

Collaboration

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On having experiences • Cloning • All-USA meeting • A walk into God • The separation and the anguish • Pavilion of Tibetan culture • Cyberspace satsang

A Yoga turned towards an all-embracing realisation of the Supreme will not despise the works or even the dreams, if dreams they are, of the Cosmic Spirit or shrink from the splendid toil and many-sided victory which he has assigned to himself in the human creature. But its first condition for this liberality is that our works in the world too must be part of the sacrifice offered to the Highest and to none else, to the Divine Shakti and to no other Power, in the right spirit and with the right knowledge, by the free soul and not by the hypnotised bondsman of material Nature. If a division of works has to be made, it is between those that are nearest to the heart of the sacred flame and those that are least touched or illumined by it because they are more at a distance, or between the fuel that burns strongly or brightly and the logs that if too thickly heaped on the altar may impede the ardour of the fire by their damp, heavy and diffused abundance. But otherwise, apart from this division, all activities of knowledge that seek after or express Truth are in themselves rightful materials for a complete offering; none ought necessarily to be excluded from the wide framework

of the divine life. The mental and physical sciences which examine into the laws and forms and processes of things, those which concern the life of men and animals, the social, political, linguistic and historical and those which seek to know and control the labours and activities by which man subdues and utilises his world and environment, and the noble and beautiful Arts which are at once work and knowledge, — for every well-made and significant poem, picture, statue or building is an act of creative knowledge, a living discovery of the consciousness, a figure of Truth, a dynamic form of mental and vital self-expression or world-expression, — all that seeks, all that finds, all that voices or figures is a realisation of something of the play of the Infinite and to that extent can be made a means of God-realisation or of divine formation. But the Yogin has to see that it is no longer done as part of an ignorant mental life; it can be accepted by him only if by the feeling, the remembrance, the dedication within it, it is turned into a movement of the spiritual consciousness and becomes a part of its vast grasp of comprehensive illuminating knowledge.

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About the cover: *The Samadhi of Sri Aurobindo, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, India . Photograph by Victoria Uytana.*

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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BEGINNINGS

On having experiences

The following is from Questions and Answers 9 March 1955 (Collected Works of the Mother, Vol. 7, pp.77-80).

Sweet Mother, if there is someone who wants to have experiences or something like that, what is the first thing he should do ?

To have experiences ? What kind of experiences ? Have visions or have psychological experiences or — what kind of experiences ?

In fact, the whole life is an experience, isn't it? We spend our time having experiences. You mean having a contact with other realities than physical ones? Is it that? Ah!

Well, I think the first condition is to have, to begin with, the faith that there is something other than the physical reality. This can be the first condition. Then the second condition is to try to find what it is, and the best field of action is oneself. So one must begin by studying oneself a little, and manage to discern between what depends exclusively on the body and what on something else which is not the body. One can begin like that. One can begin by observing one's feelings or thoughts in their working; because... sensations are so linked to the body that it is very difficult to distinguish them, they are so tied to our senses, and the senses are instruments of the body, so it is difficult to discern. But feelings already escape... the feelings one experiences; and to try to find the root of this... and then the thoughts... What are thoughts?

If one begins to find out, to understand what a feeling is and what a thought is, and how it works, then one can already go quite far on the path with that. One must at the same time observe how his feelings and thoughts have an action on the body, what the reciprocity is. And then, there is another exercise which consists in looking into oneself for what is persistent, what is lasting, something which makes one say "I," and which is not the body. For obviously, when one was very small, and then when each year one grows up, if one takes fairly long distances, for example a distance of about ten years, they are very different "I"s from what one was when as small as this (gesture), and then what one is now; it is difficult to say that it is the same person, you see. If one takes only this, still there is something which has the feeling of always being the same person. So one must reflect, seek, try to understand what it is. This indeed can lead you far on the path. Then if one also studies the relation between these different things between

thoughts, feelings, their action on the body, the reciprocal action of the body on these things — and also, what it is that says "I" permanently, what it is that can trace a curve in the movement of the being, if one seeks carefully enough, it leads you quite far. Naturally if one seeks far enough and with enough persistence, one reaches the psychic.

It is the path to lead you to the psychic; and so this is the experience, it is the first experience. When one has the contact with the permanent part of one's immortal being, through this immortality one can go still further and reach the Eternal. It is still another state of consciousness. But it is in this way that one follows the path, gradually. There are other ways, but this is the one which is always within reach. You see, one always has his body with him, and his feelings and thoughts, and at any moment of the day whatever, even in the night one can be busy with this;

while if one must have something else around him, people or things or certain conditions, it is more complicated; but this is always there within one's reach. Nobody can prevent you from having your body with you, your thought and your feelings, your sensations; it is the field of work which is always there, it is very convenient — no need to seek outside. One has all that is necessary. And so what must be acquired is the power of observation and the capacity for concentrating and for pursuing a little continuously a certain movement in one's being; as when you have some very strong feeling which takes hold of you, seizes

you, then you must look at it, so to say, and concentrate upon it and manage to find out where it comes from, what has brought you this. Just this work of concentrating in order to succeed in finding this out is enough to lead you straight to an experience. And then if, for example, you want to do something practical, if in your feelings you are completely upset, agitated, if there's a kind of storm within, then by concentrating you can try to find out the cause of all that, you see, the inner cause, the real cause, and at the same time you can aspire to bring peace, quietude, a kind of inner immobility into your feelings, because without that you can't see clearly. When everything is in a whirlwind one sees nothing; as when you are in a great tempest and the wind is blowing from all sides and there are clouds of dust, you cannot see; it is the same thing. To be able to see, all must become quiet. So you must aspire and then draw into this storm... draw peace, quietude, immobility, like this; and then if you succeed it is still another experience, it is the beginning.

Of course one can sit down and try... not to meditate, because that's an activity of thought which does not lead to experience, but to concentrate and aspire and open oneself to the force from above; and if one does it persistently enough, there is a moment when one feels this force, this peace or this silence, this quietude descending, penetrating and descending into the being quite far.

If one begins to find out, to understand what a feeling is and what a thought is, and how it works, then one can already go quite far on the path with that.

—The Mother



The first day it may be very little, and then gradually it becomes more. This also is an experience. All these are easy things to do.

But if, for example, one has a dream, when one remembers it very precisely in its details and concentrates in order to understand this dream, this too can be an experience, some door of the deep understanding can open and one may suddenly get meaning which was hidden behind the dream; this also is an experience — many things... and one always has the opportunity to have them. Of course the experience which most gives you of something new is the one you the sense of a revelation or the psychic, and in have as soon as you enter into contact with the psychic, when you are in the presence of the Divine; this indeed is the typical experience, the one which has an action on the whole orientation and activity of the being. But it may come quickly or may also take time. Yet between the state in which one is at present and that state there are many rungs. I mean these are rungs of experiences one can have.

So it is a vast programme. The first steps are these: to collect oneself, try to be very quiet and see what is happening within, the relations between things, and what is happening inside, not just live only on the surface.

There. That's all?

On Consciousness

by Paul Edmonston

While Paul Edmonston was a post-doctoral fellow in South Indian Studies at the University of Pennsylvania from 1972-73 he submitted a thirty-five-page research paper using some twenty sources on Sri Aurobindo's life and yoga.

Essentially one throughout the universe, consciousness varies as it manifests in different orders of existence. At some levels, consciousness is unorganized or inchoate, as in the inconscient, or variously suppressed, as in the subconscious. The ordinary human being is usually only conscious or in contact with a limited range of phenomena in the mental arena, having little or no awareness or contact with ranges of consciousness from the submental through the overmental to the supramental.

Consciousness is the essence of being and manifests itself in a progressive movement downward from higher spiritual levels to its involution and obscurity in the densest matter, and upward from the most inconscient levels by a process of both natural and spiritual evolution. Essentially it is divided into two aspects, an awareness of self, things and forces, and a higher will-force which can be applied for change.

Consciousness is usually involved and bound up in the physical, vital and mental actions of man, but with the development of yogic powers, the capacity for detachment and separation from the ordinary levels of being arises. As conscious energy, it can be put forth or held within and, as inner witness, it can stand back and

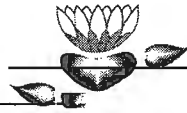
observe the actions of the energies it puts forth. While ordinarily synonymous with mind, increased conscious awareness allows it to function at all levels, while on the mental level, introspection fosters its division into a consciousness that observes and a consciousness that acts. This developed self-awareness leads to the habit of observing the various movements and impulses of one's being and the ability to discriminate and be aware of an impulse to action when it arises. It may lead to a feeling of uneasiness when an erroneous idea, impulse or feeling occurs, and so prevent one from taking false action. It may also take the form of a subtle inner voice which gives warning and inhibits false actions before they are initiated.

At the lowest levels of our being, we partake of a material consciousness which is mostly beyond awareness, subconscious, mechanical, inert, moved by habits and forces of our lower nature. It is resistant to change, full of inertia, ignorant, obscure, dark and dull. At the mental level it gives rise to the mechanical mind, concerned with the lower instinctive and reflexive reactions to physical life and things. It tends to be repetitive and is evidently a deep well or storehouse of all past experiences.

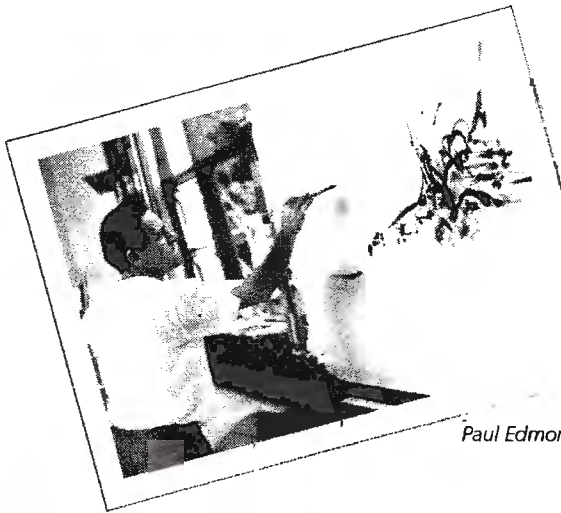
Slightly above this level is the physical consciousness, of which, as manifestations of living matter, we also partake. It is the part in us related to the universal physical consciousness of nature in all her forms. It gives rise to the physical mind, that mental part of us concerned only with physical things and their effects, depending entirely on the input from the senses and deducing all truth from such limited evidence. It knows no other truth than that of sense. Further, there is a resident consciousness in physical things which is responsive and sensitive to human consciousness, whether this is exhibited in rough handling or loving attention and care, a phenomenon which has most recently been demonstrated in controlled experiments with humans and plants.

There is a body consciousness as well, a body-mind, even a cellular consciousness: an obscure intelligence, purpose or will resident in the lowest levels of our material organization, a consciousness in the atoms and molecules, the corpuscles and the cells. The body, with its ongoing processes of automatic metabolism, homeostasis and involuntary nervous controls, acts on its own without our conscious mental intervention or will, and often against them. Its processes are ordinarily little known by the mind, and an aim of yoga is to become aware of this separate consciousness in the body, to become sensitive to its movements and to the forces acting upon it from within and without, and to control and direct it in its most hidden and subconscious operations. The numerous demonstrations of remarkable control over body processes in the yogic literature of India are testimony to the fact that such superior awareness and control has been attained.

Since we live in a universe composed of vast and complex subtle forces, a sea constituted of various waves of cosmic origin, as well as intermingling waves of mental, vital or physical origin which emanate from other beings, there is an environmental consciousness which we share, an ordinarily invisible extension of ourselves into the surrounding environment. This consciousness



is a means of contact with the ever-present waves of force impinging upon us and seeking entrance into our awareness. The ordinary man, who is primarily bound up in his small personal consciousness, an ego identity knowing only by means of mental and vital waves based on feeling and sensation, is constantly being bombarded and invaded by these forces, and thereby affected by them without any awareness of whence they come.



Paul Edmonston

With the development of the yogic consciousness—a magnified and subtle and expansive awareness of all the planes of being—one is aware of these forces, can feel or sense their coming, and control or reject their influence at will. This environmental consciousness manifests as the aura, which has recently been demonstrated by scientific experiments conducted in the Soviet Union to exist as rays of colored light emanating from the surface of the skin. Around those with a developed concentration of yogic power or force, such as the Buddha or Christ, this aura is supposedly very intense, and is visible to those who have developed the powers of subtle sight.

The inner consciousness or inner being, sometimes referred to as the inconscient or the subconscious by psychology, and as the subliminal self by those in the psychic sciences, is actually a very complex range of self-awareness which encompasses the five planes of being, including the physical, vital and emotional, mental, psychic or spiritualized overmental beings. This inner self plays across the complex range of the subconscious (all those processes below our waking awareness), the conscient (but much wider in its access and dimensions), and the superconscient (which is unknown to most, but which breaks through into existence in many and subtle ways).

The term higher consciousness is reserved for that contact with the higher ranges of consciousness designated as the illumined mind, intuition, overmind and higher mind and opens up to the borders of the supramental. Finally, the cosmic consciousness refers to the supreme and ever-present omniscient spirit of the

cosmos, including the nature and all beings and forces in the universe, of which we are, once again, an integral and functioning part.

The aim of yoga, then, or of spiritual evolution in life and time, becomes a process whereby we move, in a series of ascents, from conscious awareness and control of the physical being, with its inconscient history and its subconscious processes; up to the vital being, with its sensations, passions, emotions and desires; up to the fully developed mental being, controlling the centers of will, vision, and dynamic as well as higher thought, to the supramental being with access to the superconscient planes, and truth-consciousness above; eventuating finally in the integral consciousness of the spiritual or divine being, luminous and self harmonizing, free and commanding all levels below which have been transformed by the Light.

Paul Edmonston lives in Athens, Georgia, and can be reached at edmonart@aol.com.

NEW LETTERS ON YOGA

Below are a few of the postings to Auroconf, an electronic forum which discusses Integral Yoga among other things. To subscribe, send an email to subscribe-auroconf@compatible.com. All letters are reprinted with the permission of the authors.

Cloning

On February 22, 1997, it was reported that Ian Wilmut, an embryologist from Edinburgh, had successfully cloned a sheep named Dolly. There was an extended discussion on Auroconf about the spiritual implications of this event.

The question that stuck me is, what about the psychic being? If we as humans can create clones, then in the cloned individual does a psychic entity descend as it does in those who take birth in the biological way? Somehow the prospect of people making copies of each other seems a rather interesting prospect to me. But I seriously doubt if humans can be copied, except in their most physical and perhaps mental traits. Can one actually duplicate another psychic being? And if it is not duplicated then will the Divine or supernature or whatever name you call it, consent to collaborate with Man in this artificial process of birth, i.e. would a soul waiting to descend, wish to take on a cloned body?

The Mother speaks at length of how there are souls who wait for the right conditions and in a way almost choose their parents and environment. After all, unlike the animal, Man has a conscious soul in the form of a psychic entity.... Keeping the deeper laws of birth and evolution in mind, can a human be cloned? Would a conscious psychic being choose to descend into an artificially



created human form? Actually my question is relevant to even test tube babies.

Personally, I would be inclined to think that all such phenomenon such as cloning in the long run would only show to Man that in fact biological birth is not a necessity, and perhaps in the next century even the now more physical aids like rubbing of the two eggs or DNA implantation may not be imperative!

—Ameet Meera,
ameeta@viasd101.vsnl.net.in

The psychic being and traditional yogas

In May a discussion was started after a question by August Timmerman.

Traditional Yogas are about the realisation of the Atman or the True Self. But what about the Divine Essence in the Psychic Being? Does this mean that the Yogas do not know about the Psychic Being and its Divine Essence?

—August Timmerman, augustti@lily.bu.ac.th

I believe that the evolving personality called by Sri Aurobindo the psychic being was known to exist in other traditions. Many of the Christian mystics speak of this entity calling it “soul” and often referring to it in the feminine sense. Thus a male mystic could seek the “divine marriage” or union with Christ since his soul was considered to be inherently feminine. Also, Sri Aurobindo called it the Chaitya-Purusha which seems to indicate that he found references to it in the Indian scriptures. But it is also very possible that Mother brought the knowledge of the psychic being from her background in western spirituality. It ought to also be pointed out that of the three transformations (psychic, spiritual, and Supramental) Sri Aurobindo says that the first two have already been done in the past traditions, whereas the Supramental Transformation is a completely new possibility since the Supermind is, for the first time in history (as of 1956), directly active in the Earth atmosphere. Psychicisation and spiritualisation are not new spiritual possibilities, but rather have been a part of most earlier spiritual practices.

