

Collaboration

Spring 1996

Journal of the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother

Vol. 21, No. 2



**Conditions of supramentalisation • Readers discuss "Aging" • A lesson in surrender
Matrimandir journal • Amrita: 1895–1969 • Meditations on the human journey**

The taking up of life and matter into what is essentially a spiritual seeking, instead of the rejection and ultimate exclusion of them which was the attitude of a spirituality that shunned or turned away from life in the world, involves certain developments which a spiritual institution of the older kind could regard as foreign to its purpose. A divine life in the world or an institution having that for its aim and purpose cannot be or cannot remain something outside or entirely shut away from the life of ordinary men in the world or unconcerned with the mundane existence; it has to do the work of the Divine in the world and not a work outside or separate from it. The life of the an-

cient Rishis in their Ashramas had such a connection; they were creators, educators, guides of men and the life of the Indian people in ancient times was largely developed and directed by their shaping influence. The life and activities involved in the new endeavour are not identical but they too must be an action upon the world and a new creation in it. It must have contacts and connections with it and activities which take their place in the general life and whose initial or primary objects may not seem to differ from those of the same activities in the outside world.—Sri Aurobindo, *The Supramental Manifestation upon Earth*, p. 11

1996: Tenth leap-year anniversary of the supramental manifestation	3
Editorial	Ariel Browne 4
New letters on yoga	
Sally Walton, Richard Stein, Shannon Perneti, Soleil Righter, Carlo Chiopris, Sam Spanier, Auro and Fidelite Arindam, Mickey and Angel Finn	4
Net digest	
Janis Coker, David Hutchinson, Carolyn Vaughan, Annie Ricciuti	7
Current affairs	
Volunteer advisors needed for Lions Aravind Institute	8
Group trip to India still in the works	Vishnu Eschner 8
Cellular evolution conference tapes available	9
Book to be written on "The Spirit of the Net"	David Hutchinson 10
Briefs	10
Auroville almanac	
Matrimandir journal	Joan Tomb 10
Funds needed to continue work on Matrimandir	The Matrimandir team 11
Center to center	
Study Circle active in Manhattan	Miriam Belov 12
Cincinnati center established	David Fiedler 13
East-West Center expands program	Janis Coker 13
Chronicles and recollections	
Amrita-da (Sept. 19, 1895–Jan. 16, 1969)	Satadal 13
The story of Matagiri, part II	Sam Spanier 16
Salon: Readers discuss "Aging"	
Joseph Spanier, Arvind Habbu, Janis Coker, Stephen Phillips, Hadassah Haskale	19
The poetry room	Carlo Chiopris, Mary (Angel) Finn 23
Notes from the field	
Questions or answers	Wolfgang Wiehr 23
Crushed gold: A journey	Chitra Neogy-Tezak 24
A lesson in surrender	David Hutchinson 26
Memos on yoga	Lynda Lester 28
Essays	
Meditations on the human journey	C.V. Devan Nair 30
Book review: Mother, Sri Aurobindo, and WWII	Miriam Belov 33
Source material	
Conditions of supramentalisation: Nine excerpts from Sri Aurobindo	Compiled by Robert Zwicker 34

As of this issue, Gordon Korstange moves from active editorship to the position of editor emeritus. I would like to join the Integral Yoga community in thanking him for the service he contributed and the excellent work he accomplished for more than 13 years. *Collaboration* with Gordon at the helm has always been a sustaining comfort in the yoga; what we read in its pages elevated and changed our lives. Luckily for *Collaboration* subscribers, Gordon will continue to solicit articles from his widespread network of colleagues in the yoga (see, for instance, "Amrita-da," "Matrimandir journal," and "Mother, Sri Aurobindo, and WWII," in this issue); and luckily for us, he will continue to contribute his own beautifully written articles and poetry.

—Lynda Lester

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

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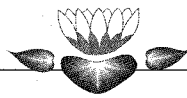
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To make tax-deductible contributions: Contributions, all tax-deductible, are welcome for the work of the SAA; contributions for Auroville and the Sri Aurobindo Ashram can also be made through the SAA at the above address.

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1996: Tenth leap-year anniversary of the supramental manifestation

On February 29, 1956, during the meditation on the Sri Aurobindo Ashram playground, there took place what the Mother called “the first manifestation of the supramental Light-Force in the earth atmosphere.” On May 2 and Oct. 10 of that year (see Questions and Answers, 1956), she discussed the difference between individual descent and universal manifestation. In this tenth leap year since the manifestation, we may examine the relevance of this event in our own lives.

May 2, 1956

What I call a “descent” is this: first the consciousness rises in an ascent, you catch the Thing up there, and come down with it. That is an *individual* movement.

When this individual event has happened in a way sufficient to create a possibility of a general kind, it is no longer a “descent,” it is a “manifestation.”

What I call a descent is the individual movement, in an individual consciousness. And when it is a new world manifesting in an old world—as for a comparison, when mind spread upon the earth—I call that a manifestation.

You may call it whatever you like, it makes no difference to me, but we must understand one another.

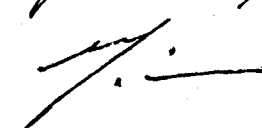
What I call a descent is in the individual consciousness. Just as one speaks of ascent (there is no ascent, really: there is neither above nor below nor any direction, it is a way of speaking), you speak of ascent when you have the feeling of rising up towards something; and you speak of descent when, having caught that thing, you bring it down within yourself.

But when the gates are open and the flood comes in, you cannot call that a descent. It is a Force which is spreading out. Do you get it? . . . Ah!

Oct. 10, 1956

“The first obscure material movement of the evolutionary Force is marked by an aeonic graduality; the movement of life-progress proceeds slowly but still with a quicker step, it is concentrated into the figure of millenniums; mind can still further compress the tardy leisureliness of Time and make long paces of the centuries; but when the conscious spirit intervenes, a supremely concentrated pace of evolutionary swiftness becomes possible.”—Sri Aurobindo, The Life Divine, Centenary Edition, Vol. 19, p. 932

I am reading this to you because I have been asked about the action of the Supermind, and I had compared this manifestation of the Supermind to that of the mind which, according to all modern scientific discoveries, took nearly a million years

*New forms are needed
for the manifestation
of a new Force,
with my blessings*


to evolve from the animal brain, the ape-brain, to the first human brain. And I told you that, consequently, one should not expect that this will take place in a few months or a few years, that obviously it would take much longer. Some people, it seems, thought that I was announcing that the superman would not come for yet a million years! I want to correct that impression.

Sri Aurobindo has said that as the development rises in the scale of consciousness, the movement becomes more and more rapid, and that when the Spirit or the Supermind intervenes in it, it can go much faster. Hence we may hope that in a few centuries, the first supramental race will appear.

But even that is quite disconcerting for some people, for they think it contradicts what Sri Aurobindo has always promised: that the time has come for the supramental transformation to be possible. . . . But we must not confuse a supramental transformation with the appearing of a new race.

What Sri Aurobindo promised and what naturally interests us, we who are here now, is that the time has come when some of the elite in humanity who fulfil the conditions necessary for spiritualisation, will be able to transform their body with the help of the supramental Force, Consciousness and Light, so as not to be animal-men any longer but become supermen.

This promise Sri Aurobindo has given and he founded it on the knowledge he had that the supramental Force was on the point of manifesting on the earth. In fact it had descended in him long ago, he knew it and knew what its effects were.

And now that it has manifested universally, I may say, generally, the certitude of the possibility of transformation is naturally still greater. There is no longer any doubt that those who will fulfil or who fulfil now the conditions are on the way to this transformation.

The conditions Sri Aurobindo has given in detail in *The Synthesis of Yoga* and in still greater detail in his last articles on *The Supramental Manifestation*. So it is only a question now of realising them.

—The Mother



EDITORIAL

SAA has an eventful year

The Sri Aurobindo Association (SAA) has had an eventful year. It has been more than two years since our plans for a more expanded and wider ranging All USA Meeting (AUM) and conference were seeded. Last October 11–15 in San Francisco, the AUM/conference, “Cellular evolution: The transformation of the body,” was attended and enjoyed by 200 people from 18 states, Canada, South Africa, England, and India.

The conference was a success on many fronts: It brought together kindred souls from all over the world in an atmosphere of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo in a hotel venue made *bhakti* by the loving spirit and offering of the Rama family of devotees; it introduced many people with no prior experience to the teachings and practice of Integral Yoga; it brought speakers and presenters together who have had experiences of Mother and Sri Aurobindo and who had an opportunity to share and expand their experiences in a rare community of psychic being.

A number of people from the Integral Yoga community attended this lovely event and gave positive feedback. [See “New letters on yoga” for two first-hand reports.] Attendees not familiar with the yoga also gave positive feedback and asked that the event become an annual occurrence. Many thanked the SAA and said they were grateful to know of teachings and experiences of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

We of the Sri Aurobindo Association feel that this was a signal blessing for us all. The past year has focused not so much on establishment of the known but rather with expansion. The AUM/conference, s-t-r-e-t-c-h-e-d every resource we had. It demanded everything, but this is the very reason for our existence as an organization.

Planned giving has been a focus this year. Several people have expressed interest in identifying SAA projects and activities for financial support through living trusts or in wills. Individuals have wanted to know how to make the arrangements in such a way that they would still be financially secure, and how to include their heirs. For their benefit, we have retained the services of Phil Murphy, a specialist in estate planning, financial advising, and trusts. He has consulted with the SAA board and was available at the conference for anyone who wished to avail themselves of his expertise. For any of you who wish to know more about financial planning, trusts, and wills in order to name SAA projects as beneficiary, Phil Murphy is available for consultation at no cost (SAA will pay the fee) by calling him at (415) 457-7482. Phil does not sell any products or services.

The best outward signs of our success are our continued work; our strong book sales; the continued evolution of *Col-laboration*; the cellular evolution conference; the SAA center’s

seminars, library, and weekly meditations in Berkeley; and in our wide-ranging information network support all over the world. Through this work, the presence of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo is brought into and strengthened in people’s lives throughout the world.

The special events of this last year reaffirmed our belief in our mission, our importance as a community of devotees, and the relevance of the Sri Aurobindo Association’s many areas of outreach and service.

Please consider our past and our future. Consider your own past record of support. If you have never made a gift to the annual fund, could this be the year that you start? If you have given before, would you consider increasing your gift this year?

We are grateful for your understanding of our continued need for annual support and deeply appreciate the other forms of support you provide in myriad ways.

—Ariel Browne, Atlanta, Georgia

NEW LETTERS ON YOGA

A time of ‘divine contagion’

Many people attended the cellular evolution conference Oct. 11–15 in San Francisco who had never heard of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. It was a wonderful week of the “contagion”—including with the U.S. Army!

The ballroom where we held our main sessions was partitioned down the center with the Sri Aurobindo Association sign on one side, and the U.S. Army on the other.

The first morning meditation was accompanied by the shouts and exercises of the Army in the next room. As I walked out, I encountered one of the Army men, still in his sweats, and said in my usual talk-to-strangers fashion, “Hey, why didn’t you come over and join us for meditation?”

He stopped, spun around to face me, and said in a strong New Jersey accent, “You know, we represent two cosmic forces, the physical and the spiritual. I’ll confide something to you. I’m 54, and it’s not easy to keep up with some of those 18-year-olds. When we got to the push-ups, I said to myself, ‘I know what’s going on in that next room; I’m going to tune into that.’”

He straightened up from his crouched, confidential pose and said jubilantly, “I did 50 push-ups! We were supposed to do 20, and I did 50!”

As mistress of ceremonies, I was privileged to work closely with the speakers and the conference committee. I was also privileged to have the opportunity to tell that story at the opening session. People loved the story, and several said something turned in them at that point.

Perhaps they realized it is simply a time of “divine contagion.”

—Sally Walton, Santa Cruz, California



Surama Bloomquist welcomes participants to the SAA conference.

Glad they attended

I have just returned from two days at the cellular evolution conference sponsored by the Sri Aurobindo Association and held at a hotel near the San Francisco airport. I had been reluctant to attend when I first saw the brochure a few months ago, as it seemed to be putting the yoga into the big-time, new-age conference arena. On the other hand, Arabinda Basu was coming from the Ashram, and I had been impressed by his scholarship, spiritual sincerity, and genuine devotion when I met him there over 20 years ago. As I often wish there was more of a collective yoga here, and have not had the time or inclination to participate in much more than a study group, it seemed like an opportunity to see what was going on.

One of the things that was noticeably different from past AUM meetings and other get-togethers was the effect of having a significant portion of the presenters and participants being people who were not devotees of the Mother or Sri Aurobindo. Some had heard or read a bit, while others (like Michael Murphy and Stanislov Grof) were knowledgeable but remained scientifically standoffish. Some (like a couple of young women from the Midwest who do body work) had their own intuition that there is something important going on at a bodily level and were taken by the descriptions in the brochure and curious enough to fly to San Francisco and learn more. There was a freshness and openness to their willingness to experience something new. One woman I met from Knoxville complained that people were not very friendly, that they seemed more inward than other yoga groups she'd been around.

It was clear from some of the comments that to the "outsiders" there is a religious or cultish aspect to an "insider group" who already know the language and have a history with the teachings. (Michael Murphy made an explicit point of wanting to open

the discussion in a way to disrupt any complacent agreement in the group; the result was a discussion of a wide range of topics that focused on nothing.)

Some of the speakers tended to focus on body practices that seemed to me to oversimplify the depth and revolutionary nature of Sri Aurobindo's message. After one such talk, Arabinda Basu got up and delineated in clear terms the stages of the yoga as outlined by Sri Aurobindo that precede any serious consideration of the transformation of the cells.

An old friend from Auroville who now lives in the U.S. met me at lunch and asked what I thought of the clash of cultures: refined Indian spiritual intellect (over the heads of many people there) versus the great American openness to trying anything. I had been meditating as much as listening during the morning talks, and I had to say that I thought there was room for both, although I was personally relieved to hear Dr. Basu set the record straight in terms of the actual teachings of Sri Aurobindo. The meditating was good, and there was a real atmosphere behind the new-age marketplace.

One of my original attractions to Sri Aurobindo was his emphatic refusal to proselytize, and I have always aspired to understand and represent what he said and meant as deeply and honestly as possible. Despite some of the distortions presented, there was a general sense of goodwill and seeking, and I found myself glad to see that the yoga was being made available to a new circle of people.

I found myself appreciative that Wayne Bloomquist and the other people who put on the conference had worked so hard to make it happen, and glad that I had attended. As a member of the "audience," I could see the yoga (with Mother and Sri Aurobindo's pictures literally in the center of the stage) both through the eyes of a devotee and those of people around me who were respectfully not devotees. I left feeling that it was a good thing for those of us in the yoga to not limit it to the chosen few.

—Richard Stein, Mill Valley, California

The conference was very important to me. Please sign me up for *Collaboration*!

—Shannon Perneti, Portland, Oregon

Dead grate

Letter to the editor, *Collaboration*

Subject: Your extensive coverage and glorification of Jerry Garcia and the Grateful Dead

While it is true that the Divine Force can come through anything, I believe that it is a potentially dangerous mistake to identify the Force with the object, ego, or form of the conveyer.

Probably most of us who were youths in the 60s and 70s had profound experiences of oneness, transcendence, past lives, etc. through sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll. These experiences are real, but to identify them with the initial vehicles of their conveyance



opens one to the whole mixture of vital forces that those vehicles also bring with them.

A simple look at America today should make it obvious that the dark side of these things are far darker than any light a particular individual may tune into through them. You cannot deny, for example, that two members (including Jerry Garcia) of the Grateful Dead are dead because of prolonged drug abuse. Even their logos—grinning skeletons and a skull with a lightning bolt inside—should make it clear that they are open to opposite forces than those which this yoga is reaching for.

I have found many of the experiences personally shared in articles in this “summer” issue of *Collaboration* to be helpful and inspiring. But I believe, particularly in the role of editor, we must discriminate what we suggest or propagate to others.

Let us try to encourage the highest aspirations in one another—that of service to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo—through this journal.

—Soleil Righter, Ashland, Oregon

Editor's note: Some serious points are raised here that deserve response; I will take some paragraphs to reply.

As a person who saw more than 50 Grateful Dead concerts (drug free), I have to disagree with the opinion that a “simple look” will deem it apparent that “the dark side of these things are far darker than any light a particular individual may tune into through them.” For me, the music was a wonderfully effective way to bring forth the psychic being and experience the Self; I used the spiritual awareness I gained at concerts as hands-on training in a number of states of consciousness Sri Aurobindo described in his works.

Although originally associated with the counterculture “psychedelic ethic,” the Grateful Dead later made a point of not advocating drugs. It was generally the media, searching for quick and sensational copy, that publicized “long strange trip” stories rather than investigating the more subtle and delicate concert phenomena related to consciousness and spirituality.

From what I understand, Jerry’s drug problems were intermittent and carefully hidden from the public. He died from a heart attack, not an overdose, that was as much due to a heavy workload, touring stress, insufficient exercise, chili dogs, and diabetes as to a tragic weakness he was trying to overcome—not glamorize or encourage in others. (Other band members have long been physically fit due to running, mountain biking, and drumming.)

As to logos, a skull filled with lightning may well signify the mind of ignorance pierced by higher illumination, the supramental immersion in matter, or the transformation of death into immortality. The red rose, another ubiquitous Grateful Dead icon

(not mentioned above) may represent, if we think of Mother’s designation, “human passions changed to love for the Divine.”

