only a working of Prakriti which takes place in the thought-mind." Thus a division is created between the mind that thinks and wills and the mind that observes and the Purusha becomes the witness only; he sees, he understands the process and laws of his thought, but detaches himself from it. Then as the master of the sanction he withdraws his past sanction from the tangle of the mental undercurrent and the reasoning intellect and causes both to cease from their importunities. He becomes liberated from subjection to the thinking mind and capable of the utter silence.*

**Using my will and feelings to get me through my day is tiring. Is love an endless flow of energy that carries the body through its existence? I can imagine that Divine Love would be such an energy.**

The mind is released from its attachment to sensations and emotions through the practice of observing that the "I" is not the thought-mind. Sri Aurobindo says that mental silence liberates us from subjection to the thinking mind. Otherwise the thought-mind continues to turn round itself and this is a subjection to the flow of thought rather than a mastery of the intellect.

*But the silence is necessary; in the silence and not in the thought we shall find the Self, we shall become aware of it not merely conceive it, and we shall withdraw out of the mental Purusha into that which is the source of the mind.*

And here Sri Aurobindo states that silence will lead us into the source of the self. This creates a sense of detachment towards my thoughts. I ask myself, why be stuck on these by-products of the physical mind? I want to know the source of this individual life activity. Using my will and feelings to get me through my day is tiring. Is love an endless flow of energy that carries the body through its existence? I can imagine that Divine Love would be such an energy.

# Notes From A Yoga Journal

By Michelle Mara

Throughout a decade of studying and practicing Integral Yoga, I have kept journals in which I have recorded my daily thoughts, feelings and experiences. Reading through them, I recall the many difficulties I've had, the frustrations, the times when it all seemed impossible. But they also reveal my steadily increasing joy and the sense of awe that I feel in realizing, from my own experiences, that Sri Aurobindo truly opened a door for the human species.

I have selected some excerpts from my journals to share with others who are interested in this path. As the passages begin, in December of 1977, I was a dreadfully unhappy girl, desperately searching for answers. I had finally discovered Integral Yoga, though I wasn't really aware yet of what a tremendous discovery it was. But somewhere along the way, during the following few years, I fully accepted the Mother's invitation.



Winter Landscape

Painting by Michelle Mara

## December 1977

Something very incredible has begun to happen during meditation. I have fleeting moments which can only be described as extreme mental ecstasy, an unprecedented level of pure joy. The rest of the time I am so miserable, yet in the midst of all my gloom and despair come

these wild and wonderful moments of bliss. I know that it has to be the result of this yoga study. It is like some sort of doorway is revealed for a moment, which opens into the essential reality of the universe. But I don't really understand yet how this is happening; is it my own subconscious mind, or am I tuning in to something else?

## July 1978

I've always felt such rebellion toward "accepted" laws; I have known a desperate need to escape from the bonds of what people call mortality, to be free from the laws which supposedly govern the human mind and body. I want freedom to choose which human characteristics I would wish to keep and which to eliminate. Now, as my yoga practice continues, I've begun to believe that it is all possible. I am aware of a vast and beautiful new consciousness. I'm saying to myself that complete mastery of life is possible. The transformation I'm reading about can really happen.

## January 1979

(This paragraph was written a few months before I began to read about the Mother's work.)

Great things continue to happen in meditation. Sometimes there are moments when I can "see" inside my body. Can see each organ and how it is functioning. I've become aware of the refinement going on within all the cells of my body, in nerves and glands and vital organs. Not only do I have increasing control of the parts of my body, but also a conscious contact with them, a sort of communication. I have not found this so far in Sri Aurobindo's books, but why shouldn't all the parts of the body be obedient servants of the mind? I think this would be a logical process in evolution. I also think at times that each living cell has an intelligence of its own, with which it transforms itself and works toward the total perfection of the organism. But only when

the mind is cooperating and directing. This is where I find the main difference between humans and animals, since no species other than human beings has yet evolved this ability. I'm seeing very clearly now that it is our forward evolution, our incredible potential, that gives life such glorious and wonderful meaning and purpose. I'm seeing light that I did not see one year ago!



**November 1979**

Today I read Sri Aurobindo's messages to disciples in difficulty with their yoga practice. I needed this badly, considering the terrible state of mind I've been in for so many months now. Obviously it is not possible to proceed smoothly without some back-sliding. I was ready to give up on my studies, but now I have a new surge of hope. I even cried when I read his words of advice.

**February 1980**

I think I'm making progress again. Am feeling such a thrilling sense of discovery, of glorious anticipation. I find myself looking forward eagerly to the next upward step. It is the discovery of innate power over myself; I can see ahead to unbelievable levels of development which I would not have thought possible just a few years ago. I feel that I have found the true Self, the eternal being which is nature's perfect combination of body and mind. Now I must manifest it, and this will be the difficult part. I wonder how long it will take.