—Prapanna Smith, prapanna@local.net

The soul is the spark of the Divine which is not seated above the manifested being, but comes down into the manifestation to support its evolution in the material world. It is at first an undifferentiated power of the Divine Consciousness containing all possibilities which have not yet taken form, but to which it is the function of evolution to give form. This spark is there in all



Part of the online community at AUM '97. Standing, L to R: Will Moss, Debashish Banerji, Prem Sobel, Devan Nair, Vishnu Eschner, Ravi Narula, Tom Cowen, Don Salmon; kneeling, L to R: Julian Lines, Lynda Lester, Dave Hutchinson, Chandresh Patel, Larry Seidlitz, Carolyn Vaughan, Girish Mantry.

living beings from the lowest to the highest.

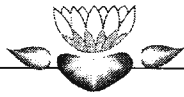
—Sri Aurobindo (aurobindo@supra.wld?), Letters on Yoga

The Supramental transformation is not new. Sri Aurobindo and Mother underlined themselves that it is very probable that the ancient Vedas discovered this possibility too. Then in the past there seemed to be many individuals having the same experiences and trying a physical supramental transformation before Sri Aurobindo and Mother. I would suggest to take a look to the book of Marshall Govindam, Babaji and 18 Siddha Kriya Yoga Tradition. Even if it's a book about Kriya Yoga it devotes a whole chapter to Sri Aurobindo showing interesting parallels between the two yogas. There it appears clear that the attempt of transformation is very old.

I think that the real difference between Sri Aurobindo, Mother and others consists in the fact that they announced that the time has come. They rediscovered some secrets of nature and evolution that were, at least partially, already known also by some few others. But developing the integral yoga, centering it on the evolutionary vision of a race that is going towards a divine transformation, they offered this secret to the whole humanity and not only to some few elected ones. The fact that this did not happen before is because only now the human race is probably evolved enough to begin this journey and because such a transformation seems to be possible only on a collective basis.

—Marco Masi, auro@maya.dei.unipd.it

To me the psychic being seems to be the key to all the questions man has been asking for centuries: Where do we come from? What are we here for? Where are we going? These questions brought me into contact with Sri Aurobindo and Mother.



The traditional yogas have addressed these questions by confirming the fact of reincarnation and setting out a fixed discipline that brings one who practices it beyond the senses and into contact with the eternal Atman or true Self. However that was always regarded as the final aim. Life itself was/is always looked upon as falsehood and misery. However, in the psychic, life is not experienced as misery and falsehood but becomes a joyful existence. Sri Aurobindo and Mother emphasize that the psychic can harmonize and unite the outer being with the inner being: once all the parts of the being: the vital, mind and body are surrendered to the psychic. None of these parts are ignored or suppressed but put in the true place of the total being, without one dominating over the other, and all governed by the psychic.

—August Timmerman, augustti@lily.bu.ac.th

Gurus

The nature, work, and relation of Gurus is an ongoing topic on Auroconf.

From Mother's reply to Alain I gather that mixing of gurus causes only confusion in the disciple. If so it is the weakness of the disciple and I feel that there seems to be nothing spiritually objectionable in approaching more than one guru. She warns one against opening oneself to the complex interaction of the influences of two gurus. Some may be able to handle that and some may not. It is probably to make things easier for the sadhak that such an advice is given, and in that case it is true.

But there is sure harm in generalizing without qualifications that one should not approach more than one guru. As long as the person has sincerity in his pursuit and not a motive to test or weigh one guru against other he will have no problem. An egoistic motive lacking sincerity in the approach to the guru causes some problems. Simple folks with true devotion always respect a holy man and try to learn from more than one. This freedom has produced such wide spiritual diversity in India and so many gurus. Of course not all gurus are the same level of spiritual height. But that does not matter. It is only those who are unconsciously egoistic suffer from the confusion and difficulties they encounter. That is their problem of sadhana. It is not guru's fault. Is it not true that you receive in proportion to your receptivity? Blaming a guru for casting some spiritually harmful influence on you (such as those which contradict the influence of the other guru) is the problem of your own and not his.

—Madhu Kanchi, mkanchi@krusty.nafb.trw.com

The Mother and Sri Aurobindo remain as our guru (singular) in the body or not, but that does not mean that others cannot help. Mother mentioned before she left her body that a small number in the Ashram were realized beings, many of which have left their body since She made that statement. Such mentors are of immense help.

—Prem Sobel, prem@ix.netcom.com

I don't see how you or anyone can accept one or more gurus sincerely. You cannot belong to all of them at the same time. Or do you consider that someone else beside Sri Aurobindo and The Mother knows better than them the road which has to be taken. Do you really think they are the formless divine?

The acceptance must be absolute. And if we speak about sincerity that too must be absolute. The only question which remains is whether one is invited/accepted by the Mother or not. This doesn't mean that we cannot ask and receive the help from the friends who have advanced on the path. But they will be always friends not gurus.

—Zdenko Grgic, zden61@hotmail.com

"... To admit or call the invasion of others into one's own being is to remain always in the confusions of the intermediate zone." (Sri Aurobindo, *Letters on Yoga*)

When we are talking about the ordinary influence of a Guru we are not talking about allowing someone into our consciousness like he is talking about there. We are constantly being influenced by society, our parents, teachers at school when we were younger, etc., all these acted as influences on us and influences can remain from them but that is completely different than allowing a being INTO our consciousness by means of inner penetration of our personal aura. This is what Sri Aurobindo was referring to in that particular letter, not the ordinary influence that comes from contact with others, be it Guru or ordinary person. Sri Aurobindo, I believe, is referring to a phenomena related to when the inner consciousness is open (after all it is in the chapter Experiences of the Inner and Cosmic Consciousness) whereby one has the ability to allow other beings to act through one directly by directly impinging on the consciousness directly, if one allows it.

—Johannes Vloothuis, jhav@wchat.on.ca

It seems that there is a difference between seeking a guru and meeting one.

All of us on this list are here I believe because we already have direct access to Mother and Sri Aurobindo, at some level or another. So too, more and more people, realized, partially realized, etc. have increasing contact with the Divine. Even the orthodox religions got set up because of some original, embedded, deeper connection, and one can feel this in some of their adherents, some of their leaders, their religious festivals, observances, rites, temples and holy places and events, etc.

For those who experience that direct connection, there is no need for a guru, or a conventional religion, or whatever. Sometimes however, a brief taste of the connection urges people to seek for more and in their haste and eagerness, to look for all the help they can get to speed the process, in a possibly misguided but admirable sincerity. Even those who have met Mother and Sri Aurobindo also, (not in the physical) might wish to see how they can get closer, "do it the right way" from someone who they see as having



a closer relationship than they themselves. Only Mother and Sri Aurobindo themselves really tell one directly that that is totally not necessary, but one has to be confident enough to hear them!

So of course we do not need gurus, and therefore need not seek one or the other, or compare—like a shopping list to see which one has the ‘best’ path...

Nonetheless when I meet the Divine in a less veiled form I still bow down before it, I still experience Namaste. And the more one comes to know and love the Divine, the easier it is to not only discern, but to discriminate - to see the ‘human’ aspect _and_ the Divine, in, for example, Christ, the Buddha, Mohammed, Sri Chinmoy, Alan Watts, Mother Meera, Sivananda Valentina, Krishnamurti, Sai Baba, etc. etc. etc. etc. etc. — and even in we ourselves, who correspond with ourselves and reveal so much of ourselves and of the Divine on these lists!

—Marian Cummins, mcummins@netspace.net.au

Based on what Sri Aurobindo and Mother say, there is a possibility that the earth today has many manifestations or vibhutis of powers of Mother, just as there existed goddess forms in most traditions, including Hinduism, Christianity, etc. So, perhaps Mother Meera, Ammachi, Anandamayi-ma, etc are personalities or powers or vibhutis or aspects of Mother. To prove or disprove that they are vibhutis or aspects of mother doing her work is beyond my perception. It is also very difficult for me to think of them as the complete manifestation of Divine Mother which some say as to have happened only once on earth in the form of “The Mother of Sri Aurobindo Ashram.”

—Girish Mantry, gmantry@cisco.com

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother’s teaching demands that we look at the opposites of our conclusions to see the grain of truth residing there as well, to find the place where the “opposing” truths may be unified or harmonized. By saying “no other teachers under any circumstances” we perhaps run the risk of limiting the Mother’s action in some way. Certainly we should be faithful to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, and find their presence within us, but what if we feel that this presence is urging us to a temporary outer guide of some sort? Should we ignore that, or explore its possible validity? It may be presumptuous to state that under no circumstances would the Mother direct one to an outer teacher.

—Benjamin Irvin, b_irvin@stblaw.com

The Western mind always finds it difficult to submit totally to a Guru and without total and unquestioning surrender to the Guru his help to you is paralysed. That is why generally I advise westerners to find the guidance and the Presence within themselves; it is true that this process is very often open to uncertainty and self-deception, mistaking some voice of the ego in disguise for the Divine’s guidance. In both cases, it is only an absolute sincerity and an unmixed humility that can be your safeguard.

—The Mother (Mother@shakti.aum?), *Collected Works*,
Volume 14, page 61

Reading

I read a paragraph from the Life Divine, my mind silent (as much as is possible) my heart open, receptive (as much as is possible), I wait, then I begin to reflect—not analyze, but contemplate, allow feelings and thoughts, intuitions, sensations, images and illuminations to come, inviting without pulling. I am at the same time ever mindful of the flow of energy, observing the tendency of the analyzing, separative mind coming in. As inspiration dries up, I go on to the next paragraph, reading in silence. I wait, and again, begin to reflect. In the midst of reflection, inspiration stirs. I stop, and—just as Satprem describes in the chapter on Sleep in *Adventure of Consciousness*, trying to remember a dream—I gaze, I reach towards that emptiness, that cloud of unknowing, and attempt to create a womb for the birthing of that inspiration, careful not to disturb it with too hasty ordinary mental activity. I observe with great care and mindfulness, as the time for the inspiration passes, and it is time either to go on with further intuitive/feeling/sensing/imaging reflection, go into silent effortless concentration, or continue reading.

And even this is not an accurate description, since the process of integral feeling and thinking is much more multi-dimensional than any verbal description could be. But this, as best as I can say it for now, is my current level of understanding how we can have an openness to the unknown, a respect for the mystery, AND AT THE SAME TIME, engage in the most precise, carefully discerning reflection (and even analysis if called for) of ourselves, our text, our life, our world.

—Don Salmon, virtreal@erols.com

Cell division

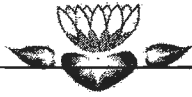
This is a response to Mike Wyatt who requested feedback to his letter about the Cellular Evolution Conference experience. (Collaboration, Vol. 22, No. 1)

Your letter touched on an interesting debate which has been germinating for some time now in the rich mental soils of this community. Call it the question of when to “cell.”

The strategy of the integral yogi so far has been to start with purifying the inner being, and when that’s sufficiently transformed, the transformation of the body begins by Grace.

Recently, though, there has been a growing force which recommends another method. I understand them to be saying, “let’s look at the the possibility that the supramental transformation is already occurring in the body, and see what we can do to help it along.”

If we leave it at this level, the discussion is healthy for the community. Unfortunately, perhaps with the intention of transcending the rational mind, the debate usually slips into irrationality.



One form of decline begins when those who profess finding fulfillment in Sri Aurobindo's writings and methods are called "dogmatic" and "fundamentalist." Confessing no interest in novel techniques is deemed "reactionary" or "close-minded." The only defense is to return the insult – call those with an urge to find procedures of cellular transformation, "superficial!"

But emotionally charged words like these have no value or relevance to this discussion. They completely ignore the important issues which could be worked through. Instead, they move the discourse into a realm where growth and mutual understanding are impossible.

Your letter, though hardly confrontational, contained subtle and, I am certain, unintentional movement in this direction. Because it was on a public forum I feel the need to respond publicly and specifically.

It's important to let you know that I was very inspired by Dr. Basu's talk at the Cellular Evolution Conference in October, 1995. I did not sense the "chilling effect" or the "defeatist mentality" you mentioned in your critique. Rather, his talk opened a strong sense of devotion and aspiration within me and in many of the others with whom I spoke at the conference. I'm one of those whose days are pretty full attempting to practice just a few of the thousands of techniques for sadhana that have already been given by Mother and Sri Aurobindo. And personally, I haven't come across anyone besides Sri Aurobindo and Mother who have made a credible example of transformation beyond what naturally accompanies the sadhana outlined by Sri Aurobindo — which was so aptly described by Dr. Basu. For me, simply, it works — and it's working — in a huge way!

That's only *my* experience.

I'm not implying that the search for ways to augment bodily transformation is invalid. Actually, I like to think that most of us are working out our own, private transformation.

My concern is not with who's right in this debate. I think that with God, both sides can be correct. But it is ultimately an intensely personal, individual matter — not one which can be decided in a shouting match anyway.

Until we become truly conscious of the forces which move our mindstuff, it is dangerously easy to divide this blossoming collective into any number of factions, each quoting Sri Aurobindo out of context in support of some mental position. It's time we display some real evidence of transformation and try a different approach with each other.

At a recent seminar at the Cultural Integration Fellowship, Robert McDermott postulated that compassion and courtesy may be among the more effective tools for transformation of the collective. I would like to second that.

—Vishnubhai Eschner, SASP@mindsync.com

The Third Way

People seem to lean in two directions:

The way of the devotee, the bhakta: just open, feel the Force, allow Mother to lead you, open your heart, do not question the teachings.

The way of the disciple: study carefully all that the Mother and Sri Aurobindo have written, carefully practice long, involved meditations, be wary of all special claims, develop a strong and especially, critical mind.

The disciple looks at the devotee and smiles at his/her apparent simple-mindedness. The devotee looks with compassion on the disciple, seeing excessive mental strain where there could be, instead, simple surrender.

—Don Salmon, virtreal@erols.com

There is yet another, third way: the goofy way.

On this path, the practitioner is smitten forever with the stillness and rapture of the Divine, sucks up Sri Aurobindo's writings like chocolate milk, sees Mother's words luminous and transparent, develops a supple power of thought, can't find his/her mind because it's disappeared into some wide silent sea, laughs because the air is full of enchantment and marvel, notes little difference between meditation hall and workplace, is afflicted with showers of gold (fairy dust) while walking through parking lots, feels smaller than nothing, and dreams about enlightened buffaloes.

On the goofy way the perfect world is perceptible just a micron away, near as breathing, so intimate as to make all existence worthwhile...the transformation is a felt certitude...and it becomes impossible to dismiss anyone because God is in them, looking out through human eyes.

—Lynda Lester, lester@ucar.edu



CURRENT AFFAIRS



Some of those who attended AUM spending a day at Matagiri.

Notes from the 1997 AUM at Phoenicia Pathworks Center, New York

Debashish:

As the distance increases between now and the AUM, it takes on a clearer definition and I understand it better for what it was—a living experience imprinted on and carefully preserved in the collective psyche, a dynamic landmark setting into motion wheels in all directions towards the future.

The coming together for four intense days in the remote but opulent lap of Nature, of over a hundred individuals inwardly attuned to a manifesting of the Integral Yoga, set into place an Invocation that brought powerfully into our midst the presence of the Divine Mother, cocooning the event in a serendipitous field, like that of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

Above, the sunshine of Her compassionate smile or the lucent starry cloud-net of Her muse, around, the sky-aspiring verdant hills, below, the regal stillness of old trees, the timelessness of grazing golden deer and within, the struggle for clarity and light, the powerful multiplication of the aeonic urge.

The psychic stimulation of the morning chanting and the transporting evening programs; the physical stimulation of the morning workouts and the long treks through the trees; the vital euphoria of connecting with old dear friends and awakening to new relationships that seem eternal, only asleep until now, or in volunteering one's action or entering into new dynamic work-possibilities for the future, sensing the engines of Divine Intention, the seeing eye of the Divine Will; the profound contemplative intensity of talks by living repositories of yogic practice and its heuristics such as a Manoj Das or a Devan Nair, topped by occasional awakenings to that powerful Divine Presence of the Mother and the Master surrounding, supporting, manifesting

through it all, made the four days an integral state of altered consciousness, a hint of the Divine Life in action. Thanks are due to the tireless instruments of the Matagiri Committee who made it possible.

I'm sure many of us will bask in the ambience of this AUM for a long time. The Internet provides us a possibility to extend its gathered power in space and time, into a global community and into dynamic continuous collective action.

—Debashish Banerji, ewcc@earthlink.net

Devan:

I wouldn't use the word "Impressions." AUM'97 was an EXPERIENCE. We can no more encapsulate an experience in linear human language than can a caterpillar speak of a butterfly's experience in caterpillar language.