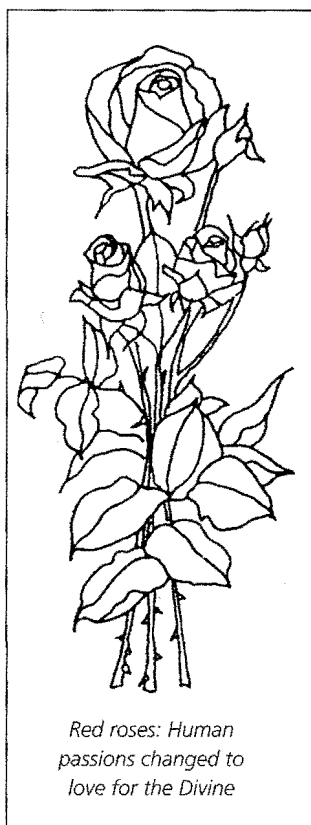
Far from being emissaries of darkness, the Grateful Dead have contributed substantial funding to the Seva Foundation, which supports the Aravind Eye Hospital (founded by Sri Aurobindo disciple Dr. Venkataswamy). They have also been active in healing work with the elderly, saving the environment, and supporting many ecological and cultural causes through their charitable offshoot the Rex Foundation.

Last December the Grateful Dead chose to no longer perform as a group rather than continue without Jerry.

As the above letter reminds us, it is indeed easy to identify the Force with the channel, and hard to remember that the instrument is but an imperfect reflection of the One. It is also true that vital mixture and distortion permeate most human endeavors, not least Grateful Dead concerts.

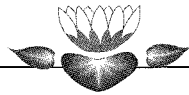
This being said, however, I must say that I often perceive the Divine in nontraditional settings, and feel the presence not only in meditation halls but in the manifestations of popular culture (all this really is the Brahman). I am thus more inclined toward an optimistic viewpoint, and tend to err on the side of tolerance. Certainly in the decades I experienced the Grateful Dead I reaped full benefit of the doubt thereof, which is why I included the apparently questionable material in last issue’s *Collaboration*. I wish to apologize if by doing so I seemed to encourage death-seeking drug addiction, or to advocate a yoga synonymous with vital indulgence. Certainly the material was offered in a spirit of goodwill and not with the ulterior motive of tempting sadhaks to abandon spiritual discrimination.

In November 1986, I attended a seminar on music, art, and consciousness presented by well-known mythologist Joseph Campbell (*The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, *The Masks of God*, etc.), Grateful Dead members Jerry Garcia and Mickey Hart, and others. The following, an excerpt from the talk Campbell gave, may better express what I may have failed to convey.—Lynda Lester



Red roses: Human passions changed to love for the Divine

“Some six or eight months ago I had the very good fortune to be invited by Mickey Hart and Bob Weir to go to a performance of the Grateful Dead in Oakland. Well, rock ‘n’ roll never interested me in itself, and I didn’t really know anything about it, but I expected something very interesting. After all, the name “the Grateful Dead” is a phrase that comes from *The Egyptian Book of the Dead*, and it refers to those dead who have gone through the underworld of the agonies, of the pains of being and not being, and who have arrived by the waters of immortal life at the throne of Osiris the Lord, with whom we are one. So, I suspected that there might be something interesting to observe, and indeed there was.



"It reminded me of Russian Easter. Down in New York we have a big Russian cathedral. You go there on Russian Easter at midnight and you hear '*Kristos anesti!*' '*Christ is risen!*' It has the same kind of feel. When I was in Mexico City at the Cathedral of the Virgin of Guadalupe, there it was again. In India, at Puri, at the Temple of Jagannath—that means 'the lord of the moving world'—the same thing again . . . it's somehow hitting that chord of realization of the unity of God in you all. That's a terrific thing, and it just blows the rest away.

"What I found were 8,000 people who had all been standing for five hours in a rapture, and what I felt there was something that seemed to me to be the true religious experience. By the end of the concert these people were all one; the heart was bursting open, and one's illusive self was in a spiritual experience of compassion and suffering, and living, and joining with others who, in the same mode, were having this experience. It seemed to me that we had an awakening there of the kind that the great religions first intended, and that it somehow involved everybody. There were kids there. There were old people there, and in other parts of the building there were people just dancing and dancing. I think that afternoon we had a chance to awaken our hearts, unbound by any particular cultural or religious commitments to this group or that. I am very serious when I say that the prime religious experience transcends all the bondage and definitions of who and what we are.

"It is my view that at this time of the world history, when we have merely one planet and one society, it is time to awaken all of the symbols to the knowledge of their original and natural eloquence: which is of all mankind being one."

—Joseph Campbell, from "Day of the Dead Lecture," published in *Magical Blend* #16 and transcribed from audiotape

Feedback

Collaboration is so different from *Domani* and the rest of the Italian Sri Aurobindo-related culture. We have to go over a short shock which is caused by the cultural diversity. We don't have here as much cultural variety as in the USA. The background is heavily Roman Catholic and dogmatic, that's why I think an infusion of something so different is stimulating.

—Carlo Chiopris, Verona, Italy

I was very pleased with the presentation of "The story of Matagiri." I also found a number of articles quite wonderful, particularly Savitra's ("In search of community") and Gordon's ("By the shores of Lake Winnepasake"). I've had quite touching feedback about the articles from people all over the world. Thank you!

—Sam Spanier, Mt. Tremper, New York

We particularly enjoyed Savitra's article "In Search of Community."

—Auro and Fidelite Arindam, Victoria, British Columbia

Hoping this letter finds you all in the most joyous and brightest spirit of the Divine Mother. All of us in Boston send our love and appreciation for the work you are doing.

—Mickey and Angel Finn, Boston, Massachusetts

NET DIGEST

The following postings represent a small sampling of conversation being shared on the Internet via electronic mail (e-mail) among disciples of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. (See "Briefs" on p. 10 for more information on the how the Net is being used by the Integral Yoga community.)

Global mind field?

There is an interesting article in the November/December 1995 issue of *Common Boundary*: "Casting a wider net" by Peter Hawes. He starts with a question, "Is it possible to have an authentic feeling of spiritual community when my interaction with others comes by way of my computer screen and the tap of my fingers on plastic?"

In the article he quotes members of several groups such as the One Attunement Group and SpiritLead, and the remarks of psychologist, philosopher, author, and conference facilitator Jean Houston.

Houston and others suggest that the Internet is a materialization of the spiritual connection that we already share with fellow humans. "What is happening here," Houston says, "is an electronic neurosphere that is going to change philosophy, theology, the way we think about ourselves—I mean literally a global mind field that is spawning a new culture."

Trudy Johnson-Lenz of the One Attunement Group, when asked how spiritual experience could be possible when people relate only through a computer, replied, "Yesterday I was reading some Rumi poems. Your question is like asking, 'How can you have the experience of being touched by Rumi's poetry when you're only interacting with a book?'"

—Janis Coker, JanisFL@aol.com

Our own lights

Today I happened upon this section in the *Collected Works of the Mother* (Vol. 11, p. 129):

I came to the conclusion that it is impossible to reproach a human being who does as well as he can according to his consciousness, for how can he go beyond his consciousness? . . . This amounts to saying that it is absolutely impossible to lay the blame upon anyone who acts sincerely according to his own limited consciousness. And in fact . . . everyone in the world has a limited consciousness . . .

So who are we to say that another person can't use breathing exercises, or mantra, or living in an ashram, or electronic com-



munication, or painting, or prayer, or abstinence from an activity, to approach the Divine? We all travel by our own lights; to curse someone else's because you believe yours to be brighter seems futile on the face of it. If they see your light, fine; if not, they may well see better by their own.

—David Hutchinson, dbhutchinson@ucdavis.edu

The modes of the Self

Sri Aurobindo's chapter "The modes of the Self" in the *Synthesis of Yoga* brings my thoughts to a couple of things. One is thinking how beautiful it is that we humans in all our myriad forms and ways of being are all part of the Divine—not just "part" of the Divine, but the Divine in each one's own essence. It's like a hologram where the part is also fully the whole.

The difficulty, of course, is recognizing that my next-door neighbor, or someone with whom I have philosophical differences, is indeed the Divine. Even harder is realizing and accepting that I, too, am the Divine when I'm so intensely aware of my limitations, attachments, and aspects of my personality that hold me back.

Then I think how sad it is that there are those who would like to limit this infinite beauty to one or another way of being or of seeing and experiencing the Divine. In reading Aurobindo, you begin to have some understanding and learning how to embrace all of this variety and still understand it to be the one infinite Consciousness.

Someone recently said to me that I'm using Aurobindo's teachings as a standard against which I measure all the other study that I do. I realize that this is true, and have been asking myself if I am indeed "stuck" or "trapped" in some kind of a limited way of thinking. I suppose that I don't ever want to allow myself to get "boxed in" into any limiting philosophy of thought again, so I'm wary and alert to those possibilities. Yet, in my study of Aurobindo, I've not found anything that is limiting; rather it's consistently expansive for me.

—Carolyn Vaughan, CarolynV@aol.com

Thanks for Integral Yoga Web site

The following note was written by a new visitor to the "Miraura" Integral Yoga archive, available on the Internet's World Wide Web at the following address: <http://webcom.com/~miraura>.

I love it! Thank you for creating such a wonderful method to discover Aurobindo and the Mother. It was my first time on the Web and it took me a while to access the page, but finally it appeared and I was so excited. I've barely scratched the surface and am looking forward to digging more deeply. Already I've found several moments in my life where I have been directly guided by the small amount I have learned. It's wonderful to see how well the teaching applies to my life. Thanks again for the tips and for creating this.

—Annie Ricciuti, Aricciuti1@aol.com

CURRENT AFFAIRS

Volunteer advisors needed for Lions Aravind Institute

The Lions Aravind Institute for Community Ophthalmology is based at the Aravind Eye Hospital in Madurai, Tamil Nadu, India, the largest eye hospital in the world. During 1994, Aravind performed 81,000 eye operations and 770,000 outpatient services. The institute's multidisciplinary training programs disseminate Aravind's methods of providing high-quality, affordable, community-oriented cataract surgery and other eye care services to all who need them.

Advisors are needed to strengthen the training curriculum and further develop the institute staff. Candidates must have extensive hands-on training and experience in their field. Travel costs, local lodging and meals, and selected other expenses will be paid. Institute advisor posts are available in management, instructional development, ophthalmology, biostatistics, epidemiology, and demography.

Send inquiries and resumes to Suzanne Gilbert or Alexa Wilkie, Seva Foundation, 8 North San Pedro Road, San Rafael, CA 94903. Phone: (415) 492-1829; fax: (415) 492-8705.

Group trip to India still in the works

In the last issue of *Collaboration*, on behalf of the Sri Aurobindo Association, I began testing the waters to see about organizing a group trip to India. After reading that issue of *Collaboration*, Taradi Jauhar, director of the Sri Aurobindo Delhi Branch, invited the group to visit their Ashram, reminding me that Mother had expressed the hope that the Delhi Ashram would be sort of a port of entry for Sri Aurobindo's devotees visiting India from the West.

From my experience, Los Angeles to Madras through Singapore, I've learned that it is possible to get a flight through New Delhi with an indefinite layover before going on to Madras.

The Delhi Branch Ashram is home to a radiant and beautiful samadhi of Sri Aurobindo and also the samadhi of Surendra Nath Jauhar, the founder. It is alive with the teachings and presence of Sri Aurobindo and Mother in a different way than Pondicherry. Of course, the life is lived a little closer to the city life—the Ashram is on a parklike 20-some-acres walled compound practically in the heart of Delhi—and the urgency of the capitol of India can't help but rub off in the sadhana of those staying there.

They are an active and industrious group. The guest house they've built is phenomenal: two intricate, 12-sided, multistory structures with open-air courtyards are joined together in a way to allow for the future construction of 10 more, which will make 12 interconnected, 12-sided buildings. You have your choice of western rooms with solar hot water, etc., or Indian amenities.



Cellular evolution conference tapes available

Professionally recorded audiotapes of the Sri Aurobindo Association conference, "Cellular evolution: The transformation of the body," held last October in San Francisco, are now available. To order tapes, please copy or photocopy this form, supply the appropriate information, and mail to the recording studio at the address below. Be sure to circle the tape ID # of the tape(s) you want, give your full address, and include a credit card authorization or check for the amount of purchase. This list is subject to change.

Mail order to: Conference Recording Service (CRS),
1308 Gilman St., Berkeley, CA 94706.

To order by phone: (510) 527-3600

To order by fax: (510) 527-8404

Name _____

Address _____

City/state/zip _____

Phone _____

I am ordering from conference SAA95: _____ tapes \$ _____

California sales tax, 8.25% \$ _____

Subtotal: \$ _____

Shipping—2.00 per tape (max: \$10.00) \$ _____

Total cost of order \$ _____

U.S. bank check payable to CRS ☐

Visa/MasterCard/AMEX # _____ Exp. date _____

☐ I would like the complete conference set in vinyl binders for \$215.

SAA95: The following list shows tape ID #, title, number of tapes in set, and price.

001	Integral Yoga—Arabinda Basu	3 / \$22.00
002	Descension of the soul: Entering cellular consciousness—Adena De Joya	2 / \$17.00
003	The future of the body—Michael Murphy	2 / \$17.00
004	Microangels in our cellular universe—Mary Christopher and Diana Douglas	2 / \$17.00
005	Ormes: The atoms of the spirit—David Hudson	2 / \$17.00
006	The Divine Mother—Elizabeth Hin and Leslie Temple-Thurston	2 / \$17.00
007	The teenager in you: Power, sex, and survival—Adena De Joya	2 / \$17.00
008	Mother as matter—Leslie Temple-Thurston	2 / \$17.00
009	Born Awake: Children of the global era—Elizabeth Hin	1 / \$9.00

010	Integral Yoga and the Mother's Agenda—Wayne Bloomquist	2 / \$17.00
011	The future evolution of the species—Arabinda Basu	2 / \$17.00
012	The dilemma of the soul: Before and after it enters the body—Adena De Joya	2 / \$17.00
013	An evening of beauty—Leslie Temple-Thurston and Bryan Walton	1 / \$9.00
014	Transforming your physical body into a proper vehicle for the soul—Adena De Joya	1 / \$9.00
015	Integral transformation in the global era—Elizabeth Hin	1 / \$9.00
016	The future of the body—Michael Murphy	2 / \$17.00
017	The cosmic game: Metaphysical and spiritual insights from modern consciousness—Stanislas Grof	2 / \$17.00

The rooms are large and airy, and Delhi was cool in the evenings in September.

Also on the grounds is an internationally known "free progress" school that implements Mother's ideas on education, as well as a large, acclaimed government school, operated by the Ashram. In fact, there's so much going on there—store, medical facility, recording, paper factory, iron works, bookstore, photography department, metal department, dining hall, and more—that you may find it a mystery how the few Ashramites (I heard estimates of 35 to 55) ever found time to do it all.

The dining hall is an international place, with travelers coming and going and returning after months, weeks, or days of exploring India. Step outside the gates onto Sri Aurobindo Marg and it's just a taxi ride to the government offices, British and

ancient sights, Connaught Circus, Old Delhi, or the airport, and a two-hour train ride to the Taj Mahal.

The Ashram sponsors regular trips to Sri Aurobindo's house in Nainital and also annual 10-day Himalaya treks for a few hundred dollars, including train, bus, and donkey fare and accommodations.

That's one possibility. Nothing has been planned yet and the idea has received what could be called "mild" interest (only one or two may be going); but anyone who's interested in being a part of planning or participating in an SAA group trip to Pondicherry this year, please contact Vishnu at (209) 339-1342 or by e-mail, SAACal@aol.com.

—Vishnu Eschner, Lodi, California



Book to be written on "The Spirit of the Net"

This is a call for anyone interested in participating in the writing of a book called *The Spirit of the Net*. The subject of the book, as the title shows, is the intersection of the Spirit and the manifold phenomena of the Internet. We have put together an outline of the chapters, with short descriptions of the topic for each.

This project is intended to be collaborative in as many senses as possible; even, perhaps, an exercise in collective yoga. The process is as important as the final book itself. We want to explore not just the ideas inherent in the topic, but how well all contributors can collaboratively write, edit, and produce the book.

Participation will not be limited to people who are online, or to those who are formally involved in the Integral Yoga. The book is not to be an overt explication of the ideas or writings of Sri Aurobindo or the Mother. Still, we feel that the essence and substance of our vision and experience derives from this path, and hope the Integral Yoga community will contribute most of the content. The introduction spells this out in more detail.

If you are interested, please contact David Hutchinson (P.O. Box 161613, Sacramento, CA 95816; e-mail: dbhutchinson@ucdavis.edu) or Lynda Lester (P.O. Box 3204, Boulder, CO 80307; e-mail: lester@ucar.edu) for more information.

—David Hutchinson, Sacramento, California

Briefs

- On November 24, 1995, the **Sri Aurobindo Learning Center** in Baca Grande, Crestone, Colorado, hosted a program celebrating the inauguration of Savitri Bhavan in Auroville's International Zone. The program included readings from *Savitri*, a video of the Dalai Lama in Auroville, music, and meditation.

- **Gene Maslow**, a long-time disciple, passed away in Pondicherry on February 28. **Michel Henry**, an Auroville supporter for many years, passed away March 8 in Mesa, Arizona.

- **Lynda Lester** has joined the board of the Sri Aurobindo Association.

- The **Sri Aurobindo Association** can now send and receive e-mail. The SAA may be contacted at the electronic address SAACal@aol.com for speedy communication regarding books, photographs, and *Collaboration*; information by and about Sri Aurobindo and the Mother; information on Auroville, events, workshops, and contributions; and other services to those interested in the path of Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga. SAA can also be reached by phone (510-848-1841), fax (510-848-8531), or post office mail (2288 Fulton Street, Suite 310, Berkeley, California 94704).

- Three **e-mail groups** focusing on topics related to Integral Yoga are currently active on the Internet. One group is a forum for news and discussion in general (yoga, Ashram,

Auroville, announcements, etc.). A second group is discussing *Savitri*, and a third is discussing *The Synthesis of Yoga*. To join one of the groups, send e-mail to auroconf-request@compatible.com, savitri-request@compatible.com, or synthesis-request@compatible.com, respectively.