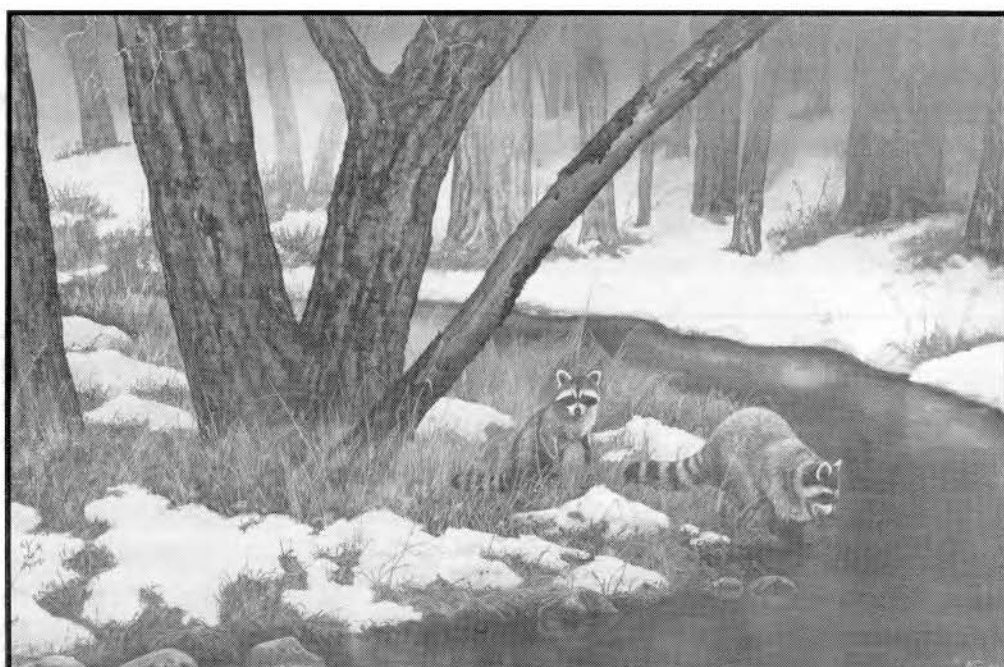
**March 1981**

Sri Aurobindo encourages creative work, but he warns us about wanting recognition or praise. He says that in every artist there is something of the public person, yearning for adulation, and that this must go absolutely. I've got to work on this matter very seriously. I am guilty of having had a desire for recognition. I must overcome it, and dedicate my skill and knowledge to animals and nature without feeling any need to be recognized. I am sure that continued yoga study is the way to achieve this. It is difficult, since earning my living as an artist requires publicity. What I have to do is detach completely from any public adulation.

**January 1982**

I think I have always believed that life should be an upward process, not a down-hill decline. I've studied enough about the human brain and nervous system to know that they are incredibly complex and highly evolved; we have far more potential than is generally

realized. I believe that with each passing year, the body and mind of an individual can and should become finer, better and more perfect in every possible aspect. Knowledge, skill, spiritual development, and physical perfection should have no limits. The farther I progress in my yoga studies, the more firmly I believe this to be true. I am seeing and feeling more and more evidence of it within myself. It amazes me, yet seems so right and natural.



**Raccoons**

*Painting by Michelle Mara*

**December 1982**

Now that another period of back-sliding is over, I seem to be moving ahead quite rapidly. Physically, I feel as if I'm not more than 13 or 14 years old. Over the past several months my energy has increased tremendously; my endurance and stamina are greater than ever before. I feel very light, as if I only weighed about ten pounds. I can run up the mountain, I can hike fifteen miles without the slightest fatigue. It's like my body wants to sing and dance and fly. All of my senses are fine and sharp. I have almost completely overcome my dreadful near-sightedness; rarely ever wear my glasses any more. But right now the greatest thing is just knowing that I've only begun, and that everything in life will continue to become finer and better. Regardless of the spells of sliding backwards. I have learned to accept them, painful as they are. With each one I hope there won't be another, yet maybe this is part of the process. How I wish I could find others who study Integral Yoga! I feel I'm on this path all by myself. None of my friends understand. I really

need to discuss my progress with someone who is doing the same thing.

### September 1983

Have just finished reading *The Mind of the Cells* by Satprem. It is fantastic! I had not realized before how close the Mother came to the total mastery of life which I so definitely believe to be possible. After reading it I have a very deep assurance that I am on the right path. However, it troubles me all the more about Mother's death. She was so close, why did she die? This question is constantly in my mind. Obviously there was something along the way which she overlooked; I cannot believe that she deliberately chose death. Something went wrong for which she was not prepared. But then there's another thought. Maybe it simply wasn't possible for one person to complete the necessary work.

**"Oh thank God for integral Yoga!  
Where would I have been without it?"  
What a difference it has made,  
in literally every aspect of my life.**

Maybe others will have to continue from where she left off to achieve the goal. It is kind of frightening, yet at the same time such an irresistible challenge. I like to visualize millions of people responding to and accepting this challenge. I know that the work will be done. I want desperately to be one of those who do it.

### August 1984

Can't believe what tremendous happiness I'm experiencing! I've discovered something in the past year or so. I'm not having any "back-sliding" anymore, at least not like I used to. The past year there have been a couple of rather dry spells when I didn't seem to be making a whole lot of progress, but it has been a long time since I've been really discouraged and down. I seem to have a lot more control over my mind and emotions. Am definitely able to learn much more easily and retain more readily. Yesterday I was remembering how terribly difficult all the mathematical subjects were for me back in high school and felt amazed at how much easier they are now. Studying Einstein's theories in my astronomy class had not been anywhere near as difficult as I had anticipated.

### February 1985

Lately I have found myself thinking, quite often, "Oh thank God for Integral Yoga! Where would I have been without it?" What a difference it has made, in literally every aspect of my life. The deep joy which I began to experience during meditation a few years ago is now being experienced most of the time throughout every day. The only way I can describe it is to call it "a dancing, sparkling delight", which permeates my work, my studies, my relationships with other persons. The yoga has helped me to increase my patience and to feel much more compassion and understanding.