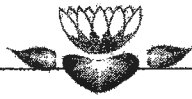
There was an indescribable ambience about the entire Pathworks Center, an unusually charged atmosphere. One met old and loved friends, came to know and love new ones. Doors and windows within were suddenly flung wide open, and one looked out at quite unexpected perspectives and potentialities — at once individual and collective. One saw in the eyes and faces of others, men and women alike, aspects of one's own seekings, aspirations, sadnesses, successes and failures, and one felt an incredible orchestration of even the tiniest details of gestures, glances, arrangements, timings of events, meetings, music, dance, inner and outer encounters of all kinds, to yield the maximum awakening each was capable of. And there was the unmistakable sense of being just one tiny body in a much, much larger body. Even the huge black bear which came along to scrounge for food in the large garbage bin outside the kitchen was part and parcel of that larger body. But none among the several who watched him in admiration cared to venture out to shake the hand of this ancient cousin of ours, nor to hug him (or her). Not all hands, nor all bodies, you see, are comfortably and safely shakeable or huggable.

In short, the atmosphere was CHARGED. A Divine electricity was in the air, in the exchanges punctuated by smiles and gay laughter. I understood, felt better than ever Sri Aurobindo's marvelous line in Savitri: GOD SHALL GROW UP WHILE THE WISE MEN TALK AND SLEEP. God was growing up there by the Catskill Mountains on those few days. May HE continue to grow in all of us.

May the annual AUM gathering never again be annulled. My heart is full of gratitude and love for every single man and woman whom I had the inestimable privilege of mingling with and of loving at AUM '97.

In ending this brief note, I offer to all those wonderful fellow-seekers, not only to those who came or who, for one reason or another, could not come, another wonderful line of Savitri (with a slight amendment): FOR EVER LOVE, O BEAUTIFUL SLAVES OF GOD.

—Devan Nair



Girish:

There were lots of talks, presentations, workshops on various subjects ranging from integral yoga, reminiscences about Mother, Buddhism, arts, healing, etc. At any time, there were two or three presentations. It was never easy to choose. The evening entertainment was a big highlight. Bharata Natyam, Indian Guitar music, story telling, Bhajans, etc were a delightful way of ending the day. In between, we tried reading *Savitri* as well. That added a nice break of most of us who were mentally tired of the talks. In the late nights some of us gather in the dining hall having tea, peanut butter and jam and chatting away until the midnight.

Matagiri visit was the best part of it for me. I could feel some sort of occult presence in that wilderness. Oh, such a nice feeling and presence in the relics room. If you get a chance, make a visit, you will know what I mean. Nice library, paintings by Sam, cute little house charged with calmness and presence. Sam shared his sweet discoveries and stories about Matagiri. He is said to be a non-stop entertainer. Of course one learns as well. A group of us, Chandresh, Prem, Dave, Vishnu-bhai, Lynda, Carolyn, Margo, Larry hike up the mountain and set up a bench there followed a brief meditation inviting Sri Aurobindo and Mother to take a seat, followed by tirtham and prasad in the Indian style. Honestly, I thought the bench was not strong enough for Sri Aurobindo, although may be just right for Mother.

I am indeed grateful for the organizers, Mother and Sri Aurobindo for giving me such a nice company and consciousness as is to be found in an AUM. My heartfelt thanks indeed. And I wish and feel earnestly that their force continue seeking to manifest strongly in America, in each of the centers and the country as a whole. We only have to have faith and prepare in this divine moment.

—Girish Mantry, gmantry@cisco.com

windows began absorbing the differences in the surroundings, “mind” began to adjust and I realized I’m no longer at the NY location of Phoenicia Path works Center—the beeping of the wrist watch merely serving to alarm me of how silly linear time is... mocking my OWN mind-set, once again, laughing inside...

I’m awake in here and now. Good morning.

What I want is to write a long version of accounts and various perspectives; that I’d listened to... reflections of what was spoken of, and the diversity of these wonder-filled creative people and course of events that took place at the Aum 97 Sri Aurobindo Commemorative Conference, most especially to address those whose presence were NOT lacking, even though their physical presences were not in attendance in NY State, USA...

sharing OUTLOUD that: the “Connection” (on-line and off line) is that of a Solid Aum. And at the same time, am also wanting to write to each individual... (so many who I originally had mixed feelings/ thoughts of meeting in the first place, and now, frankly, am missing sorely).

IN these waking moments, I wonder of those entities enroute the skyway to their alternative *H*aums spread over India, North America, Canada and elsewhere in this universal consciousness, those that have an awareness of being awake in every moment —living Sri Aurobindo, and Living Mother(s).



Devan Nair and Kosha Shah at AUM

Some have not yet completed their air flights, some having to walk (float, haha) back into their nine-to-five realm, and all the energies being redirected, into the various perspectives of Life [echoing again, ‘All Life is ... ‘]

Perhaps others may be having similar feelings to be expressing their experiences (trying not to be anxious, I think my impatience is showing;) I await to hear from all—for the sharing of the variety of accounts, insights and events of AUM 97...

Mindful that these things will take “time” (take your sweet time) I look forward to this email format as a tool to be continually sharing... beyond 97... Aum shanti shanti shanthi

—Priti Raval, raval@raval.com

Priti:

Waking this morning to the pre-set wrist watch (that served as an alarm clock at AUM 97’s conference), my right arm auto-extended to reach for the dresser that was there yesterday, only to have my hand waving in mid-air. A few blinks later, the body’s



Becoming Collective: Community, Education, and Life

**All-USA Meeting (AUM) 1998
Monte Toyon Retreat Center,
northern California
August 28 to September 1, 1998
(Friday through Tuesday)**

At AUM '98 we are going to encourage participation, in the hope that at the end of the four days the group will have actively achieved a consciousness of unity, even universality. This meeting will be an opportunity for everyone who attends to grow aware of our community of sadhaks, to work on spiritual and secular education, and to practice practical methods of integrating this Yoga with various aspects of life.

We plan to reach these goals through the presentations, activities, and structure of the AUM. The group which is working on the conference is meeting regularly to assure that in every detail the AUM will bring people together in a higher consciousness. This will be a participatory, interactive, dynamic meeting where you can explore the deeper connections you have with others in this Yoga.

As a first step toward collective participation we are asking you for suggested presenters. If you have ideas or experience related to "Becoming Collective," we would also like to hear from you. This conference will be the result of many working together.

Children are welcome at AUM '98; there will be special activities for children as well as accommodations for families.

The 1998 AUM will take place at Monte Toyon Retreat Center, near Aptos on the Pacific coast, about an hour's drive south of San Jose. The center is next to a state park, nestled in a deep forest setting with giant redwood trees, and the climate is cool and inviting in late August. The lands are laid out on gentle slopes, and distances between buildings are very close. We will have exclusive use of Monte Toyon during the four-day meeting, so we will not be interrupted by other groups.

Monte Toyon has a meditation chapel, an outdoor amphitheater, volleyball court, hiking trails, a small garden, and

many other facilities. There are semi-private and dorm accommodations.

The cost for the meeting will be:

\$85/day semi-private

\$65/day dorm

\$50 single day use

\$40/day (or less) children

This includes three meals and covers all the meetings and participatory activities. Local transportation costs may be additional depending on van-pool or car-pool arrangements.

To foster cooperation and collective work, and to assist people financially, a limited number of work-exchange arrangements will be available. Those who participate in work-exchange can reduce their daily fee by working a few hours at the AUM, for example helping with registration. A small number of scholarships will also be available. If you register for the full conference (four days) before March, 1998, there is a \$25 discount on the total cost. Deposit for registration is \$100.

Upcoming issues of *Collaboration* will contain speaker and program information, and details on transportation.

For more information, to register, or if you wish to participate in the AUM, please contact the Sri Aurobindo Association, Box 161613, Sacramento, CA, 95816. Email: AUM98@collaboration.org

Staying awake

I Almost Slept Through My Dream Come True, Strategies for Staying Awake, by Sally J. Walton, 1997.

My new book provides readers with solutions to the procrastinating delays and hurdles people erect to prevent them from making their dreams come true. I encourage you to enjoy and savor the smallest accomplishments and to make life a grateful celebration.

The book is about the possibility of being spiritually aware, even consecrated, in our day-to-day life. To see our life as spiritual practice doesn't happen in one swoosh of a magic wand. It takes daily remembering. My book is a nudge toward remembering.

For example, in my own life, I've recently started to use traffic as a spiritual practice. I found drivers seemed to be getting more aggressive and that I was as well. My car was becoming a stress box. One day I realized I could use red lights and discourteous drivers as a trigger - not for stress, but for remembering...a moment to take a deep breath, maybe even smile or say a centering phrase.

Staying Awake is available from BookPartners, Inc. P.O. Box 922, Wilsonville, OR 97070. Phone: 800-895-7323. Email: SWalton393@aol.com

—Sally Walton, swalton@aol.com



CENTER TO CENTER

Nature's Spirit

Carolyn Vaughan gave a talk at AUM '97 on the community which she and others are forming in South Carolina, called Nature's Spirit. They have purchased a tract of 210 acres, with a 10-acre lake, and have started forming the community. The following is from their first newsletter in March 1997.

About a year ago some of us had the idea of an intentional community. In the three weeks we were in Auroville in southern India we were deeply affected by their universal belief that in order to create a world that is sustainable for all we must expand our consciousness. We were also impressed by their high quality of simple living using alternative technologies and building methods and materials. In Sri Lanka and Bangladesh we were touched by the sustainable lifestyles of the villagers and their lack of need for what we in western cultures have come to depend upon, while enjoying a seemingly joyful lifestyle that most of us can only hope for.

When we returned to the United States, we felt like many people upon similar returns: overcome and disheartened by the enormity of our consumer society. Over the summer our plans for a just and sustainable community began to emerge.

At the center of our yearnings to create community is the belief that we are responding to an inner call of the Spirit to which we feel an urgency to respond. Because the Spirit is at the core of our vision, purpose, and mission, our community have a spiritual center that will be not only a sacred place but also the center that is held in our hearts. This will honor that each individual makes the choice for their personal expression of the Divine and will not be founded on any one religion or means of expression.

Believing that the land belongs to everyone and to no one individual, we plan to hold the land in common. Each member of the community will choose in collaboration with others in the community a location on which to build their own home out of their personal finances. As in Auroville, a home that anyone builds here will be theirs to live in for the remainder of their life and if some of their family want to live in it after that, then, with the approval of the community, they may do so. However, it will be "owned" by the community and will not be deeded to any individual.

Nature's Spirit is seeking differing ways for people to be involved. Membership includes:

- folks living and working full-time on the land
- others living at a distance but participating in projects of the community
- others who may want to participate in monthly planning sessions
- those who come to workshops or college internship programs and learn from our experiences
- exchange programs with villages from other cultures, perhaps in Guatemala, Sri Lanka, or India



Nature's Spirit



We recognize that this spiritual quest is a daring venture that we are inviting people to join. Having lived most of our lives in individual compartments needing to possess everything from cars to washing machines to televisions to books, we have had little experience living in true community with others. We view our community as Gandhi saw his life, as an experiment in truth, by:

- finding ways to expand our consciousness so that we can see the world with new eyes, and seek to live from an inner truth and harmony
- seeking to discover new ways to live lightly on the earth, giving back more resources than we take
- discovering new means of relating and caring for each other, locally as a community and globally with other communities in the United States and from other parts of the earth

- seeking means for communities to be self-sustainable using alternative economics and energy sources

That summer I began to see, however dimly, that one of my ambitions, perhaps my governing ambition, was to belong fully to this place, to belong as the thrushes and the herons and the muskrats belonged, to be altogether at home here. That is still my ambition. But now I have come to see that it proposes an enormous labor. It is a spiritual ambition, like goodness. The wild creatures belong to the place by nature, but as a man I can belong only by understanding and by virtue. It is an ambition I cannot hope to succeed in wholly, but I have come to believe that it is the most worthy of all.

—Wendell Berry, *Recollected Essays 1965-1980*

For more information on *Nature's Spirit*, contact Carolyn Vaughan, 455 Quail Ridge Road, Salem, SC 29676. E-mail: CarolynV@aol.com or NatuSpirit@aol.com

Sri Aurobindo Yoga Mandir

The Sri Aurobindo Yoga Mandir is an orphanage and school for children in Kathmandu, Nepal. It was founded in 1993 by Ram Chandra Das, who lived at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram during the 1980's. The following is from a letter by a San Francisco photography student who visited Nepal.

The Sri Aurobindo Yoga Mandir has a five-room house on a small piece of property on the outskirts of Kathmandu. The bottom floor has a prayer room with shrines to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, and a classroom. Upstairs are three bedrooms.

Ram Chandra has a quiet and thoughtful demeanor and he is an excellent teacher. The school currently has fifteen children, ages four to twelve, who are eager to learn, intelligent, and very attentive. While I was there we read together, drew alphabets and designs on the chalkboard, and did chores. The children get up early for prayer in the morning, then go off to gather water. Class is until lunchtime and again in the afternoon. In the evening is dinner, then prayers before bed.

Ram Chandra has two needs. The first is getting money for food. Then larger amounts would be useful for repairs of the house, building a volunteer quarter, textbooks, and clothing for the children. He writes: "I am Chandramani Bhusal, but was given the name Ram Chandra Das at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry. In 1975 I left my home for India, where I came into contact with many holy men. In 1983 someone gave me a book by Sri Aurobindo, and within a year I headed for Pondicherry. For the next ten years I lived and studied at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, where I was close to Champaklalji. When he left his body in 1992 I decided to return to Nepal, and then to Sri Aurobindo."

Questions and donations can be addressed to: Chandramani Bhusal (Ram Chandra Das), P.O. Box 1993, Kathmandu, Nepal

Ram Chandra Das...



... and a student.



THE POETRY ROOM

A Walk Into God

As I walked down the path of doom
 Cramped by death as there was no room
 I wondered what it would be like in hell
 Would it be burning hot as stories tell
 I walked on and on down the endless road
 Thinking about my future abode
 Looking ahead into the pitch black hole
 With not a single body to bear a soul
 And as I was about to reach the end
 Turning around the last death bend
 I saw the gods in my head
 Full of life, not at all dead
 Turning the final bend all was bright
 For before me sat a heavenly sight
 A being too pure for the mortal eye
 A thing too deep that can never die
 Then I realized I was not alone
 I had my mind, my heart and bone
 Then it became more clear in my mind
 The lord of all I finally did find
 Then I found that I was
 Just as everybody does
 In my soft heavenly bed
 For that strange night was finally dead.

—Matthew Smith

Matthew is a student at the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education

Revelation

Someone leaping from the rocks
 Past me ran with windblown locks
 Like a startled bright surmise
 Visible to mortal eyes, —
 Just a cheek of frightened rose
 That with sudden beauty glows,
 Just a footstep like the wind
 And a hurried glance behind,
 And then nothing, — as a thought
 Escapes the mind ere it is caught.
 Someone of the heavenly rout
 From behind the veil ran out.

—Sri Aurobindo, Collected Poems

An Already Answered Prayer

Finding God is no problem.
 She exists within each breath,
 each flower,
 each tick of the clock.
 But finding a way to live in this world in a woman's
 body
 never forgetting
 that in the very absence
 of the fulfillment of my desire
 Her presence caresses me
 has been a lifelong despairing frustration.

O Mother,
 in this time
 when men and women
 are only beginning to learn
 to find the balance of creation
 in themselves and each other
 please condense this Universe of swirling stars,
 too vast for my form to embrace,
 into a flesh and blood man
 as real as I feel myself to be
 with whom to share the daily rituals of this illusion
 in love and in joy
 until we both dissolve in Thee.

—Cassia Berman



Time is too slow for those who wait,
 too swift for those who fear,
 too long for those who grieve,
 too short for those who laugh,
 but for those who love, time is eternity.

—David LaFlamme, *It's a Beautiful Day*

Out At Sea

Drifting, out into the sea,
Up and Down, aimlessly I flow.
What message is in me?
To what distant shore do I go?

I have seen the tempest,
Ridden high crests of the storm,
Nature has thrown her best
To dislodge my inner form.

Days of endless calm,
Slowly fade the memory...
No prayer, not even a psalm,
Can end this lonely misery.

Hope and Faith, keep neck
asway,
To hear the gulls, I strain.
Gentle breeze, picks its
way,
Softly Nudging me in
its train.

I dance, I summersault,
Life's-a-jolly, I have a ball.
Waves-a-roring, I catapult,
Into the arms, of a small....

...little Boy.

—Chandresh Patel

Out At The Beach

Dashing through the pile of fallen leaves,
We jump into the car seat, my soul and me.
The Mother has promised us a ride to the sea,
Away from daily drudgery of rolled up sleeves.

"Cares" got whooshed out of the windows,
As Joy-Ride took El-Dorado wings.
Nothing was kept in shadows,
As Sun-Light bathed my sins.

The beach lay long, clean and bright,
Open, inviting, yet none was in sight.
The Mother and I walked along the shore,
Hand in hand, joys unfelt, untold before.

My soul yet was still sulking,
Dragging its feet, leaden and stulting.
When out of the froth, jumped out a
bottle,
My soul found its elusive onward
throttle.