- The **Cultural Integration Fellowship** has established a site on the Internet's World Wide Web at <http://www.webcom.com/haridas/>. Visitors to the site are treated to a beautiful darshan that includes a "virtual" experience of standing below the Mother's balcony, seeing Mother in her many aspects, and offering her flowers.

- The **Miraura** Integral Yoga Web site continues to gain in depth. The Auroville section has been expanded and includes many photos and a "walking tour" of the Matrimandir. The summer 1995 issue of *Collaboration* is available online at the site. Miraura is available at <http://www.webcom.com/~miraura/home.html>.

- The **Auroville Liaison Office** has a Web site at <http://www.auroville.org/~auro/home.htm>. The last issue of *Collaboration* incorrectly listed their fax instead of their phone number. The correct contact information is: Auroville Liaison Office, P.O. Box 8010, Victoria, B.C., V8W 3R7, Canada. Phone: (604) 383-4699, fax: (604) 480-1781, e-mail: avliaison@auroville.org.

- **Aurolink**, a repository of information about Auroville, is available at <http://www.sirius.com/~aceebro/>. The **East-West Cultural Center** has a Web site at <http://www.earthlink.net/~ewcc>. The **Sri Aurobindo Ashram Delhi Branch** has a Web site at <http://pubweb.acns.nwu.edu/~pravir/dbdesc.html>.

AUROVILLE ALMANAC

Matrimandir journal

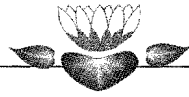
by Joan Tomb

I wish you could come here and experience the Matrimandir for yourself.

I ran across a descriptive reminiscence Mother once gave of Sri Aurobindo that spoke to my own experience inside the Matrimandir chamber: "You always had the impression of entering into an infinity, and so soft, so soft! Always it was like . . . something that was soft, I don't know. They were like vibrations that always widened you, soothed you . . . you had the feeling of touching something that had no limits." This was Sri Aurobindo, evidently. Unfortunately he left his body in 1950, 20 years before I arrived in Pondicherry.

Inside the spacious chamber's vastness I feel gently excused from my apparent limits and escorted to a wider experience of self. Another dimension where only fluent silence is spoken.

At a respectful distance from the center, 12 columns poised like gleaming sentinels are discreetly spaced in a significant arc



defining the inner space around the crystal, then suddenly vanish straight up beyond the eyebrows. White marble walls uphold the silence, enclose the psychic space in 12 facets to indicate the months of the year. So, Time is invited to participate in this experience, in case we're likely to forget that it's here on earth that the new consciousness needs to be anchored.

A splendor of the finest hand-woven carpet, a thick and naturally white sheep's wool, cushions the footsteps. How sweetly endearing she shone in my heart when I read her original description of how the floor should be: "In such a way that people are comfortable, so they don't have to think that they hurt here or they hurt there." And a generous pile of cushions at the entrance to invite a comfortably meditative pose.

Nothing more. No flowers, no photographs, no incense. Nothing to distract or disturb.

Neither is there austerity or excessive extravagance. Words fail to convey the power and the beauty of her vision brought into manifestation. Something from the future, possibly. You could say, "Here is the beauty of tomorrow."

The Matrimandir chamber is astonishingly beautiful, a vast curvature of space, of soft white silence. "It could take a lifetime to learn and absorb and assimilate what that space represents," said one of the architects. Essentially the chamber is empty, still and serene.

At the center, an exquisitely pure crystal sphere absorbs a single transparent ray of sunlight descending from an opening far, far above.

A silent explosion of light softly illumines the spaciousness. The room is bathed in the most extraordinary nuances of light, softly encompassing and very peaceful. Light that puts the moon in search of her pearls. Imagine one single ray of sunlight illumines the whole vast chamber, persuades the soft white plush of the carpet to luster, reflects again in the rich milky gleam of the towering columns, and probes the far walls of marble to a faint glimmer like curtains of beads. One is projected into a splendor of soothing stillness. A palace of silence.

Long before she'd had her vision of Matrimandir (even to its precise measurements and dimensions), the Mother wrote in her spiritual diary: "Oh to be the pure, the stainless crystal that allows your divine ray to pass through without deforming it." Her prayer was answered. This was how I knew her in the early days of my spiritual adventures at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, when Auroville was building itself into becoming a speck on the map.

Matrimandir is the symbol of the Universal Mother, the suppressed mystery of the Divine Mother as creator (known throughout the ages under different names and forms, e.g., Kuan Yin, Tara, and other emanations who embrace her diamond energy). Those who connect with the light within themselves grow one with sheer self. And those who from listening depths live in the still self for even minutes . . . win the silence. In the mind's silence the Transcendent acts.

Only afterwards, back outside again (maybe I should explain right here that the tour guide is sometimes reluctant to go off



Matrimandir evening, January 1987. (Photo by John Mandeem)

duty), thoughts run and trip over themselves: It's not just one more temple, another meditation hall. Nor is it a linear experience. Rather, it's something like a precise scientific instrument where the Infinite is condensed for an instant at a point of power where sunlight meets pure crystal. The still point between rapture and calm.

Piero, the man who engineered the construction of Matrimandir, called that still point " . . . a symbol of the realization that is about to come . . . the new consciousness, the union of spirit and matter."

Here is the secret soul of the city. "The force of cohesion for Auroville," is how the Mother put it. *Mandir* means temple in Sanskrit. *Matri* refers to the Divine Mother. Matrimandir . . . "a place to try to find one's consciousness." A simple and humbly stated purpose for the powerful symbol of Auroville's aspiration.

Joan Tomb lives in Arizona and Auroville.

Funds needed to continue work on Matrimandir

The following was a special bulletin of the Matrimandir Newsletter released in November 1995.

On the eve of this November 24th darshan, the team coordinating the work at the Matrimandir regrets to bring the following to your attention.

We are organizing the layoff of about 300 people presently working on the Matrimandir, engaged mainly in the areas of the



petals, the inner skin, and the gardens. This action has become necessary due to insufficient funds.

This news will come as a surprise to many of you who may be under the impression that several crores of rupees have been donated to the Matrimandir in recent months, thus ensuring execution of the remaining work. Indeed, rumors to this effect have been circulating in various places. Sad to say, it isn't true! What is true is that a group involved in fundraising for the Matrimandir has been seriously working to find the vast amount of money for the discs, with some success, and several larger donations have been received specified for this aspect of the work.

However, the amount of money coming in for all the other work at Matrimandir seems to have dwindled in the last few months, with the result that there have been several "crunches" in our finances throughout this year.

Now we find ourselves in the awkward situation of having to carry on—at least for some more time—with the fabrication of the discs, but with no resources whatsoever to purchase materials and continue pay in wages to the teams of laborers contracted to execute the larger work areas such as the petals and the gardens. Hence the unfortunate necessity of laying off workers and canceling orders for materials which are in the pipeline.

We have faced many crises at Matrimandir over the years, but we have never had to cut back like this before. We have scraped the bottom of the barrel more than once, but never has it seemed so empty as now!

Matrimandir, its completion, its full realization is a certitude. It is also an act of faith. Our present predicament is, no doubt, Her Grace—another chance for us to reflect on our modus operandi, to examine the work in greater detail, to streamline where possible, and to consolidate our energies and close ranks as we call to Her for Her guidance and help.

Matrimandir has to be. We all have a part to play, we can all help in our own way. Let each of us look inside ourselves and see what we can do to help at this crucial juncture. The answer lies within!

Amount needed per month to complete the work at optimum pace: Rs. 25 lakhs. Amount needed per month to cover the bare necessities: Rs. 10 lakhs.

—The Matrimandir team

Contributions for the Matrimandir may be sent to Auroville International USA, P.O. Box 162489, Sacramento, California 95816, USA.

CENTER TO CENTER

Study Circle active in Manhattan

Since the early 1950s, there have been Sri Aurobindo study groups in Manhattan. Some of the people who have held them were Eleanor Montgomery, Muriel Spanier, Sam Spanier, Eric Hughes, and Anie Nunnally.

The present manifestation, called the New York Study Circle of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, meets monthly for a reading, study of a selected work (currently *Savitri*), and meditation. All are welcome. The group meets in the home of Gary Boxer and Miriam Belov (who visited the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and Auroville in February 1995 for a short but powerful visit).

Mr. and Mrs. Subarao, long-time disciples who are now back in India, were very active and often hosted meetings while they were in the U.S. Mrs. Subarao was a gracious hostess and we all enjoyed her delicious cooking and beautiful quilting. Mr. Subarao is former head of the State Bank of India.

The Study Circle has facilitated programs over the past few years that have been offered by several speakers. Kailas Jhaveri and Richard Pierson gave talks at the Consulate of India while visiting from the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, and last fall, Dr. Karan Singh, a disciple and former Indian ambassador to the U.S., also spoke at the Consulate. He gave his talk on October 24th, the 50th birthday of the United Nations, and the sun shone warmly that day. Many people in the area helped arrange the event.

Tom O'Brien drove Dr. Singh up to Matagiri where he met with Sam Spanier, Eric Hughes, and Wendy and Julian Lines to walk the land. Dr. Singh gave an evening talk at a private home to 40 people. He was deeply touched by the experience of Matagiri and gave a heartfelt perspective on its importance. Everyone who attended was grateful to be there. Connie Buckley, Rudy Phillips, and Miriam Belov were active in arranging the evening.

Also in October, Auroville was honored by Friends of the United Nations. Meenakshi arrived in New York City to receive this award for the community and gave a poetry reading for the study circle.

At the end of December, Stephen Phillips, a disciple and a professor at the University of Texas, gave a presentation on *Savitri*.

The group would also like to share the news of the passing of Lalit Fullman, a long-time disciple who was given his name by the Mother. Lalit died suddenly in December in New York City. The most recent sharing we had with him was on the August 15th meeting. Lalit arrived towards the end of the meditation, bringing with him bags filled with mementos from the Ashram, where he had lived from the mid-60s to the early 70s. Everything was there: handwritten notes from the Mother to him, cards from others, photos, books, blessing packets. It was as if a great, glorious golden light entered the room and stayed for a long time as Lalit happily shared his stories and remembrances. He was a true artist and seeker and will be missed.

For more information on the New York Study Circle of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, contact Miriam Belov or Gary Boxer, 124 West 60th St., New York, NY 10023; (212) 956-5683.

—Miriam Belov

Miriam Belov has spoken about Mother and Sri Aurobindo at the New York City Open Center, and is on the board of the George Nakashima Altar for Peace project. She does private healing and psychic work and is happy to be of service to people in the yoga.



Cincinnati center established

A center being established in the Cincinnati area is dedicated to the pursuance of the teachings of Sri Aurobindo. The chief purpose of this center, whose full name is "GNOSIS: Knowledge in Action," is the practical implementation of the ways of Integral Yoga in the diverse corridors of activity that make up the world we live in.

Currently, the emphasis is on the formation of small study groups in which both specific spiritual practices as well as the application of these practices to life situations will be taught. An important direction is the idea of providing this service within the confines of the workplace itself, emphasizing its direct application to the work being done there by participants. The conducting of workshops in hospital situations, introducing to doctors and patients the healing powers of the breath when combined with concentration, is another area of immediate interest.

The center hopes to establish a genuine rapport with the Sri Aurobindo community in the United States as time goes on.

For information, contact David Fiedler, GNOSIS, 687B Waycross Rd., Cincinnati, OH 45240; (513) 742-4289.

—David Fiedler, director

East-West Cultural Center expands program

In existence since 1953, the East-West Cultural Center was started by the Sanskrit scholar Dr. Judith Tyberg, better known as Jyoti Priya (she received that name from Sri Aurobindo himself in 1947). Today the center offers two Sanskrit classes each week and may soon begin a third: intermediate Sanskrit.

"The relics of Sri Aurobindo were granted to the center in 1991," says center president Debashish Banerji. "Ever since then I've seen the center grow. Our meditation hall is a reliquary to Sri Aurobindo. There is an atmosphere here of sadhana, something strong that becomes palpable in everyone's lives."

The center is progressing all the time with the addition of new events and study groups. In addition to its programs, the center holds special darshan days, and a group of devotees come for gardening and other karma yoga tasks.

For information, write to the East-West Cultural Center, 12329 Marshall St., Culver City, CA 90230; call (310) 390-9083; or send e-mail to ewcc@earthlink.net.—Janis Coker

The finite cannot become infinite unless it perceives its own secret infinity and is drawn by it or towards it; nor can the symbol-being, unless it glimpses, loves and pursues the Real-being in itself, overcome by its own strength the limits of its apparent nature.—Sri Aurobindo, "The Fullness of Yoga—in Condition"

CHRONICLES AND RECOLLECTIONS

Amrita-da

(September 19, 1895–January 16, 1969)

by Satadal

In a village about 15 km northwest of Pondicherry, a boy called Aravamudachari heard the name *Aurobindo* along with other great names like *Bal Gangadhar Tilak*, *Bepin Chandra Pal*, and *Lala Lajpatrai*. It was the time when independence, foreign rule, and slavery were the cries that filled the skies, and those names reached the ears of the village boy too, being continually talked of in that village and all around.

But strangely enough (and probably not all that strange after all, since decreed by the Divine), Aravamudachari's heart and soul were caught by only one name—just to hear the name *Aurobindo* was enough. It remained a mystery to the boy for many days to come as to why that one name alone out of the four touched him so deeply.

Then, a few years later, he came to Pondicherry for his studies. Sri Aurobindo also arrived there in 1910. What a coincidence! The teenager was full of joy, thrilled with delight. A strong desire arose in him that he had to see Sri Aurobindo. Day after day, night after night, it was his one thought *a la* Paul Eluard [trans. from French]:

Upon the notebooks of my school . . . upon the pages already read . . . upon the golden pictures . . . upon the jungle and the desert . . . upon the marvels of the night . . . upon the bits of the sky . . . upon the field and the horizon . . . upon each blast of the dawn . . . upon the moss of the clouds . . . upon the scintillating forms . . . upon the awakened track . . . upon the lighted lamp . . . upon the fruit cut into two . . . upon my gentle greedy dog . . . upon my doormat . . . upon the assembly of bodies in affection . . . upon the window of surprise . . . upon my shelter shattered . . . upon the absence detached . . .

Upon the health regained
Upon the risk overcome
Upon the unremembered hope
I write your name

And by the power of a word
I begin a new life
I am born to know you,
To name you

Liberty

. . . but *Liberty* was replaced, or rather surpassed, by *Aurobindo*.

Finally, one day at about six in the evening, Amrita and his friend Krishnaswami Chettiar proceeded towards Sri Aurobindo's



house on Mission Street close to Duplex Street extending backward down to the Rue de la Cantine on the east. When they reached the house they found the door bolted.

They hesitatingly knocked at the door. All of a sudden, the door opened and was left ajar. Sri Aurobindo had come quietly and turned back immediately as the door opened. They did not have a glimpse of his face. But in that fading twilight, only his long hair hanging gracefully down his back and his indescribably beautiful small feet caught the boy's eye! His heart throbbed within as though he had been lifted up into the region of the gods!

Then followed some years of preparation, "a pilgrimage to Sri Aurobindo," when each of his acts, each event of his life "had become, as it were, offerings in the sacrifice done unknowingly" by him; and in the core of his heart burnt a living faith incessant and unwavering, that somehow some day he would have Sri Aurobindo's darshan.

He had darshan at last on the 15th of August, 1913, and felt within that Sri Aurobindo had accepted him; he went home with the image of Sri Aurobindo installed in the *sanctum sanctorum* of his being. This boy, Aravamudachari, was none but our beloved Amrita-da.

What is *amrita*? It is nectar, the divine potion. When you take a sip of it, you transcend death, that is to say, become immortal. It was certainly true in Amrita-da's case—he was so sweet to one and all, whether an Ashramite or a visitor, that one felt like saying: "Oh! He is really sweetness personified, the nectar-sweetness, justifying his name." Who can ever forget such a sweet personality as his? To all those who had any occasion to come in personal contact with him, his face beaming with a smile remains ever fresh in their memory, and he remains *Amrita*, the immortal, even in death, even without a physical body.

When I came to the Ashram for the first time in 1963 as a visitor, I was moved to the core at this unique creation of the Mother, i.e., the Ashram, and fell in love at first sight with the giant twins of the Mother: Nolini and Amrita, knowledge and devotion condensed respectively, so to say, in two human forms. If one was august and aloof, the other was so pleasantly near.



Street in Pondicherry near the Ashram; Golconde Guest House on the right.
(Photo by Wayne Bloomquist)

"He was a frank unpretentious friend . . ." who "always kept himself in tune with the Mother's judgments," as Amal Kiran, his close friend, puts it.

During the 20s and up to the early 40s, the general conviction in the Ashram was that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother would completely transform and divinize their bodies with their Integral Yoga and that those who had joined them wholeheartedly would do the same. Amrita-da used to visit Amal Kiran in the then-called Guest House at 41 Rue Francois Martin, often to practice typing on the latter's typewriter. "Once when he was typing," Amal writes, "a funeral passed in the street. In a low voice he said, 'I feel that such a thing won't happen to me.'" And rightly Amal felt that those words were not "vacuous or vainglorious."

Since Amal Kiran became intimate with Amrita-da, let us have a look into some of Amrita-da's other aspects through Amal's recollections:

I had observed that he had considerable reliance on my judgment in several matters. He valued especially my so-called artistic sense. Thus, in rearranging his office room's furniture, he made it a point to consult me. He also trusted me to pluck out grey hairs skillfully from his moustache with a tweezer.

I was frequently in his room, often exchanging jokes. He was a witty chap. I recollect a quip of his when a woman who often came to the Ashram in the company of a man arrived accompanied by a child as well. Amrita said, "Formerly there were two of you. Now the two have become three!" He had a half joke about the word "nectar": "Is it a drink that tars the neck?" He was witty with the Mother too. I have heard that once the Mother gave him a small slap. He smiled and said, "Luckily I shaved before coming to you. Otherwise your palm might have got hurt by my bristle!"