### December 1985

Reverence for all living things is such a beautiful concept. My inexpressibly deep love for the forest and animals is very closely integrated with my yoga experiences; it all seems to be a part of the same divine reality. More and more, I am striving to express this in my work.

### September 1986

Finished the book *On the Way to Supermanhood* by Satprem. It's great, but I always feel that Satprem knows far more than he is saying! Wish I could talk to him. I have so many questions. The more we learn, the more there is to learn. At times I feel quite frustrated by not knowing anyone with whom I might discuss the yoga. Would love to compare my own progress with that of other people. It's sad that there are so few. I sometimes think that the knowledge expressed by Sri Aurobindo, Mother and Satprem is so profound that perhaps it scares people away. But there have to be others somewhere who have discovered it and are responding to it with their own lives.

### April 1987

I've proven to myself that I can prevent illness and heal injuries almost instantly. I really think that this should be a part of everyone's education, and I wonder how long it will be before it can become a reality for people all over the world. There is no doubt whatever that yoga practice helps develop total control of mind and body. There is so much suffering everywhere; if only it were possible to make the yoga knowledge available to all.

Have been thinking about the past decade; am seeing it as sort of warm-up period before the main event. I now feel that I have reached the Starting Line. All those secret doubts, fears, lack of self-esteem, and a general cynicism which I felt ten years ago has been replaced by an ever-growing confidence, assurance, reverence for all life, increasing energy and enthusiasm and control of the body. Every aspect of life is opening into full bloom. The future appears now as an open door to unlimited development. It's like, every morning when the sun

comes over the mountain, it says to me, "Forward, Michelle, there's work to be done; there's an unbounded future ahead!" Every day is an invitation to move upward a little farther, to do whatever I can to make life and the world just a little better. I am very much aware that really difficult work lies ahead. But the transformation is under way, and nothing is impossible! In fact, "impossible" is no longer a word in my vocabulary. If there had ever been such a thing as impossible, I don't think there would have been a universe in the first place.

## Something Else

*By Mary Frances Weathersby*

O Infinite Becoming, how I long to know you as I am known by you.

Yet you cannot be known. You cannot be understood. Only experienced.

You cannot be captured or defined. You cannot be contained by skin or walls, nor can you be assigned boundaries. For if you could, we would not be free.

You are not a commandment of God; nor a religion, faith or creed. You're not right or wrong, neither are you a method of doing.

You are another way of being. A breathing.

You are Something Else.

O Pathless Path, walking me through the virgin forest, walking me through nothingness, your Grace making it something with each step I take. Something which has never been in this Universe and will never be again in the same way.

Walk me into the Unknown.

Unexpected unforeseeable adventure connecting with your self from light to light, you are not a continuation or improvement of a former state. You are a luminous swelling in matter; a dilation of heart; the body's cry for new air.

When I implore you to speak to me - to reveal yourself to me, you remain hidden and silent. Yet, I read your calligraphy in the Earth and Sky and when I climb the mountain to kneel beside the Holy Stream . . . without announcement you are there.

Ubiquitous specks of golden dust, sparkling through space. Kaleidoscopic colors pervading my skin and my vision. All one radiant substance permeating my body, sounding joy in my cells.

Immense wings of beatitude beating, beating within me . . . enveloping the universe, undulating in me like a vast bird inhabiting my body . . . widening my body . . . waiting to be freed.

As I wait with you, yielding and still, vibrating in silent immobility . . . your breath moves softly through me, whispering, "Beloved, if you would know me, be me!"

February 7, 1985

# A Note On The Veda

By Jesse Roarke

Though most who feel some attraction to Sri Aurobindo seem to avoid consideration of his Vedic work, to him it was not just an intriguing sideline, or something of secondary or only philological interest. For he had been there, we may say, and he found the achievements of that splendid creative period to be of ongoing, continuing power. In his *Arya* (and truly Aryan) writings collected as *On the Veda* and later *The Secret of the Veda* he gives the key to those immensities (though not so thoroughly, and decisively, perhaps, as he could have wished); and his long and persistent work on the Hymns, his translation-with-commentary, is pregnant with insight and revealing expressive movement.

That the Veda has a secret is still, however, not largely admitted. For the Indians lost it long ago, and the modern Western scholars have not been equipped for recovery. Here, in India, the fatal split was made between acting and knowing, or knowledge and power (the division that the *Bhagavad Gita* tries so strenuously to rejoin). The Veda came to be held as only a set of regulations for the sacrifice, taken as a mechanical and an external thing: *Karmakanda*; and on the other side ensued the Upanishadic movement toward “knowledge” exclusively, *Jnanakanda*: until the spiritual otherworldliness prevailed, that culminated in the Mayavada—the Adwaita of Shankara. Here the world was cast off as illusion; and here, in the truth of things, Nemesis has operated (whatever name she may have in India)—sinking Indian civilization to the supineness we know, a lack of beauty and harmonious *ordinance*, its hold lost on material nature.

Intervening were the *Puranas*, those voluminous scriptures that have had such a pervasive influence on the Indian consciousness for centuries not to say millennia, and that are now so restrictive in their limitations and the conventionality that they have engrained in the Indian approach to everything. They are all the more debilitating in that they insidiously batten on Vedic material, and lessen and falsify it. Small capacity is evident now for an arising as of the boar Emush, with a masterful upheaval, to a new creation.

When the Western scholars discovered the Veda, they promptly covered it again: that is, they could only make hash of it, having no least spiritual orientation—Christian though some of them prided themselves on

being (like Professor Lanman, the editor of the Harvard Oriental Series and Sanskrit teacher to Paul Elmer More and T.S. Eliot, neither of whom profited much by the occasion).