—Chandresh Patel

THE STRUGGLE

As I look back in the past
When I didn't have a dime,
No food, no shelter but
plenty of time.

So cold and so hungry the
nights were very long;
But there was someone watching
who made me very strong.

Day by day was a struggle and
I was feeling very low;
She was watching even then and
I didn't even know.

Her arms were wrapped around me and
guiding me every day
Then sent me someone special
to help me on my way.

He taught me about The Mother and
now I really know
It was Her that watched and cared and
taught me how to grow.

The past is far behind me, but
I'll never forget the days
I was taught about The Mother and
all Her gentle ways.

So as I get into my bed and
then put out the light,
I thank Her oh so deeply—
Goodnight, my Mother, Goodnight.



by Mary (Angel) Finn



Mickey Finn: a remembrance

I was a twenty-something drop-out, confused and aimless, starting to look into occultism, when someone came up to me, an older guy with a weathered face and gravelly voice, and a Boston accent so thick you could carve it, and said, 'I wanna see if the people here ['heah'] would like to take a yoga class, and that guy over there said I should talk to you.'

So I went to his apartment on the Fenway - 91 Kilmarnock St. - and entered into a new World! Here was this old guy [as old as my own father], sitting on the floor in the lotus position, and talking to me earnestly about some Indian guru who used to be a revolutionary and about evolution, which hasn't ended with us, but which we can continue. And that all the old ways were dying, and we had the golden opportunity to be part of the new World that was seeking to be born.

And then this guy talked about someone called The Mother. And all of a sudden, the room got larger, and quieter... and warmer too, somehow. And love poured out of this man, this old street-wise con man, as he described "Th' Mothah", and how She comes to us in response to our aspiration and devotion.

He never had to refer to a book when he spoke these words - he had lived them, every one of them, and had experienced the truth they represented in his daily life.

I realize now, thinking back, just how blessed I was to meet not only Sri Aurobindo and Mother, but also this living example of the human Soul struggling to rise above some of the deepest depths, aspiring to the highest Heights — a pure Devotion and gratitude that never failed, and a divine Warrior for the Truth.

—Will

"To walk through life armoured against all fear, peril and disaster, only **two things are needed**, two that go always together -- the **Grace of the Divine Mother and on your side an inner state made up of faith, sincerity and surrender**. ... And when the grace and protection of the Divine Mother are with you, what is there that can touch you or whom need you fear? A little of it even will carry you **through all difficulties, obstacles and dangers**; surrounded by its full presence you can go securely on your way because it is hers, careless of all menace, unaffected by any hostility however powerful, whether from this world or from worlds invisible. Its touch can turn difficulties into **opportunities, failure into success and weakness into unfaltering strength**. For the **grace of the Divine Mother** is the sanction of the Supreme and now or tomorrow its effect is sure, a thing decreed, inevitable and irresistible."

The Mother, p 11

Mickey is a very special being in the community that associates itself with Sri Aurobindo's teaching, especially in the U.S. For over thirty years he has given nearly his entire life to furthering the message that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother brought to this planet, in a very personal and generous fashion. Rather than make larger public offerings in the form of classes, lectures, books etc. he spent an incredible amount of time presenting the Integral Yoga one on one, asking for little or nothing in return.

For many years, he placed a simple advertisement in a local weekly offering yoga instruction with his phone number. Those that were called from within, would get in touch with him and among those a small number would wind up at his tiny apartment on Kilmarnock St.

Over the years, there have been perhaps hundreds of souls that have been introduced to the Integral Yoga and subsequently deeply touched through Mickey's efforts. Many early Aurovillians came to this path through Mickey.

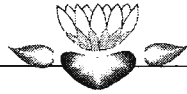
It has always seemed to me that he has been one of the strongest grounding forces and lightning rods for Sri Aurobindo and The Mother force in the U.S. in general and the Boston area in particular.

I will always think of Mickey as someone with unwavering faith, devotion and focus, a boundless enthusiasm and good humour.

—Kenny



Mickey Finn



Eugene (Mickey) Finn died October 20 at the Boston Veteran's Hospital at the age of 76 from liver cancer in the loving company of his wife, Angel.

An admitted thief, con artist and addict, Mickey had a remarkable experience of choosing to go to his yoga teacher rather than his drug connection and "forgetting about heroin for two weeks". This "cold turkey" conversion experience was part of his inspiration in teaching hatha yoga and pranayama from his one room Boston apartment for free for decades.

Bob Lawlor called him "the back street bhakti" and Sam Spanier thought of him as a "Golden Bell" ringing out "Sri Aurobindo" in his resonant voice.

Mickey introduced hundreds of people to the fundamentals of yoga, created "Sri Aurobindo Books" on Charles Street along with other devotees, many of whom drove cabs, and pooled their money to support the center. He was the inspiration behind a number of activities in the Boston area over the years, the heart of which was a weekly meditation in his apartment.

His last wish was that these weekly meditations Wednesday nights at 7 p.m. continue in the Fenway which hosted so many visitors from the Ashram and Auroville over the years:

Angel Hall
108 Kilmarnock St., Apt. 102
Boston, MA 02215
617-262-6390

Mickey's ashes will come to Matagiri next August 15th. We hope that some of you can join us.

—Julian

At 3:30 a.m. on Oct. 20, 1997, "The Golden Bell" rang for the last time as "Mickey Finn." But the sound and vibrational effect shall play upon this earth for eons to come.

That which he truly was, was greater than he himself even knew. The act of his life brought hundreds of souls to the awareness of the message of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

He acted as a bridge to carry so very many to Matagiri; without him we would not have moved along and grown as we did. He lived as a true saint and holy man.

At the hospital on Oct. 14, I saw the Mother's spirit enter his bodily form and fully take him to her.

We are all richer for the experience of his presence upon this earth. Now he has returned to the Source; He is now with us forever!

Halleluia! Halleluia! Halleluia!

—Sam and Eric of Matagiri

Mickey himself confirmed, with that unpretentious sincerity and those flashing smiles of his, that he had begun as a drug addict and con-man. But a yoga teacher whom he met introduced him experientially to a radically different understanding of the significance of life. His and Angel's were those of dedicated practitioners of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga. Few are those who are infinitely more interested in practice than in the discussion of theories about this, that or other aspect of Truth. Why rattle off incessantly about spiritual experience — about the pros and cons of this, that or other approach? Why not taste the experience, instead of discussing it. Such was the predominant mood one detected about Mickey.

How refreshing, like invigorating mountain air, his entire personality and approach was! And how many have so spontaneously evoked interest in the search for Truth. Even among the cabdrivers of Boston! Such are the true forerunners of the Future. They don't celebrate about the path. They simply walk it. And these few, these precious few, are scattered here and there, in all climes, under all skies, in white, brown, black or yellow skins, and speaking a hundred different languages - all over the globe. They don't make the headlines. Neither do they make speeches, nor send their views and opinions to fora such as this. But every moment of their lives is like a swelling canticle rising up to their beloved Sri Aurobindo and Mother. And it was my immense privilege to have met such wonderful people like Mickey and Angel.

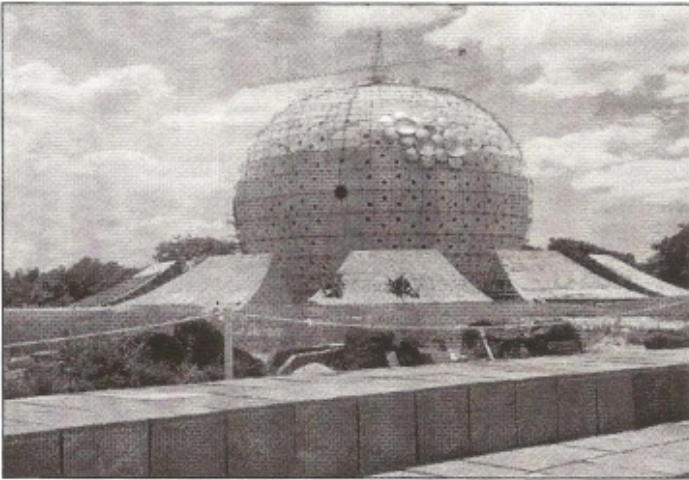
Mickey was "Nobody". Yet he, in his own unique way, was preparing for "Everybody" of Tomorrow. And I knew that I had met a true seeker. Some two or three weeks later, Will informed us of his hospitalization. I spoke over the phone to Angel, and arranged to speak to Mickey in his hospital bed. He knew he would soon leave his temporary abode. But how weakly cheerful he sounded. He thanked me for calling and expressed the hope that the weekly get-togethers in his Boston apartment would continue. A few days later, he left. And I found myself reciting over the phone to Angel that wonderful line from Savitri : THE EVER LIVING WHOM WE NAME AS DEAD.

There will not be another Wednesday evening, wherever I may be, that I will not greet Mickey in my heart.

—Devan

An exaltation entered and a hope:
An inmost self looked up to a heavenlier height,
An inmost thought kindled a hidden flame
And the inner sight adored an unseen sun."

Savitri, IV



AUROVILLE ALMANAC

Pavilion of Tibetan culture

The construction of a second Pavilion (after the Bharat Nivas) has started. It was more than twenty-five years ago that the first Pavilion began. The second Pavilion in the International zone of Auroville, the Pavilion of Tibetan Culture, will try to embody the words of the Mother: "...the cultures of the different regions of the earth will be represented here in such a way as to be accessible to all, not merely intellectually, in ideas, theories, principles and languages, but also vitally, in habits and customs, in art under all forms—painting, sculpture, music, architecture, decoration—and physically too through natural scenery, dress, games, sport, industries and food. It is perhaps symbolic that it is a nation without a country but with a deep and ancient culture which has accepted to build in the International Zone what will, we hope, be the sign of her inner quest.

Though His Holiness the Dalai Lama laid the Foundation Stone of the Pavilion on the eve of Christmas 1993, the actual construction has been delayed for different reasons, in particular by the accident of one of the architects who fell from a windmill and took several months to recover. The choice of the architecture of the building was an Aurovillian adventure and as often happens in Auroville, ended in a consensus/compromise between the technical and esthetic requirements and ultimately a far better result than the original plan. In March the final model was presented to His Holiness the Dalai Lama who made some comments for improvement of the inner courtyard and blessed the project.

As the plans were slightly modified, an extra plot of land on the western side of the Pavilion was allocated by the Planning Office in Auroville. On the eastern side, the tree planted by His Holiness the Dalai Lama will not be disturbed by the new plans, but the Foundation Stone laid by His Holiness is now outside the building. It will not be a technical problem at a later stage to move the foundation wall and the brick around it to the new entrance of the Pavilion. We decided to give the responsibility of building the Pavilion to the Auroville Building Centre, a unit of the CSR which has specialized in appropriate building technology. The main idea is that this building could be used

as a technical resource center for the Tibetans living in exile and that the technologies developed in Auroville could be replicated in the different settlements and perhaps one day in Tibet. The detailed plans are being done by Auromode Architects under the supervision of Andre Hababou the Architect in charge of the construction. The technical aspects suggested by our other architect Aurosatprem have been incorporated. The engineering drawings for the size of the foundations and the pillars have already been calculated in Madras.

One first task was to install a Solar System of twenty-five photovoltaic cells, to provide water for the site during the time of the construction, specially for the curing of the mud bricks and the ferro-cement elements. On June 20th, we had a small function for the casting of the first pillar, led by two young Rimpoches from Mundgod. A group of Aurovillians and Tibetans from Pondicherry prayed for a smooth construction and completion of the building. Seeds blessed by the Nechung State Oracle were put in the foundation of each pillar.

We are presently mainly working on the concreting of the pillars which will form the main structure of the building. The bases of all pillars have now been concreted and we are working on the tie beam. It is not the most spectacular phase of the construction, but it one of the most important ones as structurally the entire Pavilion will sit on these pillars. We should also remember that the grid of pillars has been placed according to the sketch of a traditional Tibetan Mandala. Even traditionally in Tibet, the numbers, position and design of the pillars were the most important factor in Tibetan architecture. Though the phase is a bit tedious and time consuming, we feel it is an important phase.

The manufacture of the mud bricks began the day after the birthday of HH the Dalai Lama on July 6th. This part of the construction has gone very well, the 35000 compressed earth bricks (CEB) for the vaults have been finished and are ready for laying as soon as the structure of beams will be ready. The CEB for the walls are currently being manufactured and the team of seven local people is able to press some 850 CEBs every day. By the end of September, we are expecting the pressing of the CEBs for the walls to be completed. The Department of Home of the Central Tibetan Administration has now accepted to give a labor participation from the Tibetan community. It has been agreed that the five large settlements of South India will contribute five masons for a few months till the end of the first phase of construction (hopefully in January). The expenses of their stay will be borne by the Department of Home. It is highly symbolic, that the second pavilion after the Bharat Nivas (Indian Pavilion) is being built with the concrete help of nationals from its country. This Kar Seva is in the great tradition of public buildings in Ancient India and in Tibet being built with voluntary participation of the public.

One worry remains the finances. We have now decided to complete as far as we could the first phase corresponding to the ground floor of the building. Nevertheless, the money available today will not be enough to complete this first phase. So we appeal to all the friends of Auroville and the Tibetans to help us contributing to the project or by putting us in contact with friends who could help us.

Contributions for Auroville projects can be sent to the Sri Aurobindo Association or to AVI-USA. See the Center Listings section for addresses.



CHRONICLES AND REFLECTIONS

The Separation and The Anguish

by Shyam Kumari

This is one of a series of essays written about the Mother's Prayers and Meditations. The first volume, about 120 essays, is due to be published in book form in January 1998.

In her introduction to the entire series, Shyam says:

Let me humbly say that these are my individual reflections upon the *Prayers and Meditations*. They do not explain, nay even attempt to explain, the prayers which are a sublime record of the Divine Mother's spiritual experiences: her ascents to the highest Spirit Planes, her intimate communions with the Supreme.

Yet, even if one may not be able to dive to the core of these Divine Communions and Revelations, one can, according to the measure of one's sincerity and preparation, bathe and exult in their divine ambience.

On August 6, 1994, in the holy hush of the pre-dawn hour, in an indrawn state, I pulled out the *Prayers and Meditations* from the shelf and read the prayer of March 4, 1914. Something stirred deep within. There was a descent of inspiration and as if in a meditative state I typed the incoming words; thus was formed an essay "The Separation and the Anguish" on that particular prayer.

On the prayer of March 6, 1914:

In the first week of March 1914, the Mother left her country of birth, France, on a voyage to India believing that most probably she would not return. She took leave of her family and friends. Amongst those she left behind was her young son André who was about sixteen years old. The members of her family and her friends were naturally grieved at parting from their cherished one. Though the Mother was forced to return to France in March 1915 due to the outbreak of the First World War, and lived there for about 15 months, this in fact, was the effective separation. Divine in her essence, the Mother was even in her outer consciousness, as early as 1914, worlds apart from ordinary human beings. She had, by then, scaled great heights of spirituality, and had risen above suffering in the human way. This fact is amply proved by one luminous page of her *Prayers and Meditations*, written in Geneva on March 6, 1914. In an obvious reference to her family and friends, she wrote:

After having suffered acutely from their suffering, I turned towards Thee, trying to heal it by infusing into it a little of that divine Love which is the source of all peace and all happiness. We must not run away from suffering, we must not

love and cultivate it either, we must learn how to go deep down into it sufficiently to turn it into a lever powerful enough for us to force open the doors of the eternal consciousness and enter the serenity of Thy unchanging Oneness.

Her words show that the Mother suffered acutely not from her own suffering but from that of those she was leaving behind. She did not look down from the exalted heights of her serene Consciousness on the emotional suffering of her family and friends. Rather, she pierced the outer seeming and went to the very core of the problem of pain of parting:

Surely this sentimental and physical attachment which causes an agonizing wrench when bodies are separated, is childish from a certain point of view, when we contemplate the outer forms and the reality of Thy essential Oneness.

But then the Mother identified herself with the human viewpoint. She looked deep to find out the *raison d'être* of attachment and its resultant sorrow. And having identified it she wrote:

but, on the other hand, is not this attachment, this personal affection, an unconscious effort in men to realize outwardly, as far as possible, that fundamental oneness towards which they always move without even being aware of it?

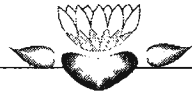
And then the Mother revealed the secret of making suffering a means of ascension:

And precisely because of that, is not the suffering that separation brings one of the most effective means of transcending this outer consciousness, of replacing this superficial attachment by the integral realization of Thy eternal Oneness?