Referring to his earliest contact with Sri Aurobindo, Amrita mentioned how he used to come from school to Sri Aurobindo and at times lie on a mat, with Sri Aurobindo sitting by him and gently caressing his body with his hand. Amrita recollected a special odor coming from Sri Aurobindo's body. In later years the Mother mentioned a faint lotus-like scent emanating from it.

A recollection by Amrita at a somewhat subsequent but pre-yogic period figured a young girl who lived in a neighboring house. Youthful Amrita grew fond of her and talked to Sri Aurobindo of his fervent friendship with her.

Sri Aurobindo asked him, "Have you kissed her?"

"No," replied the bashful youth.

"Why not? Be bold and go and kiss her." Evidently Sri Aurobindo felt his disciple needed a bit of life experience. Afterwards, when a movement started among the youngsters around Sri Aurobindo for an experiment in yoga, Sri Aurobindo told the romantic youngster to stop all intimacies.



Amrita muttered to himself, "How cruel to pull me back now!"

But he had to obey. It was also at the pre-yoga time that he learned French from Sri Aurobindo. He told me how Sri Aurobindo taught him to pronounce the French *ou*, meaning the English *or* and, when accented over the *u*, *where*. The teacher said, "Form your mouth into a small pout as if you were preparing to kiss a girl." Indeed a Frenchy way to teach French!

More serious lessons too were taught. Once Amrita was watching a spider's web in which some insects had been caught. He started amusing himself by throwing some ants into the web. Sri Aurobindo saw him and forcefully forbade him to go on with the game. It was a warning against thoughtlessness and wanton cruelty towards lower creatures that Amrita never forgot.

Connected with Amrita is a special eating experiment by Sri Aurobindo—one with opium. Sri Aurobindo asked him to fetch from the bazaar a substantial lump of this stuff. Opium is usually eaten in small quantities as either a stimulant, intoxicant, or narcotic. Sri Aurobindo ate the whole lump brought to him with no perceptible harmful effect. Amrita saw Sri Aurobindo going merrily on in spite of the abnormal amount of the poppy-product consumed.

Once Amrita proved to be an "innocent" in social contacts too. He sent a letter to Madame Vigie in folded form without an envelope. She expressed her surprise to the Mother about this impoliteness on his part. The Mother put him wise about social niceties.

During several years of the Ashram's early period, the Mother put together as chums Amrita and the chief engineer of the Ashram at that time—Chandulal, who was quite a character both in physical appearance, being slightly deformed, and in working capacity since he could give himself to non-stop work almost the whole of the working day. He often called Amrita his brother and sometimes hugged him. Amrita always took the relationship with a twinkle of humor.

What on the whole struck everybody about Amrita was not only his extreme devotion to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, but also his sweet nature. He was ever ready with sympathy for whoever brought him a tale of woe. And he would be glad to convey to the Mother her children's needs or grievances.

With me Amrita-da repeated only one joke many times: "Satadal, I wonder when will you become Sahasradal!" And he would be all smiles. Should I call it a joke? Who knows, it might have some deeper significance.

He was physically not very fit and sound, but he used to compensate the shortcomings with his wit and humor. Here are two anecdotes, told by Parichand-da during his talks with me:

Once we assembled in the courtyard and the Mother was throwing toffees to us as she stood on the terrace of Dyuman's

office-cum-bedroom. As she threw one towards Amrita he extended both hands to catch it but failed. Then the Mother asked him, "Amrita, how is it that you rushed with both hands extended just to catch a small toffee?"

"I wanted to catch the thing behind the toffee," he immediately retorted.

There was a bracket on the wall of the Mother's interview room and many used to get hurt by it. So the matter was brought to the Mother's notice with a request to allow the bracket to be removed. The Mother did not allow the removal of the bracket, saying that everyone should become more conscious so as to avoid the knock. After some days Amrita had a good knock on the head and gave a shriek.

"Amrita, what happened?" asked the Mother.

"Becoming conscious, Mother!" he replied.

In fact his whole life was an example of becoming more and more conscious, guided at each step by the dual incarnation of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

In his reminiscences (*Old Long Since*) he speaks of his "life's pilgrimage" as an "interminable flaming journey" where "the series of small changes" were brought about in him by the action of light. When Himansu-da (Himansu Neogi) requested Nolini-da to write a preface for these reminiscences translated into Bengali by Amallesh Bhattacharya to be published in book form, Nolini-da's reply was so deeply sweet and full of *rasa* at the same time: "Let me better remain silent. Only this I can say: This is Amrita."

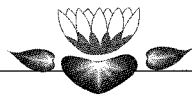
The book was published on Amrita's birthday, the 19th of September, 1969, eight months after he passed away, with the above words of Nolini-da, followed by one of his talks on Amrita-da as a sort of introduction:

I am going to read out a small poem by Amrita. This is the last bit of his writings, but that is an occasion only for expressing some pinches of the secret mystery of his soul's pilgrimage. In fact that is more or less the picture of pilgrimage of all souls towards the Divine.

Amrita named these writings *Visions and Voices*, and I am going to take this opportunity to tell you how they were



Beach Road in Pondicherry on the Bay of Bengal. (Photo by Wayne Bloomquist)



written. Indeed these are literally visions and voices and not just poetics or allegory.

Nearly half a century ago, when we were more or less young, and Amrita at least was fresh green, we used to have an evening stroll on the beach. We used to go up to the end of the jetty to sit as if on the sea for a talk or individual meditation. One evening when Amrita was sitting still—he told me all this afterwards—he felt that he was hearing a voice coming from beyond the sea, from the distant horizon . . . coming nearer and nearer . . . at first faint and soft, but as it drew near it became more clear and loud. As if a sonorous message was coming to him on the wings of the wind, sweet and rhythmic. As if someone recited to him a whole poem. After hearing the whole of it, he hurried home to write it down. This was the first poem with which he started his book, *Visions and Voices*.

Another day, when we were on the same table around Sri Aurobindo (in the Guest House), suddenly Amrita said that he was hearing a message. He went downstairs and closed himself in his room. After some time he returned with a complete poem written by him, and about the poem he said that many words in it were completely new to him—he did not know their meanings. His brain turned into an instrument, so to say, for the external manifestation of something.

Besides hearing voices, he got the eyes to see visions of things and happenings as if on a celluloid screen. He had put these later in black and white as vividly as possible. Some of these were included in his book, the only book written by him in English. The poem of his which I am going to read out now is suffused with that dual mystery of visions and voices.

So saying, Nolini-da read out the poem “Pilgrim Way” by Amrita-da which starts with “a pilgrim in search of his destined companion . . .” and culminates in finding and complete self-giving thus:

My little vanishing “I” trudges
still on, on. The moving mansion
glides on the wide, wide track
towards “the Dawn” proclaimed
under the pale grey sky, the faint
few stars disappearing
under the broad everlasting day.
Voices are heard singing in chorus:
Of the Mother’s substance we are,
In Her Light we see, we live,
In Her Strength we act,
In Her we become . . .

Then Nolini-da said, “When I had read out my translation of his poem, you know what he commented? He said that it was difficult to differentiate between the original and the translation! Such was his charming modesty and unique sense of humor.”

Amrita writes in his memoir: “On July 28, 1914 the First World War broke out. On August 15, the first issue of the *Arya* saw the light of day in English and French versions. In this 1914, indeed, the foundation was laid of my close contact with Sri Aurobindo. And in this same year I began feeling like a simple child the Mother’s continuous affection.” This “simple child,” when prostrated at the lotus feet of the Master for the first time, “lay there body, life, and mind all together a single block.” Sri Aurobindo touched him with his flower-like hands and made him stand up, and he burst into sobs as he clasped the sole lord of his being.

Thus consecrated, this “being,” a very special being indeed, continued his pilgrimage throughout his life as “Amrita” and continues to move on and on towards the Infinite and the Eternal and probably now reflects:

I have drunk deep of God’s own liberty . . .
Abolishing death and time my nature lives
In the deep heart of Immortality.

Satadal lives in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry, India.

The story of Matagiri, part II

by Sam Spanier

This is the edited transcript of the second half of a talk Sam gave at the 1994 All USA Meeting (AUM) in Phoenix, New York. The first half was published in the Summer 1995 issue of Collaboration.

Each summer then for two or three months, I came to Matagiri by myself and painted rooms and cleaned up. It wasn’t exactly the way it looks now. Eric would come up on weekends whenever he could, and a few other people came to help as well.

At the end of 1967 (because I hadn’t known when it was going to happen), Mother’s voice came to me again: “New York is dead. You can leave now.” That was remarkable; I had a job! But, she said, “You cannot go there [to Woodstock] by yourself,”—this was very important—“there must be a trinity.” So I turned to my friend Eric, and I said, “Eric, Mother’s told me there must be a trinity. Will you join me in going?” Eric said, “Well, I’m not sure, I’ll have to think about it.” Eric doesn’t like to move from wherever he’s comfortable, all of you know that very well. But about a month later he decided: “Yes, I’ll join you.” But we still needed a third person.

One day I was leaving the apartment (at that time Eric and I had an apartment on Greenwich Avenue). I was opening the door of my building and I hit a man—accidentally, of course! The man turned and he said, “Sam!”

“Oh, my God, how are you?”



"I've been looking for you. Do you remember a few years ago you told me about Sri Aurobindo and the Mother? Well, I've been reading and I—I must—" and you know, he got all kind of . . . he said, "Are you still involved?"

"Yes."

"Oh, I want to be!"

"Well, we're starting a community and we need a third person."

"I'm your third person!"

So this young man joined us in 1968, and the three of us came to what is now known as Matagiri and brought our belongings. We didn't have any real money—all in all, we had very little. We knew that this was to be the way it was, but we didn't know how we were supposed to do things. And so each day things were revealed, not necessarily by Mother saying them, but . . . the second day I said to Eric (because Eric reads very well, many of you have heard him read), "Why don't you read something from Sri Aurobindo to us?"

So Eric began his readings, which lasted for about 15 or 18 years. Those readings, by the way, have all been recorded; Eric is now on tape, but that's another story. All of those readings would be valuable: all the works of Sri Aurobindo, some of the Mother's. And you can also hear the dogs barking, and you can hear everything that went on in the room, because the tape took it all in.

Interestingly enough, people ask us, how did it prosper, how did it begin? We had a tiny mailbox, as we still do, and we just put "Matagiri" there . . . First of all, we were moving into an area where we didn't know what the people thought of things yogic, and we didn't want to be considered strange, so we were very low-keyed.

But believe it or not (and of course those of you who know the area will believe it), every day someone walked up the driveway: "Is this a spiritual community? Can I join?" I mean, people came and came and came. We didn't have many places to put people up. So we began with three, and then it was four and six.

There are a few people who lived there for many years who are sitting in the audience—many of you have lived there on and off at different times. So many people who have come to Matagiri have left to do the work and make it grow in different ways.

Remember that we began almost instantaneously with Auroville. And what we began to see over the years, because we were always in touch, was that on a very small scale, all of the problems that were existing in Auroville were paralleled in our community. It was an extremely interesting time.

The community was based on the principles of the yoga, and since we didn't know exactly what to do, we took the simple principles of the Ashram. We lived brahmacharya. There was no smoking. There was no drinking. There was only vegetarianism. That is how we began. We did very well for that for many, many years, until we didn't. And I won't go into the immediate stories, because it's not terribly important. But it did change at a particular point.



Sam Spanier, 1979, surveying the far horizon at Matagiri.

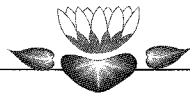
Then about a year ago, Matagiri was approached by the Foundation for World Education (of which I'm a member and was one of the founding members, along with many people here). In a very loving gesture, they came and asked us if we would give over the property to them. They said that because Eric and I are the elder statesmen of the place, we would have a place to live for the rest of our lives. So that is what has happened.

Matagiri, the little enclave, the few buildings, Eric and I now have that as our home. (We never had a private home. There are people there today. People come even when we're not there. We're always having guests, we're always having questions asked, we're always having telephone calls. We're always acting as a center, whether we want to or not. Even if we said we didn't want to, it would happen. It just is the way it is; our life has been like that.)

And now a wonderful thing is occurring. The Foundation has some beautiful and creative ideas of how to use the land in another, second movement of Matagiri. And I should say that in those slide presentations that were given [see last issue], all of this was given too. I don't mean to sound like a smart-aleck, but I knew that was coming, and you can ask Eric privately. But anyway, there's going to be another step in the life of Matagiri and it's a glorious one.

The approach to the new Matagiri, or the second Matagiri, or Matagiri number two, whatever you want to call it, will have a new driveway. And we will use the mountain, which has not really been taken advantage of, because we own the total mountain there—or at least the Foundation owns it. So that is the next step that is going to occur, and I think it's a beautiful continuance.

And that is my story.



Little house in the woods: Matagiri's front door.

Oh, the name of Matagiri was given to us by the Mother. I designed the little symbol, and Krishnalal straightened it out. I sent it to Mother and I said, "Mother, may we use this symbol, and will you give us a name?" She sent it back with "Matagiri" and, as she often did, wrote "Blessings" and put the date down. So we consider the date she put down the commencement of the life of Matagiri. *Mata* means mother, *giri* means mountain: Mother's mountain. And that is what we actually felt we were doing; we were dedicating this mountain to her.

Like so many of you, we were privileged because we had many loving friends and contacts in the Ashram. I have cards from Mother this big with her signature across; for those of us who are disciples it's very touching and beautiful to have them. I have actually put a few on the altar.

Voila, so . . . One of the things Mother told me was, as I said, "You can be a link between East and West." Now when I thought of it later, she didn't say, "You *will* be a link," she said, "You *can* be a link." There's lot between you *can* and you *will*. But what became a realized truth, and the proof is here, is that we have been a link between East and West. It has been a place of pil-

grimage for many people—a lot of you remember Gopal Bhattacharya, who lived with us for many years, this absolutely beautiful soul . . . we have had many people from the East coming, with a great love for and dedication to the Mother; recognizing that the place was dedicated in that way, their feeling was very loving, and still is.

If anybody wants to ask any questions, you're certainly welcome. It's almost time, and I think we're going on to the next. I do tell lots of stories—these are only tiny ones. I have begun to record them, because people have been asking . . .

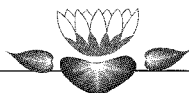
But I will offer just one tiny more story that will really tell you something.

One of the things that was interesting for me was that Mother said "I know your atmosphere for a very long time." I suppose there was a certain pride; you think, "Oh well, I'm very special because she knows me," but whatever she did . . . when I was ten years old I had a vision. And in this vision I saw a man sitting on the ground and leaning against a whitewashed wall. He was in an Indian outfit and had a beard. I didn't understand the outfit because, as I say, I came from Brooklyn and we didn't see things like that. But when I saw the vision—I had other visions in my life, but when I saw that, the thought that came into this little boy's head was, "That's what I will look like when I'm an old man." I thought it was a lovely thing—I come from long-lived people, so to be an old man like that seemed natural. My mother is 95, and my great-great grandfather lived to be 115. So when I saw this old man, I thought to myself, "That's what I'll look like when I get to be an old man."

Well, many years later, I saw the picture of Sri Aurobindo and that's who it was. I said, "Oh, that wasn't me, that was Sri Aurobindo." But I didn't know that until many years later. In 1952, when Ann Harrison sent me *The Life Divine*, I said, "Are you kidding? You want me to read this heavy book? Never this long—no, I can't do that," and I set it aside. Absolutely set it aside. It wasn't for another ten years that I went to the Ashram. I began to meditate with the thought of yoga, but I would never read that book. (I have now, of course, but I wouldn't think of it at the time.)

The only reason I tell this is because for all of us who have been drawn by Sri Aurobindo, the connection is much more involved and deeper than we suspect.

I should say, because I'm doing all the talking and I usually do—you know, Eric doesn't do the talking—that all of this work, and very intense work, was done and still is done by Eric. We have made a remarkable team, because I don't like to do certain things that he loves to do, and he doesn't like to do certain things that I do; so we have been brought together, and we really function as a remarkable companion brotherhood. It's really quite amazing. You might not know it, but we have been friends now since 1959, which is a very long time for anybody to be friends; but to be living as disciples, brahmacharya, is quite remarkable. I can tell you that.

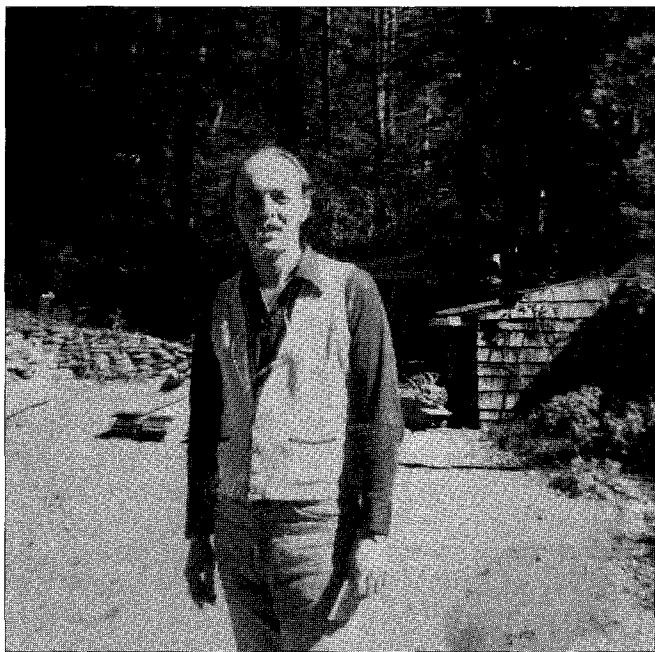


In any case, as you know, he was the writer for ten years of *Collaboration*. Eric did all of *Collaboration* for ten years, every single word that ever went into it. Of course, everybody who lived at Matagiri and people who came helped *Collaboration*, because we were so poor, we didn't even pay to have them collated. We used to do it, and we sent out 6,000 free copies, 6,000 free copies. We never had much money, but if we had a little bit, it went into *Collaboration*, so it was a real service and giving.