Bemused by the unsupported notion of an Aryan invasion of India (denied by Sri Aurobindo and mentioned nowhere in Indian literature and tradition), they “naturalized” everything, bringing it to the paltriest external terms; and when the hymns would not lend themselves to such a treatment, pronounced them incoherent. Thus the Dasyus became primitive Dravidians, and not the obstructions in one’s own nature that they were to the Vedic Rishis.

It is now time for the recovery of the fundamental Vedic wisdom, as a foundation for the future. Not that the old forms should be adopted now—a practical impossibility, even if it were desirable. The Sacrifice must be understood as an inward thing: the offering of all one’s difficulties, capacities and achievements—all the world (or the “three worlds”)—to the central fire, that grows by the offering as it consumes the outworn nature.

In this process, a worship of the Vedic gods is not called for. In fact, they were not worshipped in Vedic times—rather they were created in the sacrificer by the Sacrifice, and gave as they received—complementary and cooperating powers, not the Puranic or the Overmind figures who would have the devotee come only so far, and no further. In fact, Rudra sometimes, or Varuna or some others, could be quite severe with the sacrificer—his higher nature reproving his lower, and spurring him to surpass himself and all restriction and limitation, but that creatively assumed by his own divine immortality. But such figures speak little now to most of us; and one may be fiery enough or sunny enough without necessarily calling Agni or Surya into play.

**The Sacrifice must be understood as an inward thing: the offering of all one’s difficulties, capacities and achievements—all the world (or the “three worlds”)—to the central fire, that grows by the offering as it consumes the outworn nature.**



How far the Veda went toward the Supramental realization is unknowable. That the Rishis knew of the existence of the Supermind, we may take for certain: it is what they meant by "Vijnana" or "Mahas;" but how closely they apprehended or approached it we do not know, and that they had any idea of transformation, in Sri Aurobindo's terms, is not apparent. And indeed, the Rishis seemed to consider themselves as something of latter-day figures, falling away: for there was an older tradition, that of the Fathers, to which they continually hearkened back. (The Mother makes fascinating and tantalizing remarks on all this in the *Agenda*.) Certainly the full thing was not achieved: but it was adumbrated and suggested; and to build on this foundation is the way of the future.

Here we are not likely to have much help from the Vedic scholars of India. For their study is only memory work—a prodigious memorization, we may say, of words and grammatical forms that they have dedicated to propositions that are not so—at the expense of more perceptive, dynamic and creative capacities that they are at pious pains not to develop; and they have not accepted Sri Aurobindo. But, nevertheless, that he knew whereof he spoke is not in serious question. Once one has caught or received the coherent but open-ended and non-doctrinal vision-and-power that he presents, one cannot doubt it; and he did not come to his knowledge by book-work, or rest with speculation, most competent master of Vedic Sanskrit though he was.

It was his own sadhana that gave him the clue: he began experiencing things that were intelligible only in the Vedic terms; which gradually (if not completely) he recovered. The Mother indeed hints, and more than hints, that he had been one of the Rishis himself. And there are those who feel certain that he was that strange figure the Rishi Agastya—and that the Mother was Lopamudra, his wife or consort and co-worker. Their ultimate work seems to have been a digging of channels for the advent of the Psychic Being and the Vijnana, or Supermind. Also, according to legend, before the beginning of this work they migrated south, to what is now Pondicherry. There is even suggestion that their establishment, their seat of yoga, was on the very site of the present main compound of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

## VAISHWAMITRA MADHUCHHANDAS

### Sukta 1

1. I adore the flame, the vicar, the divine Ritwik of the Sacrifice, the summoner who most founds the ecstasy.
2. The Flame adorable by the ancient sages is adorable too by the new. He brings here the Gods.
3. By the flame one enjoys a treasure that verily increases day by day, glorious, most full of hero-power.
4. O Flame! the pilgrim-sacrifice on every side of which thou art with the envisioning being, that truly goes among the Gods.
5. The Flame, the summoner, the seer-will, true and most full of richly varied listenings, may he come a God with the Gods.
6. O Flame! the happy good which thou shalt create for the giver is that Truth and verily thine, O Angiras!
7. To thee, O Flame! we day by day, in the night and in the light, come, carrying by our thought the obeisance.
8. To thee, who reignest over our pilgrim-sacrifices, luminous guardian of the Truth, increasing in thy own home.
9. Therefore, be easy of access to us as a father unto his son, cling to us for our happy state.