Though herself above such anguish and pain, she appreciated this "beauty of affection and tenderness" in others. Thus, in such a lofty frame with sweet compassion and total detachment and integral calm, the Mother on that day of March, 1914, left all that is held dear by human hearts, without a backward look, without tears, offering her dear ones in total trust to the Lord, praying that their suffering might be healed:

This is what I wished for them all; this is what I ardently willed for them, and that is why, assured of Thy victory, certain of Thy triumph, I confided their grief to Thee that by illuminating it Thou mayst heal it. O Lord, grant that all this beauty of affection and tenderness may be transformed into glorious knowledge. Grant that the best may emerge from everything and Thy happy Peace reign over the earth.

Conscious yet calm, understanding yet unmoved, on the above exalted note of invocation and trust the Mother closed this prayer.



Surely this was the sublimest parting that was ever recorded in the spiritual history of the world. When Sri Rama left Ayodhya his father, the great King Dashratha, died of a broken heart due to the departure of his son. Actually Sri Rama thought it advisable to leave while his father was in a swoon. Vaishnava literature records in detail the unbearable pangs of separation of Ma Yashoda, Sri Radha and the Gopis when Sri Krishna left Vrindavan. Even the animals and the plants have been said to have suffered intensely and nobody can doubt those seer poets of Sanskrit and later of other Indian languages who wrote of this pain. The great renunciation of Buddha is called Mahabhinishkraman and looked upon with holy awe, and rightly too, by the whole world. Yet Buddha had to leave while his wife was sleeping, and he left without informing his parents. His parents were beside themselves with grief when they came to know of his departure. Along with his wife, sweet princess Yashodhara, they wept throughout the long years of his Tapasya, until he came home and enlightened them. The great Shankara had to take his mother's permission by a ruse and Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu left behind a heartbroken mother and a hardly reconciled wife. Probably the Time Spirit was not advanced enough for it to be otherwise.

The Mother, the Supramental Mahashakti, acted in a different way. We see in the sole record of that noble parting how the Mother was not only above suffering, she also healed the suffering of all those she left behind, amongst them her only son and parents whose only daughter she was, and the friends who must have held her dear because none could have helped loving her. Thus the Mother wrote a finis to the reality of emotional suffering by offering it to the Divine for transforming it into a compassionate and universal greatening. That day the dramatic intensity of human suffering at parting was conquered "in its essence," and not only was a victory made possible for all those who wished to overcome it, but also a diminishing and sublimation of the pain and anguish of lesser mortals.

August 6, 1994

Shyam Kumari has lived at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram for the last twenty-nine years and is a teacher of language and literature (English and Hindi) at the Ashram's school, the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education. In 1982, she began writing poems, lyrics, literary and social essays, stories, reviews, and plays, several hundred of which have appeared in print. Among her books are the four-volume series of How They Came to Sri Aurobindo and The Mother and the three-volume series of Vignettes of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother. She is also the author of a number of books of rhymes and stories for children. She can be reached at:

*Sri Aurobindo Ashram
22 Lally Tollendal Street
Pondicherry 605002 India
or via email at kim@auroville.org.in*

On Sensing Connections in Ordinary Events

by Paul Edmonston

Paul Edmonston stayed at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram for four and a half months in 1967-68, while on sabbatical from Pennsylvania State. He had darshan with the Mother, and was at the foundation of Auroville. He later returned for the 25th anniversary of Auroville in 1993. The present essay is from a journal he kept in 1972-73 while he was a post-doctoral fellow in South Indian Studies at the University of Pennsylvania.

Paul is a long-term admirer of Jung, especially the concept of synchronicity. This essay shows how a seemingly inconsequential event can branch out in many unexpected ways, intertwining our actions, knowledge and being.

Coming into my study this morning I noticed that the wind had blown several books to the floor, and picking one up, I began reading Tagore's *Gitanjali* without having intended so at all. In the introduction by Yeats a sentence or two caught my eye. "The squirrels come from the boughs and climb on to his knees and the birds alight upon his hands." Also a reference to Nietzsche who said, "we must not believe in the moral or intellectual beauty which does not sooner or later impress itself on physical things." Then I went on to read the small poetic volume through from beginning to end, coming finally to a famous passage which I had seen on the wall of his home in Calcutta inscribed in Tagore's flamboyant hand:

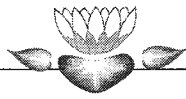
When I go from hence let this be my parting word, that what I have seen is unsurpassable.

I have tasted of the hidden honey of this lotus that expands on the ocean of light, and thus am I blessed—let this be my parting word.

In this playhouse of infinite forms I have had my play and here have I caught sight of him that is formless.

My whole body and my limbs have thrilled with his touch who is beyond touch: and if the end comes here, let it come—let this be my parting word.

Now it was not my intention to write about Tagore at the moment, but to muse a bit on the often unnoticed and seemingly coincidental or even inconsequential connections in the stream of ordinary events that constitute our ongoing experience, and of which, if we are alert, we can become increasingly aware. I stumbled on this little volume in an old bookshop in Boston some thirty years ago at a time when I knew nothing of Tagore, and even less of India, which was to call me to visit her many years



afterwards. Nor did the poetic verse make any sense to me then, and it was put aside with other volumes and only occasionally flipped through out of curiosity once or twice in the intervening years.

But I had been dreaming this morning of both squirrels and birds, and Tagore's tender relationship with these animals came to my attention because of the accident of wind. In the dream I had been concerned with a cat which was threatening a squirrel and biting its neck. In the scene that follows, however, the squirrel remains unharmed and a bird with a large beak caresses my head with its own. It occurred to me that a week ago I had looked through an album of photographs and commentary on Albert Schweitzer and was impressed with the continuing presence of animals around him at Lambarene, and had read some of his statements which revealed his continuing concern for the creation, animals as well as men. One photograph in particular I remember, since it shows a pelican perched atop a fence next to him with its long head and beak curved in a gesture of closeness around his neck. The commentary states that only with Schweitzer would the pelican venture so close and that it often followed him about, returning every night, although free to fly into the jungle. It tells of him practicing at night on his pedal organ and having an animal or two for an audience in his room, and of several animals which slept on his perch or in his room overnight, being let out each morning for the day. And above the picture of him with the pelican around his neck is a picture of him feeding a cat, a combination similar to that which occurred in my morning dream.

Recently I have been much preoccupied with our relationships, usually brutish and predatory, with most lower forms of life. I had written an essay on ahimsa (the principle of non-violence) calling attention to some of the ways in which we kill to levels of extinction only so we may eat or our dogs and cats may have meat. Finding testimony to Tagore's reverence for life is one new connection in a growing sense of concern for life on the planet, from a man whose countenance I had thought incredibly beautiful when first coming on a photograph of him on a visit to his home. This new contact with Tagore, due to the falling of his little book to the floor at this time, reminded me that I should read his biography, as I have been reading Schweitzer's, although in brief, in order to discover one more model for my life.



Cliffside Motif, Monhegan, ink on ricepaper by Paul Edmonston

This instinct of respect or dependence for the lower order, called reverence for life by Schweitzer, has recently been brought to my attention as a part of American Indian belief. They believed the animals were intermediaries between man and the gods, and would even address a tree to be taken for use in a sweat lodge before cutting it down, assuring it of the honored place in the ceremonies of which it would be a part. The relationship to Nietzsche's statement quoted earlier may be noted in Schweitzer's



lifelong attempt not only to formulate his ethic but to make it an integral part of his existence, to demonstrate it in his actions in daily life...to make his intellectual and moral philosophy visible to others in a physical way. Regarding animals, Schweitzer says:

In the past we have tried to make a distinction between animals which we acknowledge have some value and others which, having none, can be liquidated when and as we wish. This standard must be abandoned. Everything that lives has a value simply as a living thing, as one manifestation of the mystery that is life. And let us not forget that some of the more evolved animals show that they have feelings and are capable of impressive, sometimes amazing, acts of fidelity and devotion. (From *Paris Notes*)

Evidence of the continuing yet subtle interconnections taking place in our consciousness among the varying ideas and images to which we are being constantly exposed may be seen in my own case one morning recently when, while opening a can of salmon for lunch, I suddenly had a vision of the live and shining creature heroically leaping the rapids back toward the pools in which it would spawn, and thinking of the wonder of that tender pink food which had once been sparkling life, I truly ate with reverence and with thankfulness for the fact that this small life was sustaining me that day. It had not been but a few days since I had talked to some students about the manner in which man so cleverly has outwitted the salmon by stretching his seine across the mouths of rivers, thus reducing the salmon population to a mere fraction of what it was. This experience reminded me also of seeing a handsome young Indian in an ashram meditating with the most benign and reverent expression over his food before beginning to eat. It stands in stark contrast to the unthinking and hurried way in which so many of us in the West, eating heavy quantities of meat, approach our meals.

Two other very small experiences recently have further substantiated the subtle effects of interconnecting thoughts, experiences, and events on the mind, since they included feelings and insights in relation to ordinary phenomena. One was my quiet surprise and delight one morning in spring when discovering a host of small minnows swimming in schools in the creek behind our home, since they had seemingly appeared overnight in waters that had exhibited no previous sign of life. Examining the obscure reasons for my inordinate feeling of thankfulness for this simple event, I realized it was because the presence of the minnows was an assurance that the creek was not polluted enough by man to make life impossible, thus making it miracle enough in the present context of events—in the face of man's relentless degradation of his environment. An event which would have been taken absolutely for granted as a child had filled me with a kind of gratitude now, in the present, as an adult. The second event was the discovery that a male and female pair of ducks which have been living in the stream were being followed one day by eight tiny peeping ducklings. Someone later informed me that they had seen the eggs resting along the bank and that one had been lost when either a

child or another animal had knocked it into the stream. What the sudden appearance of these young creatures meant, in its miniscule way, was that in this small, hidden place, at least, life could survive—had survived, and this fact alone, at the present moment, when we seem to depend upon so much death, was miracle enough. I think it was at these two times, recently, so simple in their way, that I experienced what is so commonly referred to as reverence for life.

The connections at work in my own life regarding this matter go on and on. Recently a person who worked with laboratory animals stated that she had no problem of conscience as far as they were concerned, although she was horrified at the sight of a bullfight. In this connection, I found myself reading about ahimsa as it is practiced by the Jains, to the point that even breathing must be cautious lest the believer inhale and kill an insect. Now, it is interesting to find a quote by Schweitzer which brings these several concerns together in an imaginative and an ethical way, balancing the seeming need of man to use animals in his battle against disease while still maintaining a fundamentally ethical awareness of his actions and a sense of his indebtedness to the lower order within a context of basic reverence for life. He states:

Those who test medicines or operating techniques on animals or who inoculate them with illnesses in order to help mankind through the results they hope to obtain in this way must never quiet their conscience with the general excuse that in practicing these cruel methods they are pursuing a lofty purpose.

In every individual case they must ascertain whether it is really necessary to impose such a sacrifice on the animal for the sake of humanity. They should take a very particular care to reduce suffering as much as is within their power.

How many crimes are committed in laboratories where anesthesia is often omitted to save time or trouble! How many more crimes are committed when animals are subjected to torture merely to demonstrate to students things long known to be facts! Precisely because the animal has, by serving in the realm of experimentation, made it possible for such precious information to be obtained for suffering humanity—but at the cost of its pain—a new bond of solidarity has been created between the animal and us.

Each of us has, as a result, the obligation to do as much good for these creatures as he can. When I come to the aid of an insect in distress, I am doing nothing more than trying to pay a part of the forever-renewed debt of man to beast.



It has always been a part of the highly developed ethical consciousness, evidently, to be possessed of the imagination to realize some of the less obvious, subtle, and complex interconnections among persons, animals and events, such as Schweitzer here demonstrates, as well as the courage and the ability to articulate and formulate these relationships for the further enlightenment and sharpening of the conscience of men. It would seem also to be common early in the lives of highly developed spiritual men that they exhibit an almost instinctive or intuitive abhorrence of violence or killing suffered by one order of life at the hands of another. Similarly, the beginnings of most if not all of the great ethical world systems may be traced to the initial, almost physiologically experienced repugnance of an individual conscience when faced with what appear as unnecessary conditions of inequality, brutishness, injustice, and disease among creatures and men.

For example, it takes a sensitive and cultivated intelligence to be able to envision the elaborate chain of acts and consequences preceding such a simple luxury as the delivery to our doorstep of a quart of milk. Or the acts leading to the neatly-wrapped piece of steak. Or the complicity of hundreds of thousands of our fellow citizens in the elaborate series of operations both preceding and making possible the dropping of thousand-ton bombs or canisters of napalm on anonymous peasants in jungles halfway around the globe. Or the chain of guilt connecting the alcoholic manufacturer, the bartender, the state, and the citizenry which supports or condones them all and the fatal accident on the highways caused by a person who has had too much to drink. Or the elaborate series of interconnecting events between the profiteering speculator in the stock market dealing in war-related industrials and the last final acts of destruction visited by a superior technology on the flesh of real people in war. The superior or the developed ethical or religious consciousness becomes sensitive to and imaginatively aware of these interconnections, so much so that they become an integral part of the fabric of his actions and his view of life, which he then articulates for other men, enjoining them to adopt his precepts, applying principles based upon this awareness in their lives.

And imagine—it was the seemingly accidental fall of a little book of poetic statements by Tagore which initiated this morning's musings on the interconnection of events.

Paul Edmonston has been an artist and art teacher for fifty years. He lives in Athens, Georgia, and can be reached at edmonart@aol.com.

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The house at Matagiri

The Synergistic Duo

by Arun Vaidya

Sam Spanier and Eric Hughes Becoming a Bridge between East and West

Imagine—a small locomotive chugging along a mountainside whispering, “Yes I CAN ...Yes I CAN ...Yes I CAN” as it ascends. One might hear a gentle breeze whispering on the Mother’s Mountain, “Yes, I can be a bridge between East and West...help me and guide me.” And if one can be quiet within, one might listen to that melody—“Huff and puff...huff and puff...huff and puff...puff-puff- I surrender to YOU ever more.” This journey has many stations on the mountain of self-surrender!

Such is the commitment of Sam Spanier and Eric Hughes, the synergistic duo who have opened a cultural and geographic gate of unity between East and West. Through Matagiri they have provided an opportunity to fellow seekers of Integral Yoga to review one’s individual path and correlate it with the Mother’s will to manifest the truth of life divine. How? By visiting Matagiri, the mountain of self-surrender and consecration.

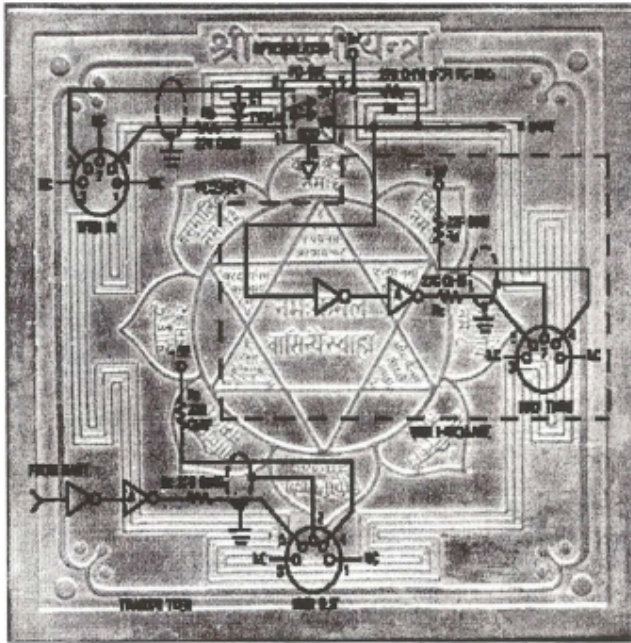
The comradery between Sam and Eric has been synergistic. They have toiled for decades with faith in the Divine Mother and surrendered to be her workers in bringing the presence to the USA. It has been a lofty undertaking but nevertheless an arduous journey. Their work has taken roots and is bearing fruits—and harmony and dedication to the Divine Mother will be the cornerstone of all who are affiliated with Matagiri.

Matagiri is located in a tranquil Catskill mountain range in the New York State. You can visit and discover your own truth of the being, find the path to follow based on your own inspirations, convictions, and enfolding divine grace. Sri Aurobindo’s relics are in the meditation room and the Mother’s statement to Sam, “You can be a link between East and West” permeates the mountain of self surrender to uplift us to a new height!

—Arun Vaidya, avaidya@erols.com



NOTES FROM THE FIELD



Yantra, scan-art by Vishnu Eschner

Cyberspace Satsang: Speculations on a Guru for the 21st Century

Let Davidson is a long-time student of Advaita Vedanta, Buddhism, and the Perennial Philosophy, and has recently studied for three years with Sri H.W.L. Poonja, a master in the tradition of Sri Ramana Maharishi. The following article is reprinted with permission from the summer 1995 issue of the newsletter Noumenon.