And Eric is actually—maybe it's my prejudice, but if you want to know anything about the yoga, and where it is in the books, or what Mother said, or where she said it, you only have to ask him and he can tell you in a snap. He can tell you and does often. Many times people call and say, "Can you tell me when Sri Aurobindo said this?" Eric tells them. You know, it goes on and on. "So is it true? Isn't that true?"

I haven't told this even to anybody, but you know we had a business where we used to sell the paper for the Ashram. Well, that was sold last July, and the little building—I had hoped that it would be there presentable to everybody, but it isn't finished yet—is going to be an art gallery. And since you all know that I am a painter, I will take the privilege of being the first artist to be shown. After that, we will have other people shown as well. It's very sweet, and you have to see what we've done. It's really quite amazing. It's turning out to be a lovely little room. And it would have been wasteful, since the paper business had moved, if there had been nothing to take its place. So the art gallery came as a thought—and since most people in the yoga seem to be very open to the arts, it would be nice.

So, thank you so much.



Eric Hughes takes a break from editing *Collaboration*, 1979.

SALON

In "Salon," *Collaboration* readers discuss a variety of issues in relation to *Integral Yoga* and the spiritual endeavor. Future topics and deadlines are: "Leaving" (May 1), "Meeting Mother" (Aug. 1), and "How I came into the yoga" (Dec. 1).

Readers discuss "Aging"

These are not the golden years

At the age of more than fourscore years, I can forthrightly declare that these are not the "golden years" as I was led to believe at an earlier age. It would be more appropriate to describe this period of life as "the age of courage." In the days of our youth we lived with comparative abandon, but in the period of old age we consciously or subconsciously understand that the Ultimate Reality has become a factor to be faced.

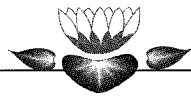
Although I may be regarded by members of my family as a venerable patriarch—a status which I should enjoy—I nevertheless encounter painful moments when I see my mind becoming intermittently dysfunctional. I attempt to laugh these moments off when speaking with my contemporaries, but deep inside my being I seek a sympathetic understanding of the fallibilities and dilemmas I encounter daily. Perhaps this is a weakness. Yet the sharing of this weakness could bring the other person to a point of my own reality.

The new technological world has crashed in upon me and in some ways I have a sense that I am being dehumanized. Creatures like VoiceMail and the constant instructions of the telephone to "press 1, then press 2," etc., etc. have become baneful and a thorn in my flesh.

I often look back to my early years and remember the people who were instrumental in the development of my thinking. As a lad, the person I loved the most was my maternal grandfather. He taught me much and molded my concepts of what was meaningful in life. Now that I am a grandparent, I yearn to share my experiences and fundamental values with my grandchildren and to bring to them a picture of the historic periods through which I lived. However, I find that like many other grandparents, my grandchildren reside somewhere on the other side of America. And so as the years fly by at supersonic speed and the ravages of time takes their toll on mind and body, I feel frustrated that my connection with the younger generation of the family has not been fully realized. Distance has virtually annulled the substance of this fundamental relationship.

Old age is a period of accommodation and adjustment to the new and to the velocity of constant change. In a broad and perhaps scientific sense, aging is a part and parcel of the whole evolutionary process that cannot be postponed, deferred, or stopped any more than one can stop the ocean waves from encroaching upon the shore.

Some may look forward to old age as a period of relaxation—swinging in a hammock that stretches from one large oak to



The betrayed

Our eyes cloud over with memories,
Our brains cling to opinions and justifications
While violent emotions thunder within us.
And she, target of this searing storm,
Has no protection except that of youth —
A canopy under which not so long ago
We also huddled.

Because she has not yet learned
As we have
To armor against the need
For tender affection,
The full outrage of our psychic cloudbursts
Strikes her full on the face.

We are kind to infants and the old
Because they are equally far from our time.
But we don't like to remember
From the inside
Being 13.

—Marta Belen (1974)

another. That is a personal choice. For me that has not happened.

I was always active in areas of protest for the betterment of the human condition. My busy professional life, as a member of the New York bar, was not an impediment or restraint in this area. I found that I was able to support my family and still remain a part of the human race in a meaningful way. Aging has, of course, limited my physical activities. (Again, the ravages of time persist.) My moral fervor remains, and my support for such activities comes from a different source.

I began this essay by mentioning the Ultimate Reality that the elderly face. This was of little concern to me as a youth. Now it must be confronted with dignity and courage.

Death breathes down the neck of the elderly. It is one's constant companion. The defense mechanism within us says, "This is your friend—be not afraid." To fear the inevitable would produce an irreparable neurosis. The human spirit fears not death as an apocalyptic experience. Beliefs are created that make one feel easier about what happens after death. Of course, such beliefs are not empirically provable. Thus, the belief in life after death may provide assurance to some that all is not lost. And so the human spirit overcomes logic and reason and repudiates death as the end.

Despite all the trials and tribulations of life, I, as an elder, have the satisfaction in looking upon my past years as having meaning in more than a personal sense.

—Joseph Spanier, Boulder, Colorado

Obsession with youth is misplaced

What's with us? Age is beautiful if steeped in character, depth, and decency. Soul-wisdom imprinted on body, its grace and charisma lambent in each atom and space: how can that be repugnant? One must know how to age and how to die in order to recognize one's inalienable immortality. For from that vantage of transcendent Being, there is only passage, not death. Only the saturation of matter with consciousness through our condensed inhabitation thereof before we release out material back into the universal matrix, after refining it over a lifespan, the better to prepare it for more overt manifestations of Spirit.

Age? What age! In a timeless continuum? Living, we permeate our material stuff with consciousness, however unknowingly: it breaks down in the long run despite its resilience, because out of sync with the rest of our inner development.

It's the same for mind- and life-energy bodies, as opposed to the soul-body's velocity of centralizing experience. Thus, we return to the universal matrices of mind, life, and matter—the material now become inadequate, but always slightly more evolved—and refashion another medium and combination for further experience and growth. It is in direct proportion to the penetrating effulgence of the soul's immortality that the material that comes overtly into contact with it begins to develop similar characteristics by contagion.

I last met Mother in February 1973 when she was 95, nine months before she left her body. I had already seen some of the photographs that had been taken when she had been dressed up in a red sari and made to wear a heavy gold crown. Perhaps she did it out of compassion for a well-meaning devotee. It did not become her at all and detracted from her natural beauty . . .

But did I even think of all that, though she was now normally dressed, when she pressed my hands in hers and looked steadily and deeply into my eyes for what seemed to be forever? In feeling the loving pressure of her hands on my head, in thrilling to the long caresses of fingers charged with a forcefully flowing, densely liquid luminous energy, did I even have the stupidity or presence of mind to think of her as being old or unbeautiful?

I have seen other old faces, in the Sahara Desert for example, where the weathered lines were the marks of fortitude ever looking unflinchingly into the unknown, unafraid, unswerving in purpose through storm and vicissitude.

The obsession we have with youth is a misplaced one, and symptomatic of the artificial condition of not being irrevocably centered through the paradigmatic shift that occurs when consciousness breaks the shackles of its identity with body, and turns back on its corporeal sheath with a transcendent compassion, the calm perspective of a materially grounded Self-Eternity.

The debility attendant upon age is also a passage, an askesis of compassion toward a body that has given itself to us for our work over its entire useful life with very few demands, and held up its end of the bargain even though we were often out gallivanting. In older civilizations, we find a profound respect for



age, though seldom with a clear understanding of the reasons therefore. There is a wisdom there, even if hidden under the folds of rigid tradition.

To twist an aphorism of Sri Aurobindo to the theme of this essay, one may say: "There is nothing but Beauty and its becoming." Let's set aside this superficial preoccupation with aging and concentrate on those things that Matter.

—Arvind Habbu, Kansas City, Missouri

Aging consciously

The conscious older human has already made most of his mistakes, learned from them, and not repeated them. To a certain extent he has purified his senses, curbed his ego and desires. He is ready to take a leap into the future.

Consciousness must necessarily be the objective of the aging process; and consciousness does not age. It is forever young, forever pure. The more conscious we are, the younger we grow, despite the physical changes that come with advancing years.

The path of Integral Yoga with its object of perfection and transformation proceeds step by step, level by level. The seeker on this path needs to live as long as possible to bring as much consciousness as possible into all levels of the being.

Usually, in the death process, the sheaths of mind, vital, and body are gradually absorbed into their corresponding planes, while the psychic being assimilates its experiences and reposes prior to taking another body. The teaching reveals that the part of the being that is organized around the divine center does not decompose after death but remains intact, to be reborn.

While in life, the more the levels of body, vital, and mind are purified and surrendered, the more likely the conscious portions are to survive intact through the death and rebirth process. On an evolutionary scale, this should save time, so that instead of taking aeons to bring about the supramental transformation, the time factor can be reduced. Sri Aurobindo has said perhaps as few as 300 years.

We are speaking here of a life that through the years becomes more and more organized around the divine center, purified, surrendered.

For that, a healthy body is the vehicle. To keep the body healthy as long as possible so it may do as much of the yoga as possible in one lifetime is our goal. To keep the body free of contamination when the very air we breathe is full of pollutants is difficult for man on earth today. The fewer chemicals we ingest through food or other sources, the better chance we have for longevity. Organically grown foods, little or no meat or processed foods can keep the body clean inside.

We know the Mother emphasizes exercise and sports. The body should be supple and plastic, not stiff and rigid.

Openness and relaxation of the emotional being are further prerequisites. Fear, anxiety, anything causing constriction create the conditions for disease to enter. These conditions make holes in the aura. In the workplace or the home, we may absorb the ill-



It is not the number of years you have lived that makes you old. You become old when you stop progressing. As soon as you feel you have done what you had to do, as soon as you think you know what you ought to know, as soon as you want to sit and enjoy the results of your effort, with the feeling you have worked enough in life, then at once you become old and begin to decline. When, on the contrary, you are convinced that what you know is nothing compared to all that remains to be known, when you feel that what you have done is just the starting point of what remains to be done, when you see the future like an attractive sun shining with innumerable possibilities yet to be achieved, then you are young, howsoever many are the years you have passed upon earth, young and rich with all the realisations of tomorrow. And if you do not want your body to fail you, avoid wasting your energies in useless agitation. Whatever you do, do it in a quiet and composed poise. In peace and silence is the greatest strength.—The Mother, message for All India Radio on the occasion of her 90th birthday

Remain young. Never stop striving towards perfection.—The Mother, message for Jan. 1, 1968

ness, negativity, or bad vibes of another person directly into our aura without being aware of it until too late. Surrounding ourselves with the Mother's light and protection can ward off impurities or accidents before they have a chance to manifest in us.

Those who have been around the elderly have observed their mental rigidity. They may watch the news and know what is going on in the world around them, but their lifestyle and belief systems remain as they were formed in childhood, adolescence, or young adulthood. Their topics of conversation are rooted in the past. Mentally they live in the past. Their attention becomes ingrown



and their focus is on their immediate needs and their pains.

Observing what happens to those who age unconsciously can teach us by reverse example what not to do.

The Integral Yoga demands that we keep our minds sharp and alert, not only to events, processes, and trends of the material world, but also to a rich inner life in which we become more and more aware on inner planes.

Aging is a huge challenge and takes a lot of work inwardly and outwardly.

Perhaps we can learn to see ourselves and other people as forever young and immortal consciousnesses instead of as aging bodies. Over and over the Mother has remarked that those around her viewed her as "old," "decrepit," and she was none of that. They were not ready to see her as young and transforming.

As we learn to view ourselves as young and transforming, it will be easier for others to view us that way, too, and hasten for the earth the supramental change.

—Janis Coker, Safety Harbor, Florida

Casual reflections

There is a story within Buddhism of the Buddha-to-be's sight of three evils: disease, old age, and death. To acquire the power to overcome these, he abandoned his life of pleasure in the palace of his father and became a mystic seeker.

The deterioration of the body as we age does indeed seem to be an evil. But it carries with it certain advantages for spiritual progress. The vital ego (I speak of it while having practically no distance on it at all) winds itself around the capacities of the body. As these diminish, apparently it becomes easier to untie that knot. Consider sex and how strong a force it is (at least it was for me) in a person's late teens and twenties. Not that every aging sadhaka transcends the preoccupation or is called to, but if one wants to, at least it begins to be easier later in life to be celibate in following Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's general teaching.

The lessening of vital urges, including the need to be quite so self-assertive, affords every aging person opportunities of personal development not restricted to the spiritual. Unfortunately, Madison Avenue has such prominence in our society that few realize the advantage.

Michael Murphy (the co-founder of Esalen and a long-time admirer of Sri Aurobindo) has written a book, *The Future of the Body*, detailing extraordinary human capacities and grounding hope, for those who want it, for fitness and much more in old age.

I am now 45. About three years ago, I began running seriously in preparation for marathons. I lost a lot of weight and lost my appetite for certain indulgences. But I have noticed a drawback to being fit. It is that I am much more sensitive to colds, etc.—not just that they depress me in the context of training for a performance in some race, but that I seem to feel the discomforts of sickness and injury much more.

I have heard it said in this context that it might be better to let concern for one's health slide, surrendering it to the Mother.

There may be something to that point.

But on the whole I think that physical fitness is not just compatible with Integral Yoga, but an aid. Consider the attention the Mother paid to physical activities in the Ashram, and not just for students but for octogenarians. And what about Sri Chinmoy's disciples (who might be said to be grand-disciples of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother)? They are setting age-group records for all kinds of physical activities all the time.

Finally, it's fun to achieve a physical feat that no one expects you to achieve at your advanced age. A 30-year-old will feel pressure to finish a marathon with a respectable time. But just to finish the grandmother's marathon is a feat that everyone celebrates.

These are just some casual reflections . . .

—Stephen Phillips, Austin, Texas

Meditation on time, development, decay, et al.

Endgame. How do we play it? Like a piano? Tackle football? A cassette tape—rewind, erase, begin again?

How have others? At 91, a friend "begins to feel her age all the time." At 90, she traveled to Japan and forsook driving her car. My mother took up drawing and painting when in her 80s. One friend took his life when in his 20s. Another's was taken from him before he reached 40.

Do you "take your time"? Spend it, waste it, pass it, kill it? "Time is the stream I go a-fishing in": Carl Sandburg

Moving from "what will I do?" to "what have I done?"

BE HERE NOW

Approaching the finish line. Are you, am I "finished" ever? Done. What have I? AM IS. How do I, how does IT run?

What is your "point of departure"?

Grand Central Station?

The train leaves. Who knows when?

From red to green lights flashing

And back, everyone doing time, Sinatra sings:

"I did it my way." Tune in, time out, time and time again
attuned to messages from body, earth, sky

spheres turning

suns blaze

burn out

worlds born

carry on!

—Hadassah Haskale, Jerusalem, Israel

Hadassah Haskale is a psychologist who facilitates self-renewal workshops and is the author of INSCAPE, "a journey through inner space" (audiotape and book).



THE POETRY ROOM

I keep meeting you.

In whatever I concentrate my mind on
Or wherever I gaze, I see you.

When I wonder at the reasons for Nazism and wars
Or at pain and impermanence,
When I walk the twin paths of power and compassion,
If I measure the wide space
That separates or joins what is human and divine,
When I run after the great figures
Of Bodhisattva Buddhas and the Vedic Gods,
I find traces of you.
I understand that you have been there before.

In some unusual, blind, unconscious way
I am following in your steps.

I try to run away, but must come back.

I am utterly ignorant of what forces or events
Could bind my life so closely to your life,
But it is so. I accept it and am grateful.
And that is why I am here,
To ask you to keep me with you.

Maybe somewhere within me we are deeply similar,
Or maybe we are made of the very same substance,
Like son and mother.

—Carlo Chiopris

The universal Mother

When I'm all alone just the Mother and me,
She is the mountains and She is the sea.
She is the moon and She is the sun.
We're all here together united as one.

She's in the plant and She's in the tree,
She's in the animal and inside of me.
She is the heavens and She is the earth.
Together forever She's given us birth.

I've tried every path, but I have found none.
My searching is over—there is only One.
We see Her in everything and are striving to be
A child in Her eyes whose love sets us free.
She is the Mother and She'll show us the way
To bring forth the truth each glorious day.
—Mary (Angel) Finn

NOTES FROM THE FIELD

Last spring a call was issued for essays on "practice": how do people "do" the yoga in their daily lives? The following essays share how the path has been experienced in practice by four different sadhaks.

Questions or answers

by Wolfgang Wiehr

Again and again I feel embarrassed by the following typical situation:

People ask me why I am in Pondicherry. I say, because of yoga. Usually they think of hatha yoga and want to know what this yoga of Sri Aurobindo is and what comes out of it. Now, I could talk about evolution of consciousness, transformation of the body, and God, of course. But that would earn only strange glances and usually, honestly, my reply is that I don't know what I am here for. Sometimes I even add that I have read that the first person to realize the aim of this yoga will be there in about 3,000 years only. So somehow I can be sure not to succeed in my life.

At that point of talk people usually try to help me. First they suggest I get married. Vigorously they argue for practical things:

"In the West you can easily earn money."

"Have a house, a car, friends . . ."

" . . . just have a nice life."

"Please don't spend your energy for such an unsubstantial and unclear thing like this yoga; merely an idea of yours."

"How can you go for something you don't know?" they ask with bewildered faces.

Luckily I don't feel disturbed by the apparent contradictions these helpers present.

But nowadays the question, "How can you go for something you don't know?" strikes me with interest. There are many unknown things in this world. So why in particular this yoga?