Sri Aurobindo, *Hymns to the Mystic Fire*, pp. 3-5

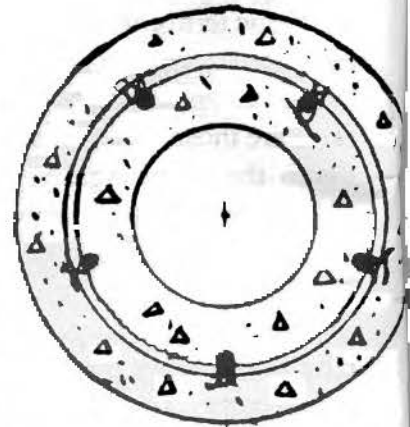
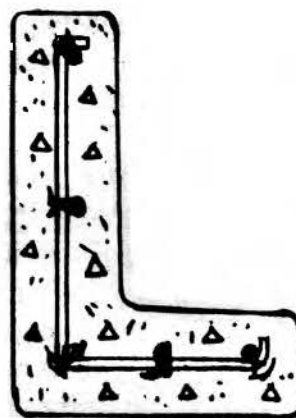
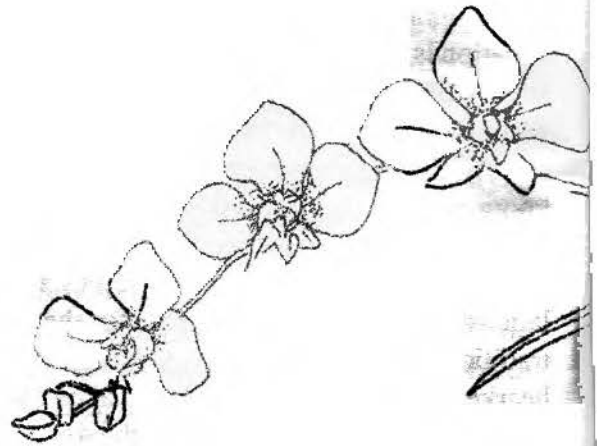
And, until the whole thing is done, nothing is done. Unfortunately it is very difficult for the Indian consciousness to comprehend the evolutionary view (for all the series of the Incarnations of Vishnu, most of the implications of which they have always missed); and there is all too much readiness to accept the unaccountable idea that one who is advanced as a Seer must have seen everything, and left nothing but repetition to be effected: only confirming the view of the Primeval Seer, whoever he may have been. That is, Truth, being "eternal" and "absolute," does not grow or veil itself from "Truth-vision."

But all this is a mentalization, an ignorant fumbling with categories. For those who are to grow spiritually, it is enough to grasp that there is a progressive manifestation; though it may be that one should not speak of Truth until the Dawn to come. That is, there has not yet been a genuine Seer.

All the spiritual knowledge and experience of the Indian tradition, everything established there (as everything established everywhere, purporting Enlightenment or Salvation or what it may be called), is just a subtle illusion, another form of Maya. In this sense, it is "all the same." But the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo is something else.

For any stopping short of the true ultimate, there is no support in the Veda. Of the Kings among the Vedic gods, the sons of Aditi, there is one rejected figure: the bad egg, the stillborn,—Marttanda. He lies inert at the center of things to which no traditional yogi has penetrated; and his awakening and executive coming forth will be the true meeting of the Serpent with himself, the two Suns joined and the two hemispheres one being, the full advent and realization—as has not yet been, however adumbrated and foreshadowed in some of the too complacent expressions of the past. If I am not mistaken, the Mother twice, in the Agenda, mentions having seen this fund of all beauty dormant, and surely waiting; though she does not give him a name.

In closing, it may not be amiss to remark that Sri Aurobindo's translations of the Vedic Hymns (as also of the *Bhagavad Gita*) are not translations, per se, that he would have published as such, in that form. Rather they are expositions, and attempts to convey the full import of the passages, that in the original are more concise and gnomic, as addressed to those who had the key, or the proper orientation.



Calligraphy by Joel Goodman

# People



I am **Mani J. Ganann** from New Creation in Auroville situated near the village of Kulapalayam. The primary purpose of New Creation is to bring into living reality the Mother's statement: "Never forget that the villagers are the first Aurovilians."

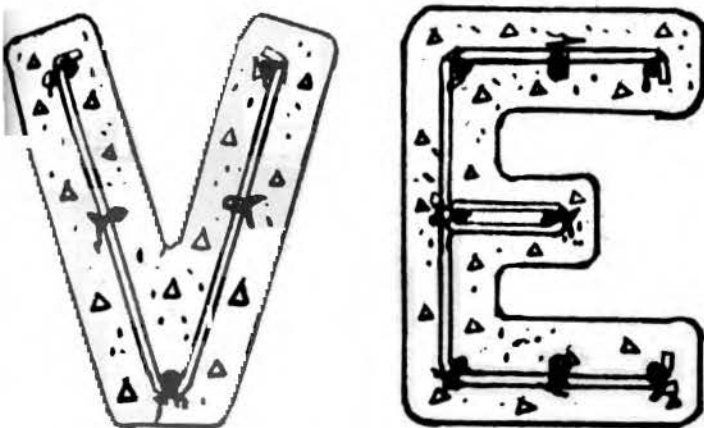
I arrived in Los Angeles, California on the fifth of September as an eleventh grade exchange student at Campbell Hall High School in North Hollywood, California. After a week of becoming accustomed to my new surroundings, I began school on the thirteenth of September. The school is a small independent high school with an enrollment of 250 in the high school and about 600 total in grades K-12.

I am taking five subjects: English, Algebra II, computer science, music history and advanced placement French. In athletics I have been playing on the school basketball and tennis teams. When the seasons for these sports begin, I will be playing on the varsity teams. So far it has been a challenge preparing for my courses, but I am doing well. Music history is a new subject for me. When I began listening to Western classical music, I enjoyed it very much. Music has opened up a new area which I was unaware of before.

The faculty and staff at Campbell Hall have been very nice to me. This has helped me to enjoy school and feel more at home here. Although some of the students are rough and uncaring, unlike Auroville students, I have made many new friends from the junior high to the senior class.