The evolution of consciousness occurring now in the last years of the twentieth century may well bring us a new experience of the guru as awakener within a unique new version of satsang. We see in history that spiritual forms and traditions have been transformed through geographical migration and historical change. One vivid example is the spectacular transformation of Buddhism as it was carried from its original base in India to Tibet, Southeast Asia, China, Japan, and now the West, in which it spawned richly varied practices, teachings and, I would dare say, realizations as well. As the explosion of spirituality and technological innovation continues to affect consciousness in contemporary, high-tech society, it is just as likely that the non-dual realization may find new forms and relevance to the emerging culture on the new frontier of cyberspace.

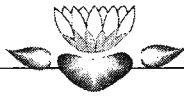
I see the possibility of a new version of satsang emerging in the globalisation of electronic communications we call cyberspace. The convergence of global telecommunications, the Internet, World Wide Web, networked computers and information

technology, commercial online services, electronic bulletin boards, satellite and broadcast radio and television, cable networks, virtual reality multimedia entertainment, is forming an expanding and internally proliferating interdependent web of connectivity that is integrating our physically separate individual and corporate intelligence into a shared collective mind. This rapidly unifying communication is bringing us together into an emerging planetary field of consciousness, a phenomenon Teilhard de Chardin referred to as the noosphere (noos=Gr. mind) and what Peter Russell called the global brain.

The increasingly sophisticated high-tech telecommunications infrastructure is actually, beginning to approximate the workings of consciousness electronically and so provides ever more subtle channels through which the all-pervading Self can circulate and reveal itself. The evolving hardware, computer technology, networking capabilities, fiber-optics, increased bandwidth, blazing modems, all facilitate the flow of digital on-off impulses of light traveling almost instantaneously through a timeless, spaceless continuum of immediate communications. Electronic bits of information, literally consciousness "information", make up a constant flow by which the unity informs itself. Similarly, the ingenious "multi-media" projection of three-dimensional "virtual reality" is beginning to replicate how mind creates the sensory experience of the physical manifestation itself, revealing the diaphanous, empty, holographic nature of the universe. Technology, the extension of mind, is rapidly providing the instruments by which we can see through the maya of form to the underlying light of consciousness itself.

Cyberspace, then, is an extraordinarily vivid and dramatic technological-electronic expression of the play of consciousness now progressively revealing its unity. Our great opportunity now in cyberspace is to see through the electronic extensions of mind to recognize our identity with this deeper reality, already present within every breath, within every bit and byte, which is the light and screen on which information, multi-media and virtual reality are being projected. This is an upgrade of Ramana Maharshi's image of the movie screen as the Self or ground upon which the moving forms of light are projected. For a new generation, the computer screen and the dancing multi-media images may well be coming straight from Arunachala: the guru who could manifest as nothing less than a sacred mountain may well claim cyberspace as its domain as well.

Within this field of consciousness are rapidly growing electronic clusters of people world-wide who are beginning to relate and communicate with one another as new high-tech versions of satsang. My vision is that this cyberspace community is an emerging satsang within which the impersonal global guru may function to awaken a segment of the planet's population to their identity as being consciousness. I see the intense rush to cyberspace in our times as the pull of the guru itself, for those souls who are ready for Self-recognition. Like the moth hypnotically drawn to the flame, the ripe mind is lured inexorably to its source. For many, the draw to cyberspace is the call of mystery itself.



Beneath the surface objectives people seek on the Internet and World Wide Web—business, communications, information, education, entertainment, sex, relationship, community—is the deeper pull to ultimate fulfillment. These drives are subliminal subsets of the mother of all drives, the unconscious yearning to drink of the sacred, to realize we are universal consciousness itself.

Despite the presence of every human experience and desire imaginable on the Internet, I would argue that for a certain segment of the population, cyberspace is a spiritual experience. The spirituality is in both the medium and the message. There are strong, vibrant discussions of spiritual and philosophical content on the Net, discussions of ultimate things and the most extraordinary array of old and new religious forms, rituals and sentiments. This is an arena in which ultimate questions are being discussed fervently, almost as if the medium itself—a projection of light—encourages inquiry and self-reflection. As Sherry Turkle pointed out, the computer is not only a business tool, it is a “metaphysical machine” which can trigger meditative awareness, the flow experience, and deep speculation on ultimate questions in the very process of browsing the Web and sending e-mail. Sitting silently in front of the computer with such focused concentration could have the power of a meditation retreat. The computer late at night is the sacred ritual of many souls who may well come to recognize their own light reflected on the screen of consciousness.

The unique capabilities of global telecommunications create a special satsang-like quality for the new virtual spiritual communities on the Net. In the past, “place-based” communities were shaped and defined by culture, race, language, geography. Now we are seeing clusters of discussion groups forming electronic communities that are bonded by spirit, floating in the non-local domain of conscious space. Drawn together by spiritual interest, sharing vision, beliefs, interests, passions, rituals, and inquiry, these satsangs literally occur in the timeless, placeless, universal, intangible reality of cyberspace which is increasingly taking on the qualities of consciousness itself.

Paradoxically, the anonymous and depersonalising aspects of electronic communication create conditions for the intimate communion of satsang. People often feel much freer in cyberspace to cut through superfluities quickly and seem more willing to reveal, confession-like, their inner-most essence, which they otherwise usually keep locked up within. The electronic transmission of disembodied intelligence provides greater freedom from the personal characteristics that often distract attention from the Self. Here is the opportunity to see through the usual

identifications—physical appearance, age, gender, race, culture—that mask the underlying source identity itself. This electronic or light-based global communication could well become a true communion in the deepest meaning of sharing the intangible reality that we actually have and are in common—freeing us to recognize the luminous all-pervading buddhamind mysteriously in dialogue with itself.

So could this be a contemporary domain for the non-dual guru function? Cyberspace may or may not produce the guru as embodied personality—certainly many individuals are already showing up on the Web and in newsgroups to claim a teaching role or provide collegial spiritual support. Yet I see a new possibility emerging here, consistent with the Internet’s fundamental character as an self-organizing, egalitarian and freedom loving community that resists authority, control and external regulation. Perhaps we will see the emergence of the guru function as a communal expression. Perhaps cyberspace itself is the progressively materializing face of a global guru, manifesting as the collectivity of evolved souls who remind one another of their prior unity and identity. Perhaps the “we” of the cyberspace community is the first-person talk of our greater Self. I remember David Spangler, one of our contemporary propohets, at the Omega Institute in the

early 80’s, musing that in our time the messiah would be a collective entity, not a solitary individual. It makes sense that in the great age of the global collective, the guru would also be a global presence. As Christ said, “When two or more are gathered in my name, I am with you.” So what occurs when millions of computer users face the screen of Self and together inquire “Who am I?” Could this not evoke the

very liberating power that satsang—the company of truth itself—has released for millenia?

Cyberspace represents the same paradoxes as the non-dual realisation: it is at the same time globalizing and decentralizing, bringing about a collective unity of consciousness while simultaneously allowing the flowering of individual empowerment and self-expression. The one and the many, the invisible light and the multiple virtual forms of multi-media and information, the harmony of transcendental unity and the proliferating immanent manifestation. And all of it consciousness’ eternal play of entertainment and self-knowing, projecting in infinite space. Who is to say what new surprise the infinite creativity of the great Mystery will reveal in this ongoing dance of awakening?

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Technology, the extension of mind, is rapidly providing the instruments by which we can see through the maya of form to the underlying light of consciousness itself.



ESSAYS

Introduction to the Bhagavad Gita

by Paul Molinari

This is part of a longer essay by Paul Molinari, presented for the first time to the Personal Theology group at the Berkeley Unitarian Church, February 28, 1993.

There are four great events in history, the siege of Troy, the life and crucifixion of Christ, the exile of Krishna in Brindaban and the colloquy on the field of Kurukshetra. The siege of Troy created Hellas, the exile in Brindaban created devotional religion, (for before there was only meditation and worship), Christ from his cross humanized Europe, the colloquy at Kurukshetra will yet liberate humanity. —Sri Aurobindo, *Thoughts and Aphorisms*

For Sri Aurobindo, the modern mystic-poet of India, the high point of the Gita are three lines in the fifteenth chapter that describe the “three souls” of existence. Sri Aurobindo has said that this concept provides a solution to the problem of the relationship of the individual to the cosmos and the relationship of the transcendental aspect to both the individual and the cosmos, perhaps “the greatest of all philosophical problems with which human reason has to struggle.” The lines are (Chapter 15, 16-17):

There are two Purushas [Souls] in the world, the akshara [imperishable] and the kshara [perishable], - the kshara is all creatures, the akshara is called kutastha, the one on the summit. There is another Purusha, the highest (uttama), called also Paramatma or Supreme Spirit, who enters into the three worlds (the worlds of sushupti, svapna, jarat, otherwise the causal, mental and physical planes of existence), and sustains them as their imperishable lord. (Sri Aurobindo’s translation)

This passage affirms the many without diminishing the One. Both are real and exist as an aspect of (in the Gita’s terminology) the Purushottama, which transcends both Being and Becoming, Unity and Multiplicity, yet is immanent in them. “This idea of the Purushottamma, though continually implied in the Upanishads, is disengaged and definitely brought out by the Gita and has exercised a powerful influence on the later developments of the Indian religious consciousness.” (Essays, p.73)

The Bhagavad Gita is a profound text that requires close study before it yields up its subtler secrets. It is Brahma-vidya, the knowledge of existence, as well as Yoga-shastra, scripture on the science of the Self. It is not pure Monism although it posits one eternal Self as the foundation of existence, nor is it Mayavada although it speaks of the maya of prakriti in the manifested universe. The Gita has had many interpreters who have chosen to

emphasize elements of its text or ignore other parts to find in it support for their various positions. This is the fate of many timeless texts such as the Bible or Koran as well as the Gita. But the Gita stands alone in its synthetic spirit and practical wisdom.

The Bhagavad Gita can be approached as inspirational literature, as metaphor and analogy or as scripture. Any approach will enrich and broaden one’s horizons because the Gita is charged with light and power. The image of Krishna and Arjuna riding together should not be taken for mere creative device. The Self and the self ride together (in the body) and this is one of the many symbols the Gita carries. As “spiritual technology,” that is, useful techniques for the pursuit of the Self and consciousness, the Gita is peerless.

Of all commentators on the Bhagavad Gita, the most prolific is Sri Aurobindo who wrote two significantly sized volumes on it. The “triple yoga” of the Gita became central to his Integral Yoga which could be considered the next step on the golden stair of spiritual evolution. In closing I would like to quote the first paragraph of his essay, “The Message of The Gita”:

“The secret of action,” so we might summarize the message of the Gita, the word of its divine Teacher, “is one with the secret of all life and existence. Existence is not merely a machinery of Nature, a wheel of law in which the soul is entangled for a moment or for ages; it is a constant manifestation of the Spirit. Life is not for the sake of life alone, but for God, and the living soul of man is an eternal portion of the Godhead. Action is for self-finding, for self-fulfilment, for self-realisation and not only for its own external and apparent fruits of the moment or the future. There is an inner law and meaning of all things dependent on the supreme as well as the manifested nature of the self, the true truth of works lies there and can be represented only incidentally, imperfectly and disguised by ignorance in the outer appearances of the mind and its action. The supreme, the faultless largest law of action is therefore to find out the truth of your own highest and inmost existence and live in it and not follow any outer standard and dharma. All life and action must be ‘II then an imperfection, a difficulty, a struggle and a problem. It is only by discovering your true self and living according to its true truth, its reality that the problem can be finally solved, the difficulty and struggle overpassed and your doings perfected in the security of the discovered self and spirit turn into a divinely authentic action. Know then your self, know your true self to be God and one with the self of all others; know your soul to be a portion of God. Live in what you know; live in the self, live in your supreme spiritual nature, be united with God and Godlike. Offer, first, all your actions as a sacrifice to the Highest and the One in you and to the Highest and the One in the world; deliver last all you do into his hands for the supreme and universal Spirit to do through you his own will and works in the world. This is the solution that I present to you and in the end you will find that there is no other.”

—Sri Aurobindo, *Essays on the Gita*, p.510



India and the USA — collaboration?

by Kosha Shah

Kosha Shah is the founder of the Sri Aurobindo Research Foundation in Baroda, India, and the editor of Ritagni, A Journal dedicated to the Social and Political Vision of Sri Aurobindo. She visited the United States in the summer of 1997 and gave a talk at the AUM meeting in New York.

India and the United States of America—they seem to be two countries poles apart in every way. They are even located half-way across the globe from each other. There seems to be little that they would have in common. Perhaps this itself can be seen as an opportunity they are both presented with to learn from each other.



My visit to the USA this summer was enlightening in many ways. I stayed there for a period of four months which enabled me to observe American Society and the American people at close quarters. What I experienced was very different from my earlier impressions about this country. When I visited nearly ten years ago, I had not been able to develop a deeper contact with the non-

Indian Americans. So my perspective was limited. The media too had not done much to further my understanding of this country and her people.

Apart from wanting to understand the USA as a nation, I was also interested in seeing it with reference to India—my own country—especially in the light of what Sri Aurobindo and the Mother may have said or implied. My personal interest lies in creating a viewpoint on the basis of what their socio-political vision was—both for India and the world at large and how to make that relevant to the current problems that we are facing. To enable this, in December 1995, I initiated the forming of Sri Aurobindo Research Foundation in Baroda. In July 1996 the first issue of *Ritagni*, a quarterly journal devoted to this vision, was published by the Foundation.

India was and is central to this work for this is where all the adverse forces are concentrated at the moment in putting up a fight against the Supramental Force. Today, she appears to be the land of Falsehood, a total negation of the truth of her Spirit in every way. Doubtless, she has to awaken to her inner Truth—for her own sake as well as for the sake of the world. For what she has to contribute is indispensable for the collective movement of the world towards a spiritualized society. In that

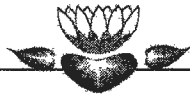
sense, each country has a unique aspect particular to her own genius which needs to be brought forward. And it is on this truth that other aspects of life can derive their strength from and grow.

India's contribution is the permeating of spirituality into every walk of life—be it social, political, religious or educational, the arts or the sciences. This is what ancient India had achieved and this is what India of the future must rediscover. The Spirit will remain the same, the form taken will be different. There must not be a return to the past but a new future is to be created. There should be a return to the spirit, to understand it and to manifest new forms in consonance with that truth. The need for every age differs and even the most outward forms have to be plastic enough to be molded to newer needs as they present themselves. Only then can a country or her institutions or her people remains relevant to the present and the future, not fossilized because of a clinging to a distant past.

This is what has happened to India today—an old lady thousands of years old. A glorious past, a troubled present and a nebulous future. Repeated invasions—the last being by the British—have depleted her vitality. Every conqueror tried to destroy the fabric of her civilization. She was battered but she survived despite all that but with very few remnants of her true self. At every stage, she tried to assimilate whatever she could of the new culture that came with the invaders, giving it a shape all her own. This resulted in a rich and varied civilization which imparted a collective knowledge and wisdom to the people. But to give an impetus towards new forms for the future, a new vitality is required to overcome the present obstacles. This is what India lacks today. Fifty years of independence have not been enough for her to organize the material circumstances. The multicultural milieu has added to the complexity of the problems. Besides, her later cultural heritage had emphasized other-world spirituality due to which there was an absence of vigor in the outward expressions of life. Poverty was often eulogized as an ideal and the generation of wealth a Sin. No doubt, undue emphasis on material progress can weigh the options in favor of a totally superficial life. But if the spiritual truth behind this is seen and followed as a national ideal, the outward manifestation would be of a very different type.

On the other hand, the USA is a young nation bubbling with life and energy. She is like a teenager on the go. Those who came to settle here were those seeking adventure and a different existence. The nation itself was born out of rebellion towards the mother country. Survival at any cost became important, for something new had to be created in an unknown land. All this had both positive and negative impacts on the psyche of the nation. Liberty was enshrined in the Constitution as central to the nation's and the individual's development. The desire for material progress and unparalleled freedom has its own fallouts. This has given rise to

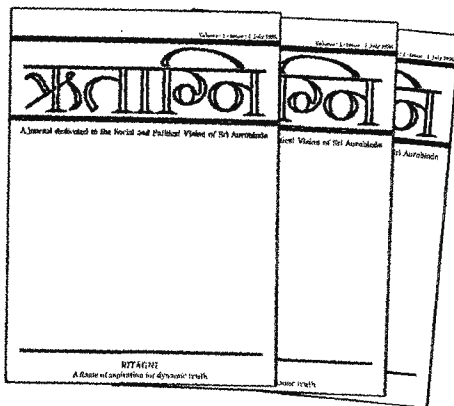
The USA is a young nation bubbling with life and energy...



a society where the individual is emphasized over the collectivity and material success is the measure of progress. Certainly, this desire for material perfection has led to a highly organized society where efficiency is the hallmark, which is a wonderful achievement in itself. But at times it seems like a gigantic machine devoid of the human touch. There has been in the last few decades the New Age phenomenon which symbolizes the subjective search amongst many Americans. It is obvious that despite so much progress, there is a lot of frustration in many areas especially amongst the old, the not-so-strong and amongst the relatively less successful. Competitiveness and market-orientation are the key words. "If it sells, it must be good," not "If it is good, it must sell" that is the criteria. But corruption and mediocrity which the average Indian is used to does not touch the average American. Life in the USA is comfortable and yet there is a search for something that will be truly fulfilling. The answer lies in spirituality alone. The subjective seeking has as yet not been true and has given rise to many self-styled "gurus" selling a hotchpotch spirituality. But till this true spirituality is found and its applications in life are worked out, the confusion will remain.