Looking at this yoga from the outside—a sort of practical philosophical point of view—I conclude that people in this yoga will, so to say, remain empty-handed because the main principle and premise here is a total surrender: "Surrender of oneself and all one is and has and every plane of the consciousness and every movement to the Divine and the Shakti." (Sri Aurobindo)

It culminates in: "Give up trying; give up the will to progress; give up aspiration for Realisation; give up everything and say to the Lord in all sincerity, let Thy will be done." (The Mother)

Notions for something like the fruit of sadhana have obviously no place in this yoga. So actually there is nothing to demand or expect.

Altogether it sounds like, "Give everything and something unknown might happen."

In the West, with this thinking, you can easily get a place in psychotherapy, especially when the guru idea is also involved.



Now, I am thinking differently. My conclusion is that normally you cannot go for God—normally in the sense of lower nature, mind, vital, and body—because these parts of the being have their own needs and approved ways of getting satisfaction. They would never follow for years and years something which they don't know or haven't experienced, which even threatens and disturbs their satisfactions.

Of course, there is more between earth and heaven than human mind can think of, and so there is something, something else, voting or pushing for God which affects or contaminates our nature.

That gives rise to other questions: What is that something else influencing me? Whether I want that, and what is really the best for me?

But who is asking these questions?

Wolfgang Wiehr is in his 30s and was born and grew up in Germany. After seeking happiness through service in the military, training in mathematics, and three years as a psychiatric nurse in Switzerland, he concluded that "common sense was not working," and decided to live with a group of people practicing Sri Aurobindo's yoga. He has been seriously engaged in service and sadhana in Pondicherry since 1992. Comments and correspondence to Wolfgang will be gladly forwarded through Sri Aurobindo Sadhana Peetham, 2621 W. Highway 12, Lodi, CA 95242.

Crushed gold: A journey

by Chitra Neogy-Tezak

Engraved in Soul Maya

It was a day when I walked on concrete
And called the gods to awaken my feet
I told them I stood for child and woman
I told them I stood for warrior and seeker
They told me they knew my inhaled glass structure
And assured me thunder of light and unblunder
I call them to come down and enter my self
I am touched by their force in every step I make
God-head . . . Krishna flute . . . play your lute
Speak to my essence and enter my breath
You who have taught me again and again
Feed me the grain that is salt and pain
I love you sweet spirits in my own humble way
Give me your grace
So I can speak in your space . . .

I sat in the relics room at Matagiri, Saturday the 22nd of April, 1995. It was pre-dusk. The sun was golden, the mountains stood sculpted in peace. The pine trees almost touched the sky: they looked like Arjuna, lord of love, in their elegant beauty. I thought of him, my cosmic lover; he spoke to me.

Inside the room, I touched everything. The textured fabric on the wall felt alive to my palms. The marble in which the relics are was cool and warm at the same time. The fresh flowers on the altar were petal soft. The photos of Mother and Sri Aurobindo seemed to come alive. Silence walked in and all was quiet.

I must have sat for hours, and opening my eyes, I fell at Their feet. A strength and a fire stood in my heart. Quietly rising and leaving the room, I slowly walked back; the pebbles on the path caressed my feet. Everything around and in me said, "Sing your song . . . you are ready to speak." So here is my story of a sojourn of sorts—bearing Their torch against all odds, walking the life journey with my heart wide open, remembering them always wherever I go.

My life, my true life, began when I was taken by my mother to the Mother at the age of seven. There She sat, magnificent and powerful. I was awestruck, and turned around and ran as fast as I could. She asked Champaklal to bring me back. He ran after me, grabbed me by the shoulders, dragged me in, and dropped me at Her feet.

My head fell on Her lap and then I remembered nothing—only Her hands kneading my head for what seemed like hours . . . I don't know how long. Something went through me, from my head through to my feet. Everything changed. I looked up with tears of joy and She smiled down at me, knowing all.

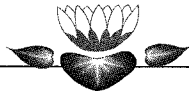
That was the beginning. No turning back. Everything revolved around Her. Growing up in Her presence shaped all that I am now. Watching Her work, play tennis. Throw a flower afterwards to whoever was lucky enough to get it, before She retired upstairs to her room. Seeing Her every morning at the balcony as She looked at each and every one, and spending days in Her light and love. I remember painting lotuses on the sea and giving them to Her. She always smiled.

It was hard to leave Her tangible presence to graduate from Calcutta University in Darjeeling, but the Himalayan range visible from my room always seemed to vibrate Her energy. I knew that She was always within. And every summer, the train would take me from Calcutta to Madras and then on to Pondicherry.

Then the move to London, England, to enhance my craft. Expression—through movement, word, and voice. As a performer, I went through all the phases and knew always that this was a molding of a bigger work ahead. A force drove me always, a fire breath, an urgency to express the inexpressible. I missed Her and called Her and continued the work. Art had been my axis since I was a child, and expression fulfilled me and soothed my soul.

Each time I went back to India, She reassured me and approved. I did all without separating or judging and knew that this is what She wanted of me—and so, obstacles always seemed to be overcome. Through all the experiences that came to meet me, the inner reflections made things clear.

From London to Montreal, Canada. Many reasons called for the move. I worked with film and did a radio show, six hours every Sunday. Began with a half-minute of silence and opened



with a poem from Sri Aurobindo or a prayer from the Mother. Played music from various sources and spoke about Them and Pondicherry and Auroville. It being an open show, many called and many were inspired to go to India.

After three years, I knew I had to return. I did. I fell at Her feet and asked for Her blessings to live in Auroville. I built a triangular hut that seemed to apex to the sky, and lived in Forecomers with only a handful of people. The land was barren and red. I walked barefoot, showered in the sun, lay on the cracked earth, and watched the stars. The land screamed Their presence. It was alive. We worked, walked, danced; I cycled to Pondicherry many times to have Her darshan. My feet were earth red. I recollected the world and felt I could live here forever.

But She had other plans. What were they? Enter the battlefield. Fight for the light. Live in life. Not quite Her words—but I felt the call. New York came to mind from nowhere. It was verbalized to Her. I was gifted with a sweet bag made by Her, blessings, a special mantra, and sent out to do the work. The work, the work . . . ah, the work. Definitions? None. Meet your spiritual self. Merge in it and walk from that truth. Easy to say. Not easy to do. Many falls, many falterings, hands reaching out and up:

One day, and all the half-dead is done,
One day, and all the unborn begun;
A little path and the great goal,
A touch that brings the divine whole.

Hill after hill was climbed and now,
Behold, the last tremendous brow
And the great rock that none has trod:
A step, and all is sky and God.

—Sri Aurobindo

The New York entry. Amazing, illuminating, revealing. Driving into this city of all cities, I remember feeling a strange quiet exhilaration. I watched the snake-like formations of smoke and steam emerging from the streets. I did not ask my friend what it was. My first thoughts were the depths of life coming up . . . hell breaking loose and at the same time a sense of earth-life coming through. I asked her to stop the car. I stepped out, took off my sandals and walked on the steam. I burnt my feet (fresh from Auroville). The world begins, I thought. Holding my scalded feet, I felt the burning grounds of Shiva and Kali. How wondrous, I thought: my gods are here, doing the dance of destruction and creation. Felt good. My silence was full and vibrating with Their breath. Mother and Sri Aurobindo here in the throbbing center of the world.

And it is here that I have lived and worked for almost 17 years. Being a Bengali, passion and fire walk with me, and Their presence lives like a burning flame through me. Breathing the divine chord through film, theater, poetry, and performance.

And then I met the man, Edgar. As I was swaying gently one

evening on the sparkling concrete of New York city sidewalk, a quiet voice made me pause. Never afraid, I turned around to see where it came from. I saw grey-blue piercing eyes in a renaissance-sculpted face. He asked me if I was South American. I said I was Indian. He laughed with joy.

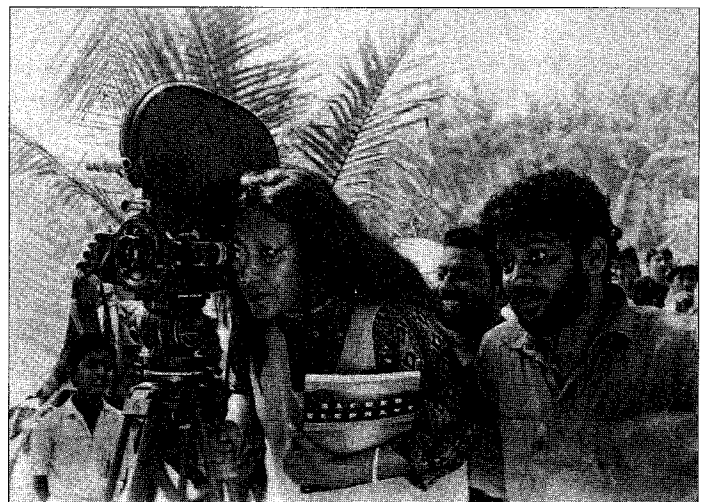
He came up to my then-Greenwich Village studio. He removed his boots, walked in, and looked at my traveling altar. It is Him . . . it is Him . . . it is Sri Aurobindo. Our spirits met . . . creativity met and a united life began in Their ideal. We worked, lived, and grew. We avoided groups, centers, organizations. We worked quietly and kept in touch with spark spirits.

And in 1985 when Champaklal-ji came to the loft in Brooklyn overlooking the East River, his wish was to stay here. He entered and my knees weakened. It was as though Mother was entering. He slept beneath the lifesize photos of Them. The cycle was complete and the message more than evident. Thirteen years of arduous work guided by Them. Krishna blowing his reed flute through the war paths in life. The great battle that is essential to life. Peace seems irrelevant without pain and passion. Spirit force sparked in time.

And now, walking on growth-divided paths, the work continues, no matter what. Light sword in hand, I wind my way . . . walking in earth mud I chant Her mantra.

No ashrams, no caves, no secluded groves. The work is **HERE** . . . to transform the mire. In rock-hard social structure, weaving in the light, through art, through creativity, and mainly through love. Love, love, my divine song.

And in this brick-walled loft with the river of life flowing outside, Their presence permeates everything. Aesthetics and symbolic reminders of the inner space seem to meet Her approval. And in the streets of the city, looking at a Bowery bum or a homeless derelict, the presence feels even stronger and more significant. In a crack in concrete are all the sounds of the world. Break



Chitra Neogy-Tezak on location while filming Journey within a Journey.



all convention, all rigidities, all dogmas, all rules. Crush me, break me, mold me. Like the lotus in the mud, untainted. My collective is the world, and in it and through it I feel Their omnipotent presence.

Returning to Matagiri, my second home, where a unique strength manifested on that Saturday the 22nd of April. I thank Sam and Eric for devoting their lives to Mother's mountain. Let it be the center of Their work and life. Let it be the laboratory for Their work. No holy shrines . . . no cobwebbed rules . . . no banners . . . no hype. She who worked for 60 or more chronological years never spoke of it. Who are we to assume, to preach and to teach. The work is already happening. We have no choice but to be prepared . . .

. . . Mother's light eats me
And forces me to be
She takes me and smiles
And wakes me in awhile
The rays strike in and shatter the grey been
The sword light cuts through
And makes all layers clean
And magic begins as mind hangs lean
The center of heart opens and bleeds
And the flow of light bursts into seed
The white light shouts loud
And the bright sight takes proud
She waters soul-soil
And scatters the grace
And blooming and being
Turn all into clearing
And then life and life
Becomes all Yoga of seeing . . .

Chitra Neogy-Tezak, a poet and filmmaker, lives in Brooklyn, New York.

A lesson in surrender

by David Hutchinson

On Wednesday, April 5, 1995, at 8:00 a.m., I was riding my bicycle along a residential street on my way to work. Along the sides lay accumulated twigs and fallen debris from a recent series of storms. The air was clear and cool; no cars were on this stretch of road, and I pedaled along at a fast clip, getting some exercise before spending the day indoors.

Suddenly I was thrown to the pavement. I felt as if the wind had been knocked out of me, or as if I had been struck on the back of the head without warning. It happened so fast that I didn't even respond reflexively, but simply found myself on my stomach with the bicycle on top of me.

Breathing deeply, and bracing myself, I pushed the bicycle

off with my left arm and turned over onto my back. My head was intact. My right arm and shoulder hurt fiercely. I closed my eyes, took another deep breath, and looked around. I saw a trickle of water near the curb.

A car went by. I looked at my body. My clothes were undamaged. No blood.

From across the street a man walked over to me. "Are you okay?" he said. "Can I help you get up?"

"I don't know. Give me a minute." I tried to gather my wits, then reached up with my left hand, and he pulled me to a standing position. As we walked across the street to his house, I felt pale and close to fainting. The man called Marta, and 15 minutes later I was in a local emergency room.

It has always seemed a reasonable secular and spiritual principle to take events in stride. Why worry about causes? If I understand why a branch lodged in my spokes, pitching me into the street, fine, but if not, no matter: life goes on, and perhaps the future will bring more insight.

Whenever possible, I try to see misfortune as an opportunity for growth. An illness can show where the body is weak; uncontrolled attachment to a thing can show where the ego is strong. Taken in this way, irritations and missteps become useful pointers for improvement. Of course none of us is perfect in this practice: often we repeat mistakes and undergo illnesses again and again, neither learning from certain experiences nor advancing beyond them.

Two days after the accident I was lying in bed late at night and grappling with excruciating shoulder pain. The head of the humerus had broken in three places, and it had been knocked off the main shaft of the bone. The orthopedic surgeon said he would operate after the weekend—three long days away—pending authorization for the surgery by my HMO [Health Maintenance Organization]: there was nothing to do but wait. One of the surgeons had warned me that no matter how many pillows I lay on, or what position the shoulder was in, my displaced tendons, muscles, and bone fragments would be painful.

I was taking a standard oral narcotic (Darvocet) every three hours, but at best this gave only moderate relief. The forearm, which had started swelling within a few hours of the accident, was getting larger, bringing a deep tissue discomfort to the entire length of the arm. At times the narcotics barely touched the intense gnawing in my right shoulder, which ebbed and flowed, but never relented—as if some black-robed Inquisitor were silently and relentlessly pulling my arm out of its socket in his quest for a confession.

When in mild pain I can go about daily life by exercising simple endurance; ordinary physical discomforts don't bother me much. But my little self didn't have the ability to master or transcend this kind of gripping agony. Lying there that Friday, facing three more days, I knew that true relief could only come from a higher consciousness—the soul, the Divine, Sri Aurobindo, call it what you will. This was clearly a test of my ability to let go of the surface consciousness and surrender to the deeper Self with-



in. The pain virtually shouted at me, “You MUST break through NOW!”

There I was, faced with overwhelming physical pain and unable to get relief. The universe was telling me that I needed to do something. But what? Or how?

In the past I’ve used various techniques for altering and deepening consciousness, such as pranayama, prayer, or mantra. I’ve also meditated on the image of Sri Aurobindo or the Mother, or on other incarnations, symbols, ideas, feelings. As I lay in bed with my shoulder burning, I reviewed the various techniques. Thinking that I needed something concrete to occupy the mind, I picked visualization. Two images of Sri Aurobindo always come to mind: sitting in the overstuffed chair in old age, and sitting writing at his desk, as a younger man. So I pulled these photos out of my mind and visually pasted them over my heart—then invoked Sri Aurobindo to come and accept this offering of myself.

For half an hour I tried to surrender to his picture—with no result. Just motionless agony, mixed with my ineffectual yearning for a pain-free consciousness.

“OK,” I said to myself, “we’ve got all night—hell, we’ve got three days. Try something else. Where is Sri Aurobindo most accessible to my awareness? What part of him do I know the best? Where do I look to find him? Where have I found him before?”

Unexpectedly, the answer came: for me, Sri Aurobindo is most alive in the accumulated remembrance of his writings, in the sum and substance of his thoughts as studied, questioned, assimilated, repeated, and integrated the last 20 years. These studies have built a mental background, a more-or-less coherent set of concepts that is a reflection of Sri Aurobindo’s mind—at least his mind as I have interpreted it. This segment of my consciousness has taken on a life of its own, such that I can talk to that part of me, ask it questions, have a dialog with it.

I have actively fostered a kind of mental intimacy with Sri Aurobindo. While reading I have often used a trick of the mind, the “aura effect” of psychology, to encourage the process. I turn off the critical mind so that his thoughts will enter my mind without interference.

Sometimes I try to recreate Sri Aurobindo’s mind while I am reading—to become his (mental) voice. I read his works as if I had written them; I anticipate that the ideas will be perfectly and transparently clear. I want the next sentence to flow naturally into my mind, almost before reading it.

How could I use this practice to contact the living consciousness of Sri Aurobindo and open myself to him, surrendering the pain? I hadn’t any idea. This was an intellectual tool for understanding the yoga and the man, not a practice of yoga itself.

“All right,” I told myself, “then recreate that tapestry of ideas as well as you can, any way at all, and use that mental background to contact Sri Aurobindo. Don’t worry about how to do it. Go at it full tilt. Make it happen.”



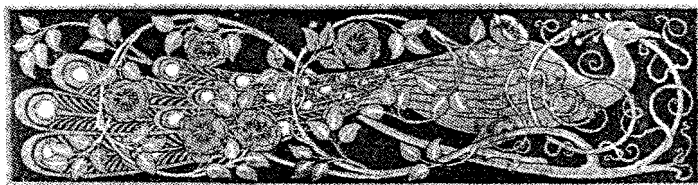
Art by Lisa Rachlin

Taking the works in turn—*Savitri*, *Essays on the Gita*, *Synthesis*, *Letters*—I commanded my mind to bring to awareness the essence of each, to refashion that cognitive map of Sri Aurobindo’s mind more fully and vibrantly than ever before. I didn’t worry about how to accomplish this obviously impossible feat; in desperation I just told my mind to do it. Taking global mental snapshots of each work in turn, I rapidly pulled up general ideas and feelings and relied on the subconscious mind and inner being to finish the job.