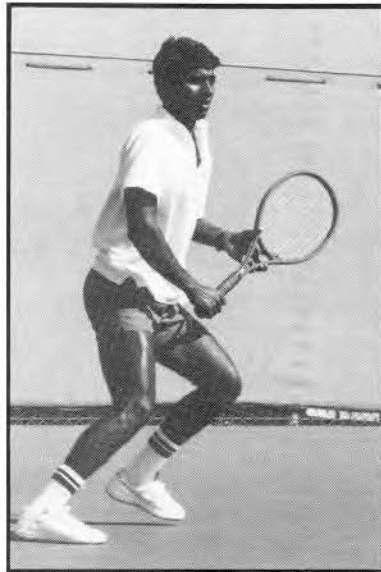
I am really grateful to the school which granted me a full scholarship for the 88-89 school year. After I learned that I would be coming to study here, **Andre Tardeil** (of New Creation in Auroville) helped me a great deal to get all my papers in order and in many other ways to prepare for this important experience. I am staying with **Mario Santonastaso**, who teaches at Campbell Hall. Mario offered this possibility of an Aurovillian studying at Campbell Hall for one year as an exchange student after attending the AUM conference in 1987 where Jean and Gordon Korstange presented information on sponsoring students from Auroville. I am thankful to everyone who has helped make it possible for me to study at such a fine school and gain the experience of this year in the USA.

I feel that I am learning so much already from my studies and from being in a new country, that by the time this year is over I will be able to contribute so much more to Auroville when I return.



Attachment for the Divine (orchid)

Drawing by Raman



Mani Ganam

Write to Mani at the following address: 5060 Whitsett Ave. #6, No. Hollywood, CA 91607, 818/760-1784

**Larry and Lucille Seidlitz** have not disappeared upon leaving the Boston area. They are now established in their new home in Champagne, Illinois. They are both students at the University of Illinois. They send their love to all friends

in the yoga. Letters are welcome and a good way for everyone to keep in touch. Write them at their new address: 1801 Meadow Drive, Champagne, IL 61821.

**Rohit Mehta's** fall tour has been cancelled due to an eye operation. His trip to the USA will be re-scheduled when he has fully recuperated from this operation.

**Ardis Hansen** visited Auroville From August 1 through 24. As a school nurse in the NYC school system she used her skills in Auroville by working with health care during her stay. Ardis felt that Aurovilians have found a good mix of alternative & traditional medicine.

Ardis conducted physical examinations and vision screening of children at Isaiambalam. Decisions about using antibiotics to treat people led her to homeopathic remedies. **Hilde** encouraged her to find alternatives and proved to be a homeopathic teacher and friend as well. Life in Auroville was not all work. Two days of special celebrations, 8.8.88 and 8.15.88 brought cultural events to Auroville. The community was treated to a special performance of folk dances by a national company of regional folkdancers. Kuchipudi was performed by a visiting artist and a Sitar concert under the banyan tree were especially memorable for Ardis. On 8.8.88 there was a dance improvisation by **Paolo**. People brought gifts and exchanged them following the performance. The concret-

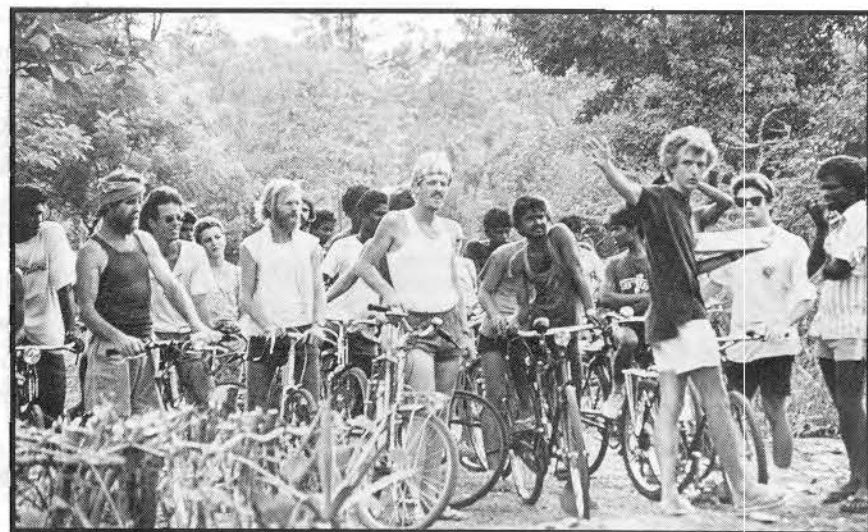
ing of the cap on Matrimandir started after the program. Sangamam, the Auroville Tamilian festival, the August 15th bonfire breakfast, a concert by **Stefano and Nadaka**, and a poetry reading by **Meenakshi** made the stay truly memorable.

**Jack, Mary, Jyothi and Satya Alexander** spent their summer vacation in Auroville. Jack concentrated on three areas: alternative energy; communications between Auroville and the USA (particularly the Auroville Review), and ideas for a self-generating economy, or "capitalism," as he hesitantly called it. He was impressed with the work being done on drip irrigation, a little known technique that **Igor** of Auroville has perfected.

10 year old **Jyothi**, in India for the first time, attended the Auroville school, played sports, rode horses and went to the beach. She loved the flowers at the Samadhi and decided that the the Ashram wasn't "junky" like certain parts of Pondicherry.

Satya also went to the Auroville school and helped Jack set up a 3 day bike race event. He liked "riding around in the warm, humid air."

Mary felt that Auroville had made a "natural progress." She felt a sense of connection with old friends when she found that many of her inner experiences matched theirs, even during the long separation. She encouraged the Sri Aurobindo International Institute of Educational Research to put out a monthly newsletter and shared some of her training as a teacher with her counterparts in the Auroville schools.



Jack Alexander at the Auroville Bike Race



# Center News

**AVI USA**  
**P.O. Box 162489**  
**3112 'O' Street, Suite 13**  
**Sacramento, CA 95816**

Thanks to support from friends, regular donors' contributions, the Foundation for World Education and Merriam Hill Center, AVI USA sent \$99,000 in contributions to Auroville and its projects for the 1987-88 year.