So with India at one extreme with her ancient spiritual wisdom in need of vitality to recover it and with USA at the other extreme with her drive for material perfection but in need of true spirituality to give a higher and more complete form to her dream, it seems obvious that they have much to give to each other. Whether the respective governments realize this or not, individuals and groups who do recognize this need can take the initiative to come together and collaborate in several areas. Those devoted to Sri Aurobindo's Yoga would understand this much better and could increase the movement both ways, not limiting themselves only to this group but widening the circle as it were. A great future awaits both India and the USA—in a deeper sense. I feel that their coming together in many ways would serve a higher purpose setting an example to the rest of the world and hastening as it were the movement towards a truly spiritualized society.

Ritagini is available from: Sri Aurobindo Research Foundation,
B-103, Amrakunj Apartments, Racecourse Circle,
Baroda-390 007, India.



REVIEWS

Film

Truly, Madly, Deeply. Directed by Anthony Minghella, starring Juliet Stevenson and Alan Rickman. Samuel Goldwyn Co., 1991.

How does grief—gut-wrenching, sobbing, maddening grief—affect the human spirit? And how might a spirit respond? In this touching film, Stevenson plays a woman who can't get her recently deceased husband out of her mind or emotions, and Rickman is the husband who returns from death in answer to her profound need. There are no special effects, just an introspective look at love and grief, life and death.

—DH

Book

And There Was Light, by Jacques Lusseyran, Parabola, 1987 (first published 1953). (Also available on audio cassette from <http://www.amazon.com>). One man's memoir of blindness and light; a simple but moving account of the power of consciousness. Lusseyran went blind at the age of eight, but quickly developed an inner sight, which served him for the rest of his life. This memoir covers his experiences as a young man, through his role as a leader in the French resistance, and finally his capture and internment in Buchenwald.

—DH

Music

Symphony #5, Adagietto movement, by Gustav Mahler. Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra with Zubin Mehta, London Records, 1987.

This movement, with its restrained use of harp and strings, speaks of grief and grieving, and of acceptance, while its pathos, repose and genuine sadness transports us to another realm. It is a long goodbye—to those we have loved, to the world itself—and a meditation on the fragile, precious, fleeting nature of life.

—MB

Book

Where There Is No Doctor, A Village Health Care Handbook, by David Werner. Hesperian Foundation, 1992.

Where There Is No Doctor has been translated into more than eighty languages, and has been followed by *Helping Health Workers Learn*, *A Book for Midwives*, *Disabled Village Children*, and most recently, *Where Women Have No Doctor*. These books are written for peasants, and in addition to modern medical treatments talk about home remedies, first aid, nutrition, village hygiene, and family planning. In my opinion the Hesperian Foundation has done more for the world's health than any other single group. The Hesperian Foundation, PO Box 11577, Berkeley, CA 94712-2577

—DH



Multimedia CD-ROM

On Common Ground: World Religions in America, edited by Diana Eck. Columbia University Press, 1997.

This CD is based on research by the Pluralism Project at Harvard University. It looks specifically at the last thirty years in America, and covers fifteen traditions such as the Buddhist, Jain, Muslim, Sikh, and Taoist. Diana Eck, the founder of the project, came to Harvard as a student of the culture and religions of India. She notes that in the 1990s we are seeing an "emergence in America of a new cultural and religious reality," due in large part to the influx of Asians following the 1965 Immigration Act. For more information, see <http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~pluralism/>

—DH

Book

Choosing Reality: A Buddhist View of Physics and the Mind, by B. Alan Wallace. Snow Lion Publications, 1989.

In this book, Wallace elegantly sets forth a non-dual perspective, which is neither materialism nor idealism, as an alternative to current attempts to integrate mind and matter. Presenting a clear understanding of the limitations of present-day science, Wallace develops the beginnings of what Sri Aurobindo might have called a gnostic science, a way of knowing which honors the contemplative vision of the world without rejecting the gains of modern science. While not academic in the sense of having a dry scholarly style, this is a book which requires deep and sustained reflection.

I was fortunate to take part in a workshop given by Alan Wallace in the fall of 1996 on contemplative science. He has a childlike enthusiasm, and it is wonderful to see the joy he conveys both in person and in writing regarding the synthesis of science and spirituality.

—Don Salmon

Film

Contact. Directed by Robert Zemeckis, starring Jodie Foster, Matthew McConaughey, and Tom Skerritt. Warner Brothers, 1997.

Contact begins with a visual flight away from the earth, into the far reaches of space, where the universe collapses into blackness whereupon this void condenses itself into the pupil of a young girl's eye. She is seated at a shortwave radio, searching for someone to talk to. She is the consciousness of the universe seeking to meet itself. Solitary vastness and solitary consciousness. This searching is the heart of the movie, and a central movement of spiritual practice.

Contact may well be the forerunner of a new generation of science fiction film, one as far from the current crop of laser-blasting space operas as it is from the fifties' bug-eyed latex aliens. Instead of special effects, *Contact* relies upon a sense of awe, a grounding in current science, and intelligent, mature characters.

The movie, and Carl Sagan's 1986 novel of the same name, is based on the search for extraterrestrial intelligence, otherwise known as SETI. A project with this name was funded for some years until the early 1990's at a radio telescope facility in New Mexico called the Argus Array, and perhaps the most dramatic event in the movie occurs when Jodie Foster, playing Ellie Arroway, a single-minded astronomer intent on the search, first gets an indication that there may be a message from another civilization. She skids along dusty roads in her convertible, punching commands into a laptop computer, as gargantuan telescope dishes wheel slowly above her in response. Here we feel more than in any other scene the relationship between human life and technology.

When I became blind, I found out that an inner space existed. This space also changed its dimensions in accordance with the condition of my soul. Sadness, hate, or fear not only darkened my universe, but also made it smaller. The number of objects I could encompass within myself with one glance decreased. In the truest sense of the word, I knocked against everything. Objects and beings became obstacles within myself. Outwardly I could not avoid running against doors and furniture. I was punished very thoroughly and very quickly.

Conversely, however, courage, attention, joy, had the immediate effect of opening up and illuminating space. Soon everything existed in me abundantly: a great many objects, pictures, beings. I saw a magnificent landscape before me. I knew that this landscape could be expanded indefinitely, in order to achieve this, my joy had merely to become greater. At the same time, my physical adroitness increased; I found my way and moved with assurance. In short, there were two possibilities: to reject the world—and that meant darkness, reverses—or to accept it, and that meant light and strength.

From Blindness, a New Seeing of the World, by Jacques Lusseyran



The philosophical dialogue moves back and forth between Arroway and Palmer Joss, a young theologian who declares at one point "I'm not against technology, I'm against the men who deify it at the expense of human truth." Joss is the voice of all those who do not believe that science holds answers to ultimate questions, but who are not willing to condemn it either. He stands in stark contrast to the irrationality of wild-eyed religious fundamentalists.

Science and religion both loomed large in Sagan's mind, as seen by the fierce arguments he raised in another recent book, *The Demon-Haunted World*. One of the strange paradoxes of our time, he points out, is that science—which permeates daily life, which has given us wonders to strain the imagination, and which raises fundamental questions of human nature—is practically unknown. We live in a mythological world populated not by unicorns and river sprites but by microwaves, distributed computing, and recombinant DNA. The average American, who can talk for an hour about prayer in school, would be hard pressed to explain the basic principles underlying a telephone. Three centuries after Newton, knowledge of the natural world seems to be shrinking, not growing, in the public mind.

The reasons for this are complex, but one sure factor is our desire for instant results, and our unwillingness to commit to substantial goals. Knowledge, whether mental or spiritual, is a skill which takes hard work, experiment, and experience. It depends upon lengthy preparation; one doesn't exhaust the intricacies of quantum mechanics or Integral Yoga in an week, or even a year. Dedication and perseverance are required.

Jodie Foster is the soul of *Contact*, and her integrity permeates the film; role and person become one. The force of a person's consciousness manifests itself in all that she does and says, for actresses as well as yogis, and watching such a person becomes a meditation on excellence.

Ellie Arroway spends years watching and listening to the stars, in an attempt to find what she has lost, the touch of soul to soul. Radio astronomy may seem an unlikely route to achieve unity with the cosmos, but who is to say what ultimate purpose our actions serve? Adult careers may begin with shadowy childhood events, or unfathomable psychic forces. Does this imply a contradiction of the objectivity of science? Not really. Science, along with every other human activity, is a conjunction of the personal and the universal, and the particulars of an individual life play themselves out in harmony with eternal forces.

Similarly, for those of us who pursue a spiritual path, the accidents of our beginning and the specifics of our practice do not encompass the whole that is the path. Neither do these outward details explain our revelations. Spiritual realization is not caused by indigestion, any more than Einstein's relativity is explained by the nursery rhymes he listened to as a boy.

In our time technology is rushing ahead at breakneck speed. The dreams of mid-century—lasers, space travel, talking machines—are old hat, and even those of a few years ago—holographic memory, cloning—are fast becoming realities. The pace of change in digital computers has far outstripped anything that the average

human can keep up with, even as that very technology regales us with sparkling visions of the future-present.

And if such wonders seemingly await us only a few years down the road, when CPU's run at a speed of gigahertz and information storage is measured in petabytes, then what would happen if we were to meet beings from a civilization a thousand or a million years more technically advanced? Would they not have found the answers to every question, solved every problem of behavior, politics, disease? To put it differently, what would happen if a being were to step out of the Supramental world tomorrow, its every cell in complete integration with the universal, having solved every problem of integration of body, mind and spirit? Is not even the possibility worth dedicating one's life to the pursuit? Doesn't every other purpose pale with insignificance compared to the attempt to bring about a new world?

The climax of *Contact* is an astronomical vision on a scale of the million eyes and mouths of Vishnu, and Jodie Foster aptly shows the heart-stopping awe, the open-eyed wonder at being granted such a vision. "No words...they should have sent a poet," she whispers.

Unfortunately the difference between fantasies and visions, for the untutored awareness, may be slight. When virtual scenes can be produced by any teenager with a fifty-dollar multimedia program, discrimination becomes all the more important, especially if we are striving for an spiritual synthesis that includes science.

Contact leaves us with a surprising ambivalence. In answer to a child's question if there are aliens, we are told "The most important thing is that you all keep on searching for your own answers." These answers must be worked out in each of us, made real to our perceptions, fleshed out in our force of consciousness; we can't accept a glib response, much less pick them up with the latest CD or download them from the Internet. Olaf Stapledon in his novel *Starmaker* imagines a half-spiritual, half-scientific journey in which a man merges consciousness with larger and larger wholes, until, after passing through civilizations, he reaches the level of the cosmos. We need to widen our horizons to the entire human race, and beyond. "All it requires," says Ellie, "is a sense of adventure."

—David Hutchinson



Sri Aurobindo with disciples,
1918-20



SOURCE MATERIAL

The Mother on Divine versus ordinary love

The following material is from Questions and Answers, 19 September 1956 (Collected Works of the Mother, Vol. 8, pp.301-303).

It is said that to become conscious of divine Love all other love has to be abandoned. What is the best way of rejecting the other love which clings so obstinately (laughter) and does not easily leave us?

To go through it. Ah!

To go through, to see what is behind it, not to stop at the appearances, not to be satisfied with the outer form, to look for the principle which is behind this love, and not be content until one has found the origin of the feeling in oneself. Then the outer form will crumble of itself and you will be in contact with the divine Love which is behind all things.

That is the best way.

To want to get rid of the one in order to find the other is very difficult. It is almost impossible. For human nature is so limited, so full of contradictions and so exclusive in its movements that if one wants to reject love in its lower form, that is to say, human love as human beings experience it, if one makes an inner effort to reject it, one usually rejects the entire capacity of feeling love and becomes like a stone. And then sometimes one has to wait for years or centuries before there is a reawakening in oneself of the capacity to receive and manifest love.

Therefore, the best way when love comes, in whatever form it may be, is to try and pierce through its outer appearance and find the divine principle which is behind and which gives it existence. Naturally, it is full of snares and difficulties, but it is more effective. That is to say, instead of ceasing to love because one loves wrongly, one must cease to love wrongly and want to love well.

For instance, love between human beings, in all its forms, the love of parents for children, of children for parents, of brothers and sisters, of friends and lovers, is all tainted with ignorance, selfishness and all the other defects which are man's ordinary drawbacks; so instead of completely ceasing to love — which, besides, is very difficult as Sri Aurobindo says, which would simply dry up the heart and serve no end — one must learn how to love better: to love with devotion, with self-giving, self-abnegation, and to struggle, not against love itself, but against its distorted forms: against all forms of monopolising, of attachment, possessiveness, jealousy, and all the feelings which accompany

these main movements. Not to want to possess, to dominate; and not to want to impose one's will, one's whims, one's desires; not to want to take, to receive, but to give, not to insist on the other's response, but be content with one's own love; not to seek one's personal interest and joy and the fulfilment of one's personal desire, but to be satisfied with the giving of one's love and affection; and not to ask for any response. Simply to be happy to love, nothing more.

If you do that, you have taken a great stride forward and can, through this attitude, gradually advance farther in the feeling itself, and realise one day that love is not something personal, that love is a universal divine feeling which manifests through you more or less finely, but which in its essence is something divine.

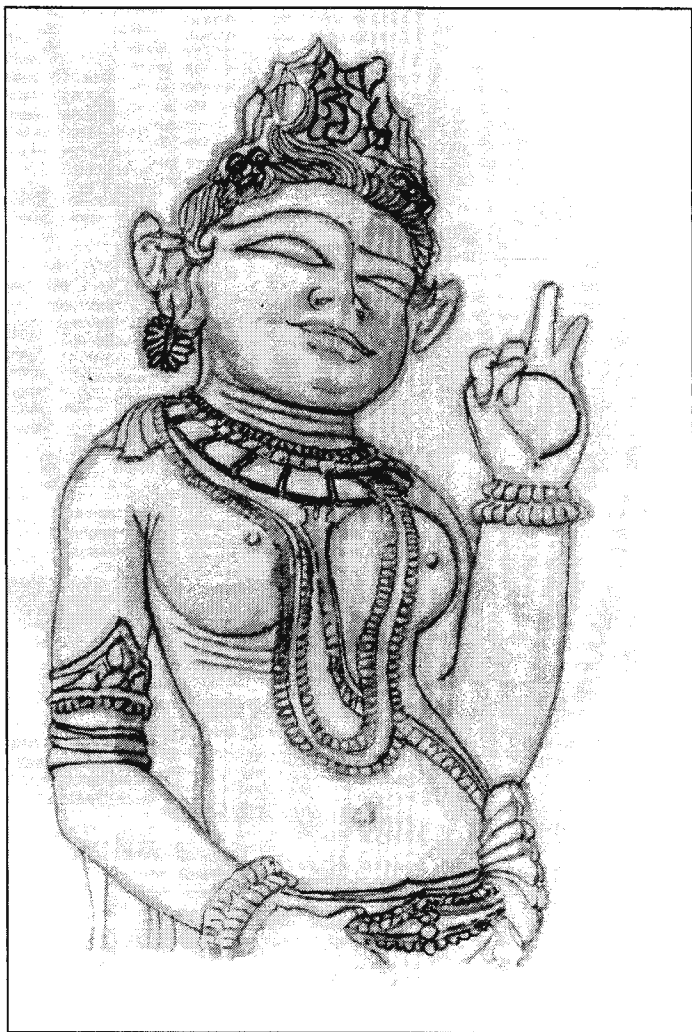
The first step is to stop being selfish. For everyone it is the same thing, not only for those who want to do yoga but also in ordinary life: if one wants to know how to love, one must not love oneself first and above all selfishly; one must give oneself to the object of love without exacting anything in return. This discipline is elementary in order to surmount oneself and lead a life which is not altogether gross.

As for yoga we may add something else: it is as I said in the beginning, the will to pierce through this limited and human form of love and discover the principle of divine Love which is behind





it. Then one is sure to get a result. This is better than drying up one's heart. It is perhaps a little more difficult but it is better in every way, for like this, instead of egoistically making others suffer, well, one may leave them quiet in their own movement and only make an effort to transform oneself without imposing one's will on others, which even in ordinary life is a step towards something higher and a little more harmonious.