I began talking to the swirling concepts, invoking a deep surrender to the person from which they came—Sri Aurobindo. “I know you’re in there,” I said to the shifting mindstuff, “here it is: all the pain, all my previous life, all that will come to pass in the future—take it all, it’s yours. Do anything you want with it. I give it completely. I renounce ownership. You take it.”

Without a pause, I returned to the task of calling up global snapshots of his works; the two movements toggled rapidly back and forth, eventually fusing into a single profound surrender to the living teacher behind the ideas.

I felt a sudden popping, as of a bubble bursting or a great pressure being released. A wave of shivering ecstasy flowed from



Memos on yoga

by Lynda Lester

Date: Tuesday

Re: Information Resources Catalog

I'm at my desk editing the *Scientific Computing Division Information Resources Catalog*. 33 pages done, 77 to go:

The Multigrid Differential Package is a collection of free, portable Fortran subroutines, vectorized on Cray computers, that automatically discretize and use multigrid iteration to generate second- and fourth-order approximations to two- and three-dimensional linear elliptic partial differential equations on rectangular regions with any combination of periodic, mixed derivative, and specified (Dirichlet) boundary conditions.

Zzz! Snore!

And yet . . .

I glance up. A stillness settles in, a large imperturbable peace tinted rose. The air is full of it: gentle wonder, spring deliciousness. It has been a hard week at work, people are out of sorts, complaining; and yet *this* is here, suffusing the atmosphere—a sweetness, a diaphanous embrace of love, a feeling that everything will be all right. Life is not a nightmare. Grace is real.

I do not mention it to my co-worker. She has posted an article on the bulletin board outside my office, perhaps in response to my relentless optimism: "Happiness Is a Disease."

Date: Friday

Re: C program

A new consciousness has come; I noticed it last week in the project meeting. We were talking about host nodes and compute nodes, message passing and code migration. I was listening to the reports on next-generation architectures and cutting-edge software, all the while running a larger process in the background: a wider, more robust C (consciousness) program. I could use my forebrain and intellect, but at the same time I could feel a powerful awareness extending out from me—concentrated, strong, sleek. Long-distance perception, with invisible vapory symbolic links to larger parts. Not too specific yet, but big. A Local Area Network (LAN) with Wide Area Network (WAN) upgradability.

It has pressure and mass; it's denser than ordinary consciousness, it takes more strength to bear. I can bear it now for six, eight hours at a time, and off and on for days on end: the force beats down, love generates in waves, light shimmers around the head and shoulders, joy wells up like silver elixir inside.

head to toe, immediately followed by another and another and another in unbroken sequence. The transition from pain to ananda was so abrupt and complete that I watched with frank disbelief. The small "I" held its breath, lest it make a wrong movement and stop the experience. My body was having a wonderful time.

Soon, the physical sensation merged with a deep gratitude. Each wave became a palpable movement of physical gratitude and surrender to Sri Aurobindo, to the Divine.

With a slight turn of the head I checked the clock on my dresser. It said 1:00 a.m.

"Should I get up and tell Marta?" I thought. "No, better let this thing take its course. Who knows what is really happening; the physical relief might be only a surface effect of other changes." I could think quite lucidly, and stretch and feel my limbs. So I lay there for the next four hours while bliss flowed through me in undulating waves,—the fracture barely palpable, just the faintest hint of discomfort in a sea of shimmering bliss.

When the sky started to lighten, about 5 a.m., the experience gradually ceased, leaving a pleasant neutrality. I arose, woke Marta (who was asleep on the floor in the living room) and recounted the miracle. We smiled and listened to the morning birds singing outside the window. The world exuded a gentle goodness, a happy peace and lightness.

Later that morning the pain returned, though it was tolerable. The day passed in a haze of semi-drugged physical numbness. That night, as I settled in bed, doubt crept in and spoke to me: "What if last night were some kind of aberration, a once-in-a-lifetime miracle that came just to bolster my faith and keep me on a hard and thankless path? Maybe nothing has changed; maybe my little self has to continue facing all the pains and imperfections of life with a stumbling half-success." My awareness was such an indeterminate mix of narcotics and residual shock and wonder and even hypoglycemia that all perceptions were suspect. I was in no position to discriminate the truth or place of any one thought, much less judge the whole experience with detachment.

As I lay immobile, the pain returned to its grinding intensity of the night before. Almost fearing to try, I went through the same mental process. Soon, waves of bliss began to flow. They lasted from midnight to six a.m. This was no illusion. Grace exists. Sri Aurobindo had answered my call.

David Hutchinson is co-author of An Internet Guide for the Health Professional, now in its second edition.



This is happening to me in the basement of a national research lab while I edit articles on machine-specific implementations of basic linear algebra subroutines.

Thus I learn to multiplex—to experience magnitudinal states and still maintain surface functionality, to be in the world and hold the infinite within.

Date: Thursday
Re: Committee meeting

Fifteen of us attended the committee meeting, sitting in plastic chairs around the faux-wood table. We were discussing single- vs. double-precision math, trying to decide if we should recommend *Q autodouble=double pad* or go with compiler flags.

The eyes inside my heart became the eyes of Brahman, looking at the world. My heart opened until it was a sea: vast, limitless. I began to ache with the love that filled me, the love that was full-bodied and rich, tender, intense. Ego dissolved; all I had and all I was started to flake off in little pieces. I began to melt into abject surrender.

I saw the soul and then came silence. The mind grew still. Peace was everywhere, and an utter, unmoving purity.

“Could you add a section on Parallel Virtual Machine to the user guide?” Dan asked.

“Good idea,” I said. “No problem.”

Always I sit in meetings keeping my mouth shut while currents of cosmic clarity lift me up and down like the ocean swells off Bodega Bay.

I am tired of secret experiences. I want the Divine here, embodied, on earth. Gnostic awareness and gnostic buddies, already.

Date: Monday
Re: Global tropospheric 3D model

The clutter in my office is reaching unspeakable levels. Piles of notebooks, stacks of papers, purchase orders, Post-Its, technical journals—and three big honking computers.

I am at my desk writing an action-item list in my Executive Daytimer:

- 1) Compile text for didactic poster on global tropospheric 3D chemical transport model
- 2) Build World Wide Web site for Distributed Climate Simulation Laboratory
- 3) Interview director of Atmospheric Chemistry Division

Meanwhile—it’s kind of hard to work. Rivers of light are streaming down and my body is charged with force. I feel like a Volkswagen with a V-8 engine, a Transformer from Toys-R-Us, a Mighty Morphin’ Power Ranger.

Lightning crackles around me. Individual boundaries fade. The small self is in abeyance, quiet, sleeping. All is taken by a larger Self.

And right in the center, touching me in the secret heart of being, is God. I am completely given, a completed woman—this is what being a woman truly is, to be possessed by Him.

I love you God.

I love you world.

The report is due on the global tropospheric 3D chemical transport model.

I go to the vending machine for a Coke.

Timestamp: Later

I’m peering at my color monitor, using Netscape to download atmospheric pictures off the Internet: GIF-1, Aurora Borealis; GIF-2, Lightning.

I *feel* like an aurora borealis, like lightning.

The core of my being is radiance—sparkling, intoxicating, weightless. My body feels like gossamer, a spider web strung with dew.

Date: Wednesday
Subject: Whining

I am all bunged up. Couldn’t get to sleep last night till 3 a.m. My skeleton feels like a crumbled fossil, my head feels like a bag of broken rocks. Depression and sadness so heavy I can hardly breathe—every cell in the body hurts, every muscle aches. All I want to do is cry. Beaten, bashed down, microcytically anemic. Snarfing Ibuprophen like m&ms. Sick for months, disapproved of by all.

But walking down the long, fluorescent-lit hall, I notice a breathe of—fresh air? hope?

Then I sense it: another consciousness overhead, like cumulous clouds. I can feel it moving in, substantial but light, with a density and forcefield all its own.

Burdens fall off, despair slips to the floor. I open my mind and let myself go—up, up, like one of those suburban houses with the pop-top roofs, out the top of my head—ah!

Up there is peace. The mind is motionless. No breeze on the horizon, only still sweetness, release from care . . . relief at last!

If the pharmaceuticals could sell this they’d make millions.

(It’s not *me*, that’s for sure—all I want to do is sneak into the supply room and close the door, lay down on the Naugahyde couch and crash.)

I reach the cafeteria. I am hanging onto that consciousness overhead with one hand, like Harrison Ford dangling from the helicopter in *Clear and Present Danger*, repeating a mantra: *Open my mind my heart my life to Thy Light Thy Love Thy Power, in all things may I see the Divine*—even in this rude dweeb who has just barged into line, and this lady ahead of me who is taking five minutes to dish up pickles and sprouts.

Lynda Lester is a writer, editor, and Web site developer at a super-computing center in Boulder, Colorado.



ESSAYS

Meditations on the human journey

by C.V. Devan Nair

This talk was given at the Savitri Solar Dome, Crestone, Colorado on August 15, 1995. Part I follows; part II will continue in the next issue of Collaboration.

In moments of silence, when the mind ceases from all thought and word, and one is motionless within, a stark realization can suddenly strike like a flash of lightning in a cloudless sky. We know NOTHING—nothing at all of who and what we really are, why we are here on earth, what the origin and purpose of it all might be—NOTHING. The modern mind, as we know it, is no more than a queer conglomeration of incongruous things. Sri Aurobindo put it succinctly: “Mind is a clumsy interlude between Nature’s vast and precise subconscious action and the vaster infallible superconscious action of the Godhead.”

We know how to make bombs, of course. There are enough of them in global stockpiles to blow up the entire planet. And we have analyzed and utilized the properties and processes of Nature. But, wrote Sri Aurobindo, “It is the magic of the Magician you are trying to analyse, but only when you enter into the consciousness of the Magician himself can you begin to experience the true origination, significance and circles of the Lila.”

A multitude of fears, anxieties, pains, and grisly maladies plague our lives. And there is the general morbidity about death, the deaths of those around us, and eventually, our own deaths. Let’s hear the Mother on this:

We must get out of this mire, this stupidity, this unconsciousness, this disgusting defeatism that crushes us because we allow ourselves to be crushed.

And we fear. We fear for its life (*Mother touches the skin of her hands*), for this thing as if it were precious, because we want to stay conscious. But let’s unite with the Supreme Consciousness, and we’ll stay conscious forever! That’s IT, that’s exactly it.

I could put it this way: we unite our consciousness with what is perishable, and we’re afraid to perish! Well, I say: let’s unite our consciousness with the Eternal Consciousness and we will enjoy eternal consciousness. How stupid can one be! . . .

But we are such fools that we can’t bring ourselves to abdicate our silly little personality to . . . let the Marvel unfold.

Mother also told the disciple:

Death as it is understood, on the inner level, means the loss of consciousness . . . But it’s not possible. If you have

consciousness it cannot be lost. . . . All the deaths in the world cannot take it away from you, and that’s why I smile . . . And it’s only unconsciousness that’s destroyed, (meaning that there’s an appearance of destruction), but not consciousness. So then, all the drama—all the tragedy, all the horror, all the dread, all of it—is vital fabrication.

Mostly, we live in our vital fabrications. But sometimes we do obtain glimmers of vast, hidden dimensions. In *Savitri*, Sri Aurobindo has these lines on life:

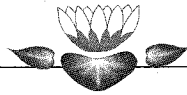
Only a glimmer sometimes splits mind’s sky
Justifying the ambiguous providence
That makes of Night a path to unknown dawns
Or a dark clue to some diviner state.

...
Ascending slowly with unconscious steps,
A foundling of the gods she wanders here
Like a child-soul left near the gates of Hell
Fumbling through fog in search of Paradise.

That ambiguous providence touched me once. Some 20 years ago, I was walking in the quiet and peaceful Sarnath Deer Park in North India, where the great Buddha had once walked and preached. No, I did not experience the Buddha’s timeless Nirvana. Far from it. But I did experience, in that immensely silent landscape, an intuitive inner leap of sudden recognition. Timeless Eternity was not a fiction of the mind. It was, no doubt about it, a concrete, experienceable Reality.

Those sensitive to the pregnant silences of vast landscapes and seascapes might understand. That Timelessness seems to contain all of the past, the present, and the future, and infinitely more besides. And one might grasp what Vivekananda meant when, in an inspired moment, he astounded an American audience with the stunning assertion: “Christ and Buddhas are but waves on the Infinite Ocean which I AM.” For he had known in powerful experience that there was nothing whatsoever on earth or in heaven which was not a wave on those Timeless maternal breasts. All waves rise and sink in that Ocean. He was forever one with It. So are we.

As I was writing this piece, one of those tiny miracles occurred which we tend to dismiss as fortuitous. I no longer do, for they have happened a bit too often when I write about Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. I got stuck after the preceding paragraphs, and did not know how to continue. So I sat back and randomly picked up a little booklet from a pile of unattended books and files on my desk. It turned out to be a SABDA [Sri Aurobindo Book Distribution Agency] newsletter that had arrived several weeks before and I had put aside. Almost immediately, I found exactly the right thing to fit in here. It was a poem by Themis, a disciple of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Her early poems had the privilege of being heard by Sri Aurobindo himself. He found in them a silent power, and pronounced them remarkable. It is titled:



Assurance

When all your life has gone to pieces,
Smashed on the stillness of your soul,
I'll shine within the interstices
And come and make you new and whole.
Be brave, fling all your being's treasure
Within the fires I have lit;
My love has neither stop nor measure,
So prove your love too infinite.

Well, He shone again within the interstices of my own fractured being. Once again I heard the call of the divine flute-player of Brindavan, whom Sri Aurobindo described as "the supreme figure of the intensest Indian religion of love, Sri Krishna, the All-blissful and All-beautiful." Generations of bhakti yogis and yoginis had yearned to dissolve themselves in that ocean of unspeakable ecstasy, and have left us their tremendously moving testimonies in the most wonderful music and poetry in the languages of India.

Sri Aurobindo undoubtedly knew that ecstasy. For we read in a sonnet, simply titled "Krishna":

At last I find a meaning of soul's birth
Into this universe terrible and sweet,
I who have felt the hungry heart of earth
Aspiring beyond heaven to Krishna's feet.

I have seen the beauty of immortal eyes,
And heard the passion of the Lover's flute,
And known a deathless ecstasy's surprise
And sorrow in my heart for ever mute.

Nearer and nearer now the music draws,
Life shudders with a strange felicity;
All Nature is a wide enamored pause
Hoping her lord to touch, to clasp, to be.

For this one moment lived the ages past;
The world now throbs fulfilled in me at last.

Nonetheless, there's a significant turn in Sri Aurobindo's aspiration for our earth which distinguishes him from those who had previously trodden the path of bhakti yoga. He did not seek personal dissolution in that ocean of ecstasy. He asked instead, at the end of another sonnet:

But when shall Krishna's dance through Nature move,
His mask of sweetness, laughter, rapture, love?

Historians have inflated notions about the present, not to speak about themselves. They believe that the past is dead, and all they need do is dissect what remains of the corpse. But the



Photo by Paul Lisseck

past is NOT dead. It lives on in each one of us. Otherwise, we wouldn't be here. The future is also in each one of us. Otherwise, we wouldn't be here either. Remember those poignant lines in *Savitri*:

We are chased by a self we cannot now recall
And moved by a Spirit we must still become . . .
We keep the ache of breasts that breathe no more.

The rishis of the Upanishads spoke of *trikala drishti*, a plane of consciousness where time past, time present, and time future exist in a state of simultaneity. Willy-nilly, each one of them includes the other two. The ape did not know that it concealed both the worm and Einstein in its genes. And most of us do not know that we conceal in our makeup worm, wolf, and shark, the shrew-mouse and the ape, devil and god. We recall some revealing lines in *Savitri*:

In the beginning is prepared the close.
This strange irrational product of the mire,
This compromise between the beast and god,
Is not the crown of thy miraculous world.
I know there shall inform the inconscient cells,
At one with Nature and at height with heaven,
A spirit vast as the containing sky
And swept with ecstasy from invisible founts,
A god come down and greater by the fall.

Those of us who have dared that stark look into our naked selves with an unflinching honesty—which is the very first step demanded of seekers in the immense journey into the vast and powerful realms of the Spirit—know of times when the beast in us has predominated, and less frequently perhaps, the god. This seesaw game between beast and god in us must end, and the Divine be firmly established in our inner shrines, from there to radiate outwards for personal and world transformation.



The kingdom of God within, said Sri Aurobindo, is the sole possible foundation of the kingdom of God without. Our starting point begins in inner spaces, not in outer ones. Not prudent, though, to lose contact with outer space. We need to visit the supermarket to secure our supply of milk, corn flakes, and bananas for tomorrow's breakfast.

Let's now take a brief look at the world today, as it really is. We find everywhere telltale signs of the end of a cycle, the twilight of an age, as Sri Aurobindo put it. Above all, we witness a general descent into the vital, most widely into the lower vital regions of being. In short, the mental-vital human being has largely chosen to serve mammon, and we see a soulless consumerism as the dominant ruling idea in nations and governments. Several among the most high-powered scientific minds of the world are engaged in providing more and more technological wizardries for the satisfaction of the vital appetites of mankind. Let Sri Aurobindo describe what is happening.

[Modern science] has encouraged more or less indirectly both by its attitude to life and its discoveries another kind of barbarism,—for it can be called by no other name,—that of the industrial, the commercial, the economic age which is now progressing to its culmination and its close. This economic barbarism is essentially that of the vital man who mistakes the vital being for the self and accepts its satisfaction as the first aim of life . . .

Just as the physical barbarian makes the excellence of the body and the development of physical force, health and prowess his standard and aim, so the vitalistic or economic barbarian makes the satisfaction of wants and desires and the accumulation of possessions his standard and aim. His ideal man is not the cultured or noble or thoughtful or moral or religious, but the successful man. To arrive, to succeed, to produce, to accumulate, to possess is his existence. The accumulation of wealth and more wealth, the adding of possessions to possessions, opulence, show, pleasure, a cumbrous inartistic luxury, a plethora of conveniences, life devoid of beauty and nobility, religion vulgarized or coldly formalized, politics and government turned into a trade and profession, enjoyment itself made a business, this is commercialism.