A big project currently in the works is preparing for the mailing and distribution of the superb Matrimandir video produced by the Sri Aurobindo Learning Center.

Taking advantage of the slides and photographs created in Auroville last winter by Verne Henshall for AVI USA, Rod Hemsell has launched slide presentations and talks on Auroville in the Santa Cruz area, an activity that has laid dormant for some time. He has arranged for the Auroville photo exhibition at Loudon Nelson Community Center, October 25 thru November 12. A reception and continuous showing of the Auroville slides will be held on November 6, with an open invitation to the Santa Cruz community.

Because of the increasing overload of work at the Sacramento office something had to be done to avoid burnout. The 'work party' emerged and has been successful in gathering 4 to 5 people at least one weekend per month.

The group works at the office under Jack and Mary's supervision. We 'go to it' on correspondence, xeroxing, filing, accounts, computer input and find that this is not so much work as fun. It's a great way to be together and get something accomplished. Help from Jyoti and Prem Sobel has been especially appreciated.

During 1988-89 Vijay Rangan will be our coordinator for developing large-scale funding from agencies and organizations in the USA. We are looking forward to increasing our support level for Auroville. AVI USA will continue its fundraising activity on the grassroots level because it is the base of our support in the USA.

**Willow Gold/Global Views**  
**Route 3**  
**Spring Green, Wisconsin 53588**

Marion Nelson, one of the founders of Willow Gold/Global View/Global Views, will be presenting "Hand-

woven textiles of Southeast Asia" at two special presentations in Chicago. The Douglas Dawson Gallery will host a special textile show that Marion curated, from November 4 thru January 1989. On November 11, 1988 at the Textile Arts Centre in the Chicago Academy of Sciences she will present films and talk about the craftsmen and women and the cultural significance of the textiles and clothing she has collected from Southeast Asia. Call Global Views 608/583-5311 for more information.

Global Views continues its culturally conscious tourism program. The primary purpose of its tours is to understand and appreciate other cultures, particularly those found in Southeast Asia. "Develop your spirit; then make it the heart of your business," has been a guiding principle for Global View as an Asian import business and Global Views as a program of tours to Southeast Asia. The founders of these businesses have sought to develop personal connections between themselves, their customers and the people and places they do business with. They have found their imports and tours to be an opportunity to create cultural understanding among people.

The Willow Gold community continues to play an active role in the Auroville network. Brian and Fanou Walton recently returned from a vacation in France where while visiting the AVI France center they met Pierre LeGrand, an Auroville artist, who was in Paris to set up an exhibition of his work. Paula Murphy and her daughter recently returned from a two month stay in Auroville where she taught a sex education course for young Aurovilians. Joel Goodman, an architect and Aurovilian, is now living at Willow Gold.

**Wilmot Center**  
**33719 116th Street**  
**Twin Lakes, WI 53181**

The Wilmot Center continues the development of its Lotus Light Publications and its Institute for Wholistic Education.

Lotus Light Publications has released two new titles this fall, companions to its spring publication of Vedic Symbolism. They are: *The Upanishads: Gateways of Knowledge* by Sri M.P. Pandit and *Wisdom of the Upanishads*, by Sri Aurobindo compiled by M.P. Pandit. The center will continue to publish American editions of books by or about Sri Aurobindo, particularly in fields of traditional interest to introduce Sri Aurobindo's ideas to people in the USA.

The Institute for Wholistic Education has added several correspondence courses to its on-site educational program. Courses in Ayurveda, Vedic Astrology, herbology and Homeopathic medicine are now available. The elementary school is still searching for a resident teacher.

Santosh Krinsky and his family will be in Pondicherry during December. He will be developing the institute's educational program during his stay there.

A new business division called Lotus Fulfillment Services, a retail mail order company specializing in the provision of Ayurvedic herbs and products to consumers by mail opened recently.

The Network Pages were printed over the summer and distributed at AUM. If you didn't get one at that time, they are still available from the center. Send a self addressed, stamped envelope to receive the listings free of charge. Anyone desiring to be listed for the second edition of these pages send your name and address to the center.

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

Once again Seyril Schochen launches into the creative process to come up with not only a new play but the perfect place for its world premier. In case you haven't heard, during the last two years Seyril has successfully started a new Sri Aurobindo center. Having built Savitri house in Baca, a new community in Crestone Arizona started by Hanne Strong, who dedicated the community to the development of the cultural and spiritual aspects of humanity and offers the site to those who are seeking a retreat, a place to study spiritual teaching and evolve higher levels of consciousness.

The Sri Aurobindo Learning Center (SALC) was founded in 1986 to further the educational, scientific, cultural and spiritual research for human unity that has been affirmed in the Auroville Charter. SALC is affiliated with AVIUSA. It's board of directors is: president, Hanne Strong, vice president and secretary, Mario Santonastaso, treasurer, June Maher with Susan Margaret Wilson and Sheila Devi Singh. Dianne and Ken Rowland -Skye along with their children recently moved to Baca to join Seyril in her endeavor to build this new center. Mario Santonastaso has also purchased land there and spent the summer at Savitri House.

Sixty-one acres of land have been purchased by the center as a nonprofit corporation in Colorado. The center is dedicated to building a solar village and a community to promote spiritual education, theater and the healing arts. People who are interested in becoming part of this center can build a residence on the land and live in it as long as they are directing a department for the center and maintain responsibility for the residence. A weekly core-group meditation and study of the supramental action upon earth started Sunday, October 23 1988. At the present time the following departments and their directors have been established: Dept. of Theater Arts - Seyril Schochen; Dept. of Teacher Education - Ken Rowland -Skye; Dept. of Sacred Literature - Sheila Devi Singh.

SALC has initiated the following projects: the Auroville Teacher Education Program coordinated by Merriam Hill Center, a semester program in Auroville for education majors in US colleges. The production of *Nishita: The Strange Disappearance of Margaret Woodrow Wilson*, the story of how Margaret's search for truth led her to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. The production of *The Matrimandir: House of the New Creation rising in Auroville, India*, a video cassette showing the pictorial history of the construction of Auroville's spiritual centre, that will be distributed through AVI USA. This video was produced with photographers and video artists in Auroville and the Baca Video Artists Co-op headed by Barbara Vail at Baca.

For 1989 SALC wants to host the Third Healing in Evolution Congress at Baca and is assisting in the organization of that conference. The first congress was held in Auroville in January 1987. Outstanding practitioners of alternative medicine came together including the physician to the Vice President of India who opened the congress. The second congress took place in England in 1988. SALC expects Western medicine professionals, Homeopathic, Ayurvedic, traditional Chinese Acupuncture and wholistic health practitioners to attend the 1989 congress. SALC hopes that this congress will facilitate the sharing of information from all disciplines of health and healing.

**Matrimandir  
Auroville, India**

On 8.8.88 Matrimandir workers poured the second half of the cap atop the Chamber in a twenty-hour concreting. The entire connection between the roof of

the Chamber and the cap itself are now closed. This was a small area but difficult to get at because work had to be done under the crane.

The central hole in the cap will be temporarily covered with reinforced safety glass. When the Chamber is dry enough the delicate work of mounting the marble on the walls will begin. In preparation for this work the chamber has undergone a major cleaning. Research is still being done on finding a suitable technique to create a "marble" finish for the ceiling. An expert in the field of "Jaipur Fresco Plaster" will be visiting the Matrimandir to help workers make a decision on how to finish the ceiling.

Matrimandir is now seeking funds to manufacture the 12 columns that will be placed inside the Chamber. They will be made in Europe from extruded metal covered with white enamel.

(Edited from the October 1988, Matrimandir newsletter)

### **Village Action Kottakarai, Auroville**

Auroville's annual Sangamam festival was celebrated on Sunday, August 14. In years past Sangamam was a day for workers to gather and perform folk dances, play games like Cubbidity and eat. This popular tradition has grown in attendance from a few hundred people gathering under the tamarind trees near Fraternity to this year's exhibition of Auroville workers' skills. There was a colorful and inspiring display of abilities; from fine embroidery on silk to electrical wiring boxes and a crowd-rousing performance of "Bangara" by the Elaingnarkal workers. The day was attended by 15,000 people from the neighboring villages. Our dear friend Raman designed the Sangamam program and Collaboration has reproduced some of his drawings from it in this issue.

The day to day work of Co-Evolution continues in the form of a weekly meeting at Elaingnarkal in the Matrimandir Nursery. A mini-employment exchange has started with Dr. Philip checking up on workers and Meenakshi and Jyothi interviewing them.

Young women workers in Auroville requested an evening school program and this has been started at Last School. Financed by the girls' employers, a one-to-two hour class is taught five evenings per week by Suriyagandhi of the Aspiration Health Center. Girls from three villages are attending the school.

A Youth Seminar was held to explore ideas on how village youth clubs and Village Action can work together

to do community work like deepening wells and repairing clinic buildings in the villages and to arrange cultural activities like biking to local temples or all - night dramas. About 40 youth leaders from 8 villages attended. (Edited from The Auroville Communicator)

### **Sri Aurobindo Association P.O. Box 372 High Falls, New York 12440**

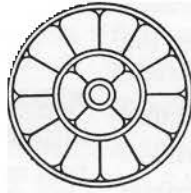
SAA is trying to be helpful and responsive to those who wish to start or join a local study group. If you feel inspired to do either please contact us and we will do our best to give as much support as possible. SAA is now offering cassette tapes of Mother's organ music, her readings of *The Mother* and excerpts from *Savitri* on a limited basis. Please write to us for a list of tapes available and prices. This is an experiment and in order to maintain the best quality we will reproduce them one by one as orders arrive. We appreciate your patience and cooperation. Sunil's music is not available at this time.

Julian Lines has been carrying on the activities of the center through tours and talks in the eastern US. Over Labor Day weekend he visited in Virginia with Directors of the Institute for Evolutionary Research, Luc and Suzie Venet, then gave a lecture on Auroville to a study group that meets with Professor Jahangir Chubb at the home of Richard & Judy Sidden in Chapel Hill, NC. The following weekend he met with the Baltimore study group and Washington area disciples at the home of Robert and Ghislaine Aarsse. The group decided to continue meeting and Rose Kupperman offered to host the next meeting.

### **Auroville Tamil Nadu, India**

On September 5, 1988 the Indian Parliament passed the Auroville Foundation Bill. This act sets up a foundation to provide for the acquisition and transfer of all the Auroville undertakings and property to make long term arrangements for the management and development of Auroville in accordance with its charter. (Extract from UNI, India)

**Please keep SAA informed of your  
address changes in order to receive  
Collaboration and other announcements.**



Do not take my words  
for a teaching. Always  
they are a force in action,  
uttered with a definite  
purpose, and they lose  
their true power when  
separated from that  
purpose.