Indian Goddess, by Paul Edmonston

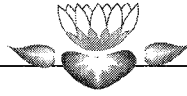
Sri Aurobindo on Faith and Shakti

From The Synthesis of Yoga, Part IV, Chapter XVIII, Faith and Shakti

The three parts of the perfection of our instrumental nature of which we have till now been reviewing the general features, the perfection of the intelligence, heart, vital

consciousness and body, the perfection of the fundamental soul powers, the perfection of the surrender of our instruments and action to the divine Shakti, depend at every moment of their progression on a fourth power that is covertly and overtly the pivot of all endeavour and action, faith, Sraddha. The perfect faith is an assent of the whole being to the truth seen by it or offered to its acceptance, and its central working is a faith of the soul in its own will to be and attain and become and its idea of self and things and its knowledge, of which the belief of the intellect, the heart's consent and the desire of the life mind to possess and realise are the outward figures. This soul faith, in some form of itself, is indispensable to the action of the being and without it man cannot move a single pace in life, much less take any step forward to a yet unrealised perfection. It is so central and essential a thing that the Gita can justly say of it that whatever is a man's Sraddha, that he is, *yo yacchraddhah sa eva sah*, and, it may be added, whatever he has the faith to see as possible in himself and strive for, that he can create and become. There is one kind of faith demanded as indispensable by the integral Yoga and that may be described as faith in God and the Shakti, faith in the presence and power of the Divine in us and the world, a faith that all in the world is the working of one divine Shakti, that all the steps of the Yoga, its strivings and sufferings and failures as well as its successes and satisfactions and victories are utilities and necessities of her workings and that by a firm and strong dependence on and a total self-surrender to the Divine and to his Shakti in us we can attain to oneness and freedom and victory and perfection.

The enemy of faith is doubt, and yet doubt too is a utility and necessity, because man in his ignorance and in his progressive labour towards knowledge needs to be visited by doubt, otherwise he would remain obstinate in an ignorant belief and limited knowledge and unable to escape from his errors. This utility and necessity of doubt does not altogether disappear when we enter on the path of Yoga. The integral Yoga aims at a knowledge not merely of some fundamental principle, but a knowing, a gnosis which will apply itself to and cover all life and the world action, and in this search for knowledge we enter on the way and are accompanied for many miles upon it by the mind's unregenerated activities before these are purified and transformed by a greater light: we carry with us a number of intellectual beliefs and ideas which are by no means all of them correct and perfect and a host of new ideas and suggestions meet us afterwards demanding our credence which it would be fatal to seize on and always cling to in the shape in which they come without regard to their possible error, limitation or imperfection. And indeed at one stage in the Yoga it becomes necessary to refuse to accept as definite and final any kind of intellectual idea or opinion whatever in its intellectual form and to hold it in a questioning suspension until it is given its right place and luminous shape of truth in a spiritual experience enlightened by supramental knowledge. And much more must this be the case with the desires or impulses of the life mind, which have often to be provisionally accepted as immediate indices of a temporarily necessary action before we have the full



guidance, but not always clung to with the soul's complete assent, for eventually all these desires and impulsions have to be rejected or else transformed into and replaced by impulsions of the divine will taking up the life movements. The heart's faith, emotional beliefs, assents are also needed upon the way, but cannot be always sure guides until they too are taken up, purified, transformed and are eventually replaced by the luminous assents of a divine Ananda which is at one with the divine will and knowledge. In nothing in the lower nature from the reason to the vital will can the seeker of the Yoga put a complete and permanent faith, but only at last in the spiritual truth, power, Ananda which become in the spiritual reason his sole guides and luminaries and masters of action.

And yet faith is necessary throughout and at every step because it is a needed assent of the soul and without this assent there can be no progress. Our faith must first be abiding in the essential truth and principles of the Yoga, and even if this, is clouded in the intellect, despondent in the heart, outworn and exhausted by constant denial and failure in the desire of the vital mind, there must be something in the innermost soul which clings and returns to it, otherwise we may fall on the path or abandon it from weakness and inability to bear temporary defeat, disappointment, difficulty and peril. In the Yoga as in life it is the man who persists unworn to the last in the face of every defeat and disillusionment and of all confronting, hostile and contradicting events and powers who conquers in the end and finds his faith justified because to the soul and Shakti in man nothing is impossible. And even a blind and ignorant faith is a better possession than the sceptical doubt which turns its back on our spiritual possibilities or the constant carping of the narrow pettily critical uncreative intellect, *asuya*, which pursues our endeavour with a paralysing incertitude. The seeker of the integral Yoga must however conquer both these imperfections. The thing to which he has given his assent and set his mind and heart and will to achieve, the divine perfection of the whole human being, is apparently an impossibility to the normal intelligence, since it is opposed to the actual facts of life and will for long be contradicted by immediate experience, as happens with all far-off and difficult ends, and it is denied too by many who have spiritual experience but believe that our present nature is the sole possible nature of man in the body and that it is only by throwing off the earthly life or even all individual existence that we can arrive at either a heavenly perfection or the release of extinction. In the pursuit of such an aim there will for long be plenty of ground for the objections, the carpings, *asuya*, of that ignorant but persistent criticising reason which founds itself plausibly on the appearances of the moment, the stock of ascertained fact and experience, refuses to go beyond and questions the validity of all indices and illuminations that point forward; and if he yields to these narrow suggestions, he will either not arrive or be seriously hampered and long delayed in his journey. On the other hand, ignorance and blindness in the faith are obstacles to a large success, invite much disappointment and disillusionment, fasten on false finalities and prevent advance to greater formulations

of truth and perfection. The Shakti in her workings will strike ruthlessly at all forms of ignorance and blindness and all even that trusts wrongly and superstitiously in her, and we must be prepared to abandon a too persistent attachment to forms of faith and cling to the saving reality alone. A great and wide spiritual and intelligent faith, intelligent with the intelligence of that larger reason which assents to high possibilities, is the character of the *shraddha* needed for the integral Yoga.

This *shraddha* — the English word faith is inadequate to express it — is in reality an influence from the supreme Spirit and its light a message from our supramental being which is calling the lower nature to rise out of its petty present to a great self-becoming and self-exceeding. And that which receives the influence and answers to the call is not so much the intellect, the heart or the life mind, but the inner soul which better knows the truth of its own destiny and mission. The circumstances that provoke our first entry into the path are not the real index of the thing that is at work in us. There the intellect, the heart, or the desires of the life mind may take a prominent place, or even more fortuitous accidents and outward incentives; but if these are all, then there can be no surety of our fidelity to the call and our enduring perseverance in the Yoga. The intellect may abandon the idea that attracted it, the heart weary or fail us, the desire of the life mind turn to other objectives. But outward circumstances are only a cover for the real workings of the spirit, and if it is the spirit that has been touched, the inward soul that has received the call, the *shraddha* will remain firm and resist all attempts to defeat or slay it. It is not that the doubts of the intellect may not assail, the heart waver, the disappointed desire of the life mind sink down exhausted on the wayside. That is almost inevitable at times, perhaps often, especially with us, sons of an age of intellectuality and scepticism and a materialistic denial of spiritual truth which has not yet lifted its painted clouds from the face of the sun of a greater reality and is still opposed to the light of spiritual intuition and inmost experience. There will very possibly be many of those trying obscurations of which even the Vedic Rishis so often complained, "long exiles from the light," and these may be so thick, the night on the soul may be so black that faith may seem utterly to have left us. But through it all the spirit within will be keeping its unseen hold and the soul will return with a new strength to its assurance which was only eclipsed and not extinguished, because extinguished it cannot be when once the inner self has known and made its resolution. The Divine holds our hand through all and if he seems to let us fall, it is only to raise us higher. This saving return we shall experience so often that the denials of doubt will become eventually impossible and, when once the foundation of equality is firmly established and still more when the sun of the gnosis has risen, doubt itself will pass away because its cause and utility have ended.

Moreover, not only a faith in the fundamental principle, ideas, way of the Yoga is needed, but a day to day working faith in the power in us to achieve, in the steps we have taken on the way, in the spiritual experiences that come to us, in the intuitions, the guiding movements of will and impulsion, the moved intensities



of the heart and aspirations and fulfilments of the life that are the aids, the circumstances and the stages of the enlarging of the nature and the stimuli or the steps of the soul's evolution. At the same time it has always to be remembered that we are moving from imperfections and ignorance towards light and perfection, and the faith in us must be free from attachment to the forms of our endeavour and the successive stages of our realisation. There is not only much that will be strongly raised in us in order to be cast out and rejected, a battle between the powers of ignorance and the lower nature and the higher powers that have to replace them, but experiences, states of thought and feeling, forms of realisation that are helpful and have to be accepted on the way and may seem to us for the time to be spiritual finalities, are found afterwards to be steps of transition, have to be exceeded and the working faith that supported them withdrawn in favour of other and greater things or of more full and comprehensive realisations and experiences, which replace them or into which they are taken up in a completing transformation. There can be for the seeker of the integral Yoga no clinging to resting-places on the road or to half-way houses; he cannot be satisfied till he has laid down all the great enduring bases of his perfection and broken out into its large and free infinities, and even there he has to be constantly filling himself with more experiences of the Infinite.

Sri Aurobindo on the Universal Consciousness

From the Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, Vol. 16, pp.401-403.

"I have encountered in my life several examples of people living or trying to live in the universal consciousness and it seemed to me that it rendered them less compassionate, less humane, less tender to the sufferings of others. It seems to me that if it is necessary not to remain in the individual consciousness where it is a question of our own sufferings, it is otherwise when it is a question of sympathising with the sufferings of others. In my opinion we feel more keenly the troubles of our brothers in humanity if we remain in the individual consciousness. But I may be mistaken and ask only to be enlightened by you on this point."

IS IT certain that such people are living in the universal consciousness? or, if they are, is it certain that they are really less humane and compassionate? May they not be exercising their humanity in another fashion than the obvious and external signs of sympathy and tenderness?

If a man is really insensible to the experiences of others in the world, he is not living in the full universal consciousness. Either he has shut himself up in an experience of an individual peace and self-content, or he is absorbed by his contact with some universal principle in its abstract form without regard to its universal action, or he is living inwardly apart from the universe in touch with

something transcendent of world-experience. All these states are useful to the soul in its progress, but they are not the universal consciousness.

When a man lives in the cosmic self, he necessarily embraces the life of the world and his attitude towards that world struggling upward from the egoistic state must be one of compassion, of love or of helpfulness. The Buddhists held that immersion in the infinite non-ego was in itself an immersion in a sea of infinite compassion. The liberated Sannyasin is described in the Gita and in other Hindu books as one whose occupation is beneficence to all creatures. But this vast spirit of beneficence does not necessarily exercise itself by the outward forms of emotional sympathy or active charity. We must not bind down all natures or all states of the divine consciousness in man to the one form of helpfulness which seems to us the most attractive, the most beautiful or the most beneficent. There is a higher sympathy than that of the easily touched emotions, a greater beneficence than that of an obvious utility to particular individuals in their particular sufferings.

The egoistic consciousness passes through many stages in its emotional expansion. At first it is bound within itself, callous therefore to the experiences of others. Afterwards it is sympathetic only with those who are identified in some measure with itself, indifferent to the indifferent, malignant to the hostile. When it overcomes this respect for persons, it is ready for the reception of the altruistic principle.

But even charity and altruism are often essentially egoistic in their immediate motive. They are stirred by the discomfort of the sight of suffering to the nervous system or by the pleasurable appreciation of others' appreciation of our kindness or by the egoistic self-appreciation of our own benevolence or by the need of indulgence in sympathy. There are philanthropists who would be troubled if the poor were not always with us, for they would then have no field for their charity.

We begin to enter into the universal consciousness when, apart from all individual motive and necessity, by the mere fact of unity of our being with all others, their joy becomes our joy, their suffering our suffering. But we must not mistake this for the highest condition. After a time we are no longer overcome by any suffering, our own or others', but are merely touched and respond in helpfulness. And there is yet another state in which the subjection to suffering is impossible to us because we live in the Beatitude, but this does not deter us from love and beneficence, — any more than it is necessary for a mother to weep or be overcome by the little childish griefs and troubles of her children in order to love, understand and soothe.

Nor is detailed sympathy and alleviation of particular sufferings the only help that can be given to men. To cut down branches of a man's tree of suffering is good, but they grow again; to aid him to remove its roots is a still more divine helpfulness. The gift of joy, peace, or perfection is a greater giving than the effusion of an individual benevolence and sympathy and it is the most royal outcome of unity with others in the universal consciousness.





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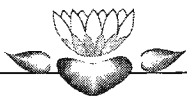
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Auroville. <http://www.auroville-india.org> Guide for visitors, accommodations, joining Auroville, e-mail and phone numbers of residents, community profiles, articles from Auroville Today and Auroville News. List of Auroville International centers. E-mail: avi@auroville.org.in

Collaboration. <http://www.collaboration.org> Full issues of the journal Collaboration online.

Cultural Integration Fellowship. <http://www.webcom.com/haridas>. Schedule of lectures, listing of books and online order form. E-mail: haridas@webcom.com

East-West Cultural Center. <http://home.earthlink.net/~ewcc/> Schedule of events, list of books, art, incense and tapes for sale. E-mail: ewcc@earthlink.net

Gnostic Center. <http://www.indiaconnect.com/gnostic/> List of workshops. E-mail: ameeta@iasdl01.vsnl.net.in

Integral Yoga. <http://www.miraura.org> Introduction to Integral Yoga, Sri Aurobindo, the Mother. Selections from the complete works. Listings of centers, study groups, organizations, events, links to related web sites. Visitor information for Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, including e-mail contacts and map. E-mail: dbhutchinson@ucdavis.edu

Sri Aurobindo Ashram - Delhi Branch. <http://pubweb.acns.nwu.edu/~pravir/dbdesc.html> Description, activities, training courses, camps, schedule of special days.

Sri Aurobindo Book Distribution Agency. <http://www.miraura.org/sabda>. Titles and descriptions of all books published by SABDA. E-mail: sabda@auroville.org.in



Internet e-mail discussion groups

Auroconf. A general-purpose discussion group for topics related to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, Auroville, the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, and Integral Yoga. To subscribe, send a message to auroconf-request@compatible.com

Doucemere. Mailings of selections from Prayers and Meditations. To subscribe, send an e-mail message to doucemere-request@compatible.com

Sadhana. Italian-language discussion group of the Integral Yoga. To subscribe, send an e-mail message to majordomo@inet.com and in the subject write subscribe sadhana.

Savitri. Summaries, discussion of Savitri. To subscribe, send an e-mail message to subscribe-savitri@compatible.com

Synthesis. Summaries, discussion of The Synthesis of Yoga. To subscribe, send an e-mail message to subscribe-synthesis@compatible.com

IMPORTANT DATES IN SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM

November

- 17 **The Mother's Mahaprayana**
(Mother's Room Darshan)
- 20 **The Mother's Mahasamadhi**
- 24 **The Siddhi Day**
(Darshan Day)

December

- 05 **Sri Aurobindo's Mahaprayana**
(Sri Aurobindo's Room Darshan)
- 09 **Sri Aurobindo's Mahasamadhi**

Conference update

Center for Cellular Evolution (CCE) presents a Conference: **Divine Life In The Process Of Evolution** in Pondicherry/Auroville, INDIA, February 1-7, 1998. Our theme is: cellular/bodily transformation. Presenters from Auroville and the Sri Aurobindo Ashram have been invited. Some of the other invited presenters are:

Elizabeth Hin, The White Rose Foundation, Santa Fe, N.M. on spiritual and occult aspects of cellular transformational with regard to Sri Aurobindo and The Mother's work and prototypes.

Dr. Charlotte Smith, Chicago, IL. Grace: An invitation to the Source to Descend, and Transformational Imagery: Healing Processes for Bodily Discomforts and Diseases.

Dr. Felicity Edwards, Rhodes University, South Africa. On Spirituality and Transformation in David Bohm's Interpretation of Reality and Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga.

Dr. Ariel Browne, Aur-ientation, Atlanta, GA, co-founder CCE, on cell-conscious breathing, cellular meditation, CELL-TALK, bio-cellular guidance, C-touch.

Dr. Wayne Bloomquist, Berkeley, CA, co-founder CCE, on Evolution of the Sadhana in Integral Yoga.

REGISTRATION FEE for the 7 days is \$225. Make checks payable to: CCE, 1780 Highland Place, Berkeley, CA 94709. Call 510-848-1836 or FAX 510-848-8531.

AIRFARE choices are Gulf Air, British Air or Lufthansa for group airfare (consolidator rates.) Call Ariel Browne re: airfare and reservations. 770-662-6881, FAX 404-378-1023. Email ARIELB@MINDSPRING.COM

THE 24th November 1926 was the descent of Krishna into the physical. Krishna is not the supramental Light. The descent of Krishna would mean the descent of the Overmind