To the natural unredeemed economic man beauty is a

thing otiose or a nuisance, art and poetry a frivolity or an ostentation and a means of advertisement. His idea of civilization is comfort, his idea of morals social respectability, his idea of politics the encouragement of industry, the opening of markets, exploitation and trade following the flag, his idea of religion at best a pietistic formalism or the satisfaction of certain vitalistic emotions. He values education for its utility in fitting a man for success in a competitive or, it may be, a socialized industrial existence, science for the useful inventions and knowledge, the comforts, conveniences, machinery of production with which it arms him, its power for organization, regulation, stimulus to production. The opulent plu-

tocrat and the successful mammoth capitalist and organizer of industry are the supermen of the commercial age and the true, if often occult rulers of its society.

Those words of Sri Aurobindo would be an apt description of modern nations, their parliaments, congresses, and senates, as of business corporations the world over. Well did an Indian supreme court judge recently describe public life in his own country as one of crime, corruption, and connivance. It is a pervasive condition, permeating all strata of society, everywhere. Meanwhile, much of the press and electronic media, especially in America, act as purveyors of an idiot culture of sensation, sex, and scandal perpetuating itself in a thought-free vacuum.

In passing, we might observe another ominous development. The education policies of a growing number of nations are increasingly

being geared to meet the voracious appetites engendered by economic barbarism. Our schools and universities are largely meant for turning out robots and specialists in robotics, while the humanities and arts get short shrift.

The inevitable offshoot of such developments has been the relentless erosion of human values. Elementary human rights and decencies the world over are mercilessly trampled underfoot. Even worse, the belly of the beast has unleashed in several unfortunate lands ethnic conflict and genocide as in Rwanda, the ongoing carnage and ethnic cleansing in Bosnia, terrorism and counter-terrorism elsewhere. Interreligious and interethnic strife are tearing at the guts of several heterogeneous countries.

Scholars see all this in rather simplistic terms, as the consequence of either a social, political, economic, cultural, or civili-



Art by Sam Spanier



zational crisis. But there is a spiritual vision from the heights that sees the crisis of the modern world as merely the end of a cycle in the immense journey of consciousness on our planet. In his vast, synthetic vision derived from his own experience of *trikala drishti*, the simultaneous vision of the three times, Sri Aurobindo gave a radically different account of the modern crisis. He declared:

At present mankind is undergoing an evolutionary crisis in which is concealed a choice of its destiny. And that choice of destiny is whether *homo sapiens* is to become obsolete as a species, like the mammoth or the giant reptiles, or whether at least some human beings choose to consciously collaborate in a spiritual revolution.

We are the only species thus far to be offered this privilege. But whether we collaborate or not, the supramental cycle of evolution will still come about. For the Mother made it abundantly clear that the transformation will be effected, not by us, but by the divine supramental force, which does not require our gracious permission to act. In fact, she announced in 1956 that it had descended into the subtle physical sheath of our earth. In other words, an entirely new and all-dominant factor has entered the planetary field, which will inexorably disrupt all the current equations and ordinances that govern mental man's perception of the universe. All our pretentious mental towers will topple. They are already toppling. Francis Thompson's lines in "The Hound of Heaven" come to mind:

Still with unhurrying chase,
And unperturbed pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
Came on the following Feet,
And a Voice above their beat —
"Naught shelters thee, who wilt not shelter Me."

Mother herself had wondered, in the last years of her physical life: "Will we have to go through a complete breakdown of the mind for people to understand? Is it going to explode with a zero at the end?" But she also did say: "Seeing the world as it is and as it irreparably seems to have to remain, the human intellect has decreed that this world had to be a mistake of God . . . But the supreme Lord replies that the comedy is not completely over, and He adds: WAIT FOR THE LAST ACT."

We may be sure of one thing at least. Among those who will be totally flummoxed by that LAST ACT will be the crystal-gazers and fortune tellers of all stripes. For, in Sri Aurobindo's words: "It is the hour of the unexpected." Regrettably, not everybody seems to appreciate that expecting the unexpected is a bizarre contradiction in terms. But that too is part of the comedy which is not completely over.

C.V. Devan Nair is former president of the Republic of Singapore. He now lives in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada.

Book review:

Mother, Sri Aurobindo, and WWII

by Miriam Belov

Maggi Lidchi-Grassi, *The Light That Shone into the Dark Abyss*. Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, 1994.

When my husband, Gary, and I were in Auroville in February 1995, we had a wonderful dinner with Piero and Gloria. Piero mentioned Maggi's latest book, *The Light That Shone into the Dark Abyss*, and asked if I had read it. I hadn't and he promised to send it. It arrived in late spring; I read it in May while the 50th anniversary of the Allied victory over Nazi Germany was being commemorated in Europe and America.

I mention all this because the book deeply touched me and I urge all of you to read it. It makes vividly clear how Mother and Sri Aurobindo actively participated, on the occult and the practical plane, in the outcome of World War II. It brought home the intensity of the struggle between dark and light and how vigilant one must be—even now, in our own individual and collective lives.

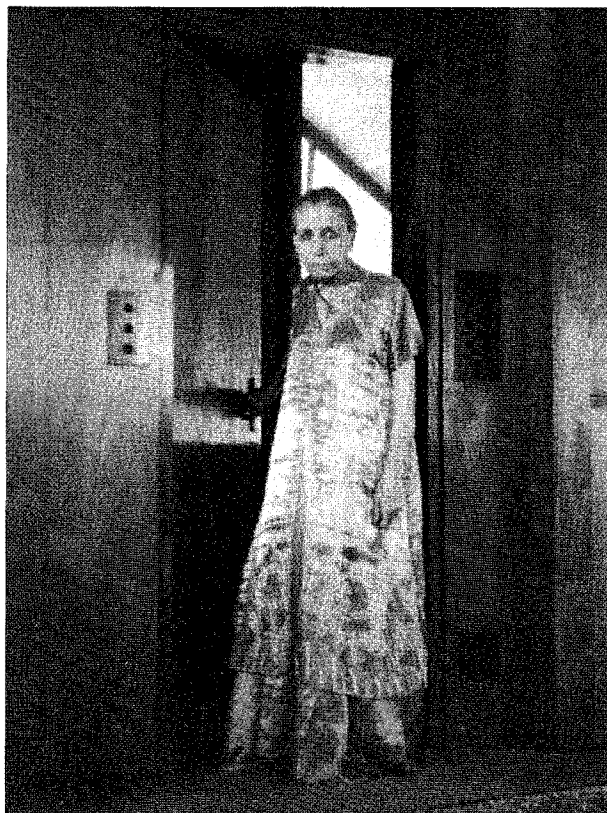
This small book "plunges the reader into the dark abyss of Nazism and World War II" and traces Hitler's study of occultism. I had read of this previously in *The Morning of the Magicians* by Louis Pauwels and Jacques Bergier, but Maggi's book focuses on this study and other factors in the war from the viewpoint of the Integral Yoga. As Hitler became more and more adept, Nazism spread over Europe.

It is important to note that Sri Aurobindo "broke a 34-year noninvolvement with politics to urge Gandhiji and the Congress leaders in Delhi to accept the Cripps proposal." He urged working with the British to protect India from a Japanese invasion and alliance with Germany. He and the Mother gave large financial donations to various war funds. He called World War II "the Mother's war" and made it clear where his sympathies were.

Maggi quotes from K.D. Sethna:

From the occult standpoint, Nazism is the exact opposite pole to the Aurobindonian dynamic . . . And because the possession is so extreme, the task of defeating the Asura and his band was both so imperative and so arduous . . . But whoever understands the profound meaning of the war and senses the incorporeal clash of which it was the outer reverberation will surely recognize, as the active antithesis to the occult evil that threatened utterly to engulf mankind through Hitler, the occult good that promises to lift mankind. (pp. 61–63).

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother stated that Churchill and DeGaulle were open to Their force, and Maggi quotes from several of Churchill's speeches that allude to a "guiding hand—a guardian—a serenity of mind." Mother was known to "suddenly



go into trance:" "I was called," she would say when she returned. And fortunately, Churchill did use solutions that he was given in dreams to help win the war.

Maggi then tells the amazing story of John Kelly. Many of us have heard John recount his tales, and Maggi's book, *Great Sir and the Heaven Lady*, covers them in depth. Reading them again only makes the exploits more powerful. John, an 18-year-old G.I. in France, had the phenomenal experience of being guided and helped during the war by Mother and Sri Aurobindo. At the time, he didn't know who They were, but he saw and heard Them giving him detailed orders on how to storm a building, fight across a field safely, or liberate a concentration camp.

And then as an appendix, Maggi shares Udar's rendering of how Mother provoked Hitler into attacking Russia, the mistake that started his complete military defeat:

Then the Mother explained how She assumed the form and voice of the Lord of the Nations (Hitler's demon) and went to Hitler and told him that he was in greater danger from Russia, which would stab him in the back when he was fully involved in his invasion of England. So, he should take care of Russia first.

Indeed, the horror of the war (and any war) and its effects on millions of innocent victims makes the small daily events of one's

life pale in comparison. But this was a positive turning point in the world's evolution, and there is a teaching going on here that reaches into the 90s and each one of our lives.

You'll have to read the book to follow in detail the many strains that are woven between the Mother, Sri Aurobindo, Hitler, Churchill, John Kelly, *Savitri*, *Mein Kamph*, guidance, surrender, struggle, and victory. It is a powerful book with a plea that "history books might cease to be almost exclusively sagas of war and bloodshed, and begin to tell the far more interesting tale of man's ascent upon the ladder of evolution and the corresponding descent of the force that comes to meet and transform him."

This brief review cannot do justice to the force of *The Light That Shone into the Dark Abyss*. Allow me to close with the quote Maggi uses at the end of her work:

O Sun-Word, thou shalt raise the earth-soul to Light
And bring down God into the lives of men;
Earth shall be my work-chamber and my house,
My garden of light to plant a seed divine.
When all thy work in human time is done,
The mind of earth shall be a home of light,
The life of earth a tree growing towards heaven,
The body of earth a tabernacle of God.

—*Savitri*, Book XI, Canto I

Miriam Belov, M.A.T., is the founder of the Wellness Agenda, a body/mind health and fitness regime of relaxation, healing, and stress management.

SOURCE MATERIAL

Conditions of supramentalisation

Nine excerpts from Sri Aurobindo

Compiled by Robert Zwicker

The object of supramentalisation is a body fitted to embody and express the physical consciousness on earth so long as one remains in the physical life . . . The supramentalisation is the most difficult part of the change arrived at by the supramental yoga, and all depends on whether a sufficient change can be achieved in the consciousness at present to make such a step possible, but the nature of the step is different from that aimed at by other yogas. There is not therefore much utility in these discussions—one has first of all to supramentalise sufficiently the mind and vital and physical consciousness generally—afterwards one can think of supramentalisation of the body. The psychic and spiritual transformation must come first, only afterwards would it be practical or useful to discuss the supramentalisation of the whole being down to the body. (1)



... the psychic and the spiritual transformation must be far advanced, even as complete as may be, before there can be any beginning of the third and consummating supramental change; for it is only by this double transmutation that the self-will of the Ignorance can be totally altered into a spiritual obedience to the remoulding truth and will of the greater Consciousness of the Infinite. A long, difficult stage of constant effort, energism, austerity of the personal will, *tapasya*, has ordinarily to be traversed before a more decisive stage can be reached in which a state of self-giving of all the being to the Supreme Being and the Supreme Nature can become total and absolute. There has to be a preliminary stage of seeking and effort with a central offering or self-giving of the heart and soul and mind to the Highest and a later mediate stage of total conscious reliance on its greater Power aiding the personal endeavour; that integral reliance again must grow into a final complete abandonment of oneself in every part and every movement to the working of the higher Truth in the nature. The totality of this abandonment can only come if the psychic change has been complete or the spiritual transformation has reached a very high state of achievement. (2)

One can aspire for the Divine to bring about the supramental transformation, but that also should not be done till the being has become psychic and spiritualised by the descent of Mother's peace, force, light and purity. (3)

All should understand that the true direct supramental does not come at the beginning but much later on in the sadhana. First the opening up and illumination of the mental, vital and physical beings; secondly, the making intuitive of the mind, through will etc. and the development of the hidden soul consciousness progressively replacing the surface consciousness; thirdly, the supramentalising of the changed mental, vital and physical beings and finally the descent of the true supramental and the rising into the supramental plane.

This is the natural order of the yoga. These stages may overlap and intermix, there may be many variations, but the last two can only come in an advanced state of the progress. Of course the supramental Divine guides this yoga throughout but it is first through many intermediary planes; and it cannot easily be said of anything that comes in the earlier periods that it is the direct or full supramental. To think so when it is not so may well be a hindrance to progress. (4)

The gate of the supramental cannot be smashed open like that. The Adhar has to be steadily prepared, changed, made fit for the supramental Descent. There are several powers between the ordinary mind and the supramental and these must be opened up and absorbed by the consciousness—only then is the supramental change possible. (5)

To speak of "receiving power from the supramental when we are not conscious" is strange. When one is not conscious, one

can still receive a higher force, the Divine Shakti works often from behind the veil, otherwise in the ignorant and unconscious condition of the human being she would not be able to work at all. But the nature of the force or action is modified to suit the condition of the sadhak. One must develop a very full consciousness before one can receive anything from the direct supramental Power and one must be very advanced in consciousness even to receive something of it modified through the overmind or other intermediate region. (6)

Certainly, the overmind descent is necessary for those who want the supramental change. Unless the overmind opens, there can be no direct supramental opening of the consciousness. If one remains in the mind, even illumined mind or the intuition, one can have indirect messages or an influence from the supramental, but not a direct supramental control of the consciousness or the supramental change. (7)

A touch or influence of the supramental is not the same thing as the supramentalisation. To suppose that the physical can be supramentalised before the mental and vital is an absolute absurdity. What I said was that the mind and vital could not be supramentalised so long as the physical was left as it was, untouched by the supramental descent. (8)

It is quite impossible for the supramental to take up the body before there has been the full supramental change in the mind and the vital. X and others seem always to expect some kind of unintelligible miracle—they do not understand that it is a concentrated evolution, swift but following the law of creation that has to take place. A miracle can be a moment's wonder. A change according to the Divine Law can alone endure. (9)

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| 3. <i>The Mother</i> , p. 130 | 8. <i>Letters</i> , p. 1227 |
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But the true reliability is there only when the psychic element in human affection becomes strong enough to colour or dominate the rest. For that reason friendship is usually or rather can oftenest be the most durable of the human affections because there is less interference of the vital and, even though a flame of the ego, it can be a quiet and pure fire giving always its warmth and light.—Sri Aurobindo, *Correspondence with Nirodbaran*, p. 963



APROPOS

The most beautiful and profound emotion we can experience is the sensation of the mystical. It is the sower of all true science. He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead. To know that what is impenetrable to us really exists, manifesting itself as the highest wisdom and the most radiant beauty, which our dull faculties can comprehend only in their primitive forms—this knowledge, this feeling, is at the center of true religion.—Albert Einstein (1879–1955)

Let us begin by committing ourselves to the truth, to see it like it is and tell it like it is, to find the truth, to speak the truth and to live the truth. That's what we will do.—Richard Nixon, nomination acceptance speech in Miami, Aug. 8, 1968

God is what mind becomes when it has passed beyond the scale of our comprehension.—Freeman Dyson

Whether people want to transform their consciousness beyond the range of experiences sanctioned by their native culture's rites of passage depends on whether they believe that they have high potentials they haven't learned to use, on whether they have sufficient motivation to grow, and on whether this kind of transformation is socially sanctioned. "Normal consciousness" is largely a matter of fashion. It's consciously and unconsciously molded by cultural myths and propaganda. The degree of consciousness a person experiences in a particular time and place is determined to a great degree by the unconscious beliefs of that person's culture and era about what is proper and desirable to experience.—Howard Rheingold, *Excursions to the Far Side of the Mind: A Book of Memes*

We need a new way of thinking, a new vocabulary. We have nineteenth-century thinking, but technology is so fast. We have to change our brains.—Andrei Voznesensky

He jumps up and shouts to God, *If you can be human, come inside me now!* . . . Gold pours down, many kinds, from all directions, gold coins, liquid gold, gold cloth, gold bars. They pile up, almost blocking the doors of the mosque. The young man works all night carrying the gold away in sacks and burying it, and coming back for more. The timid church-members sleep through it all . . .

If you think I'm talking about actual gold, you're like those children who pretend that pieces of broken dishes are money, so that any time they see pottery shards, they think of money, as when you hear the word *gold* and think, "Goody."

This is the other gold, that glows in your chest when you love. The enchanted mosque is in *there*, and the pointed cry is a candleflame on the altar. . . . A True Human Being is not human! This candle does not burn. It illuminates. Some candles burn themselves, and one another, up. Others taste like a surprise of roses in a room, and you just a stranger who walked in.—Rumi (1207–1273)

There are very few human beings who receive the truth, complete and staggering, by instant illumination. Most of them acquire it fragment by fragment, on a small scale, by successive developments, cellularly, like a laborious mosaic.—Anais Nin (1902–1977)

All positive religion rests on an enormous simplification of the manifold and wildly engulfing forces that invade us: it is the subduing of the fullness of existence. All myth, in contrast, is the expression of the fullness of existence, its image, its sign; it drinks incessantly from the gushing fountains of life. Hence religion fights myth where it cannot absorb and incorporate it. . . . It is strange and wonderful to observe how in this battle religion ever again wins the apparent victory, myth ever again wins the real one.—Martin Buber (1878–1965)

To commit adultery with God is the perfect experience for which the world was created.—Sri Aurobindo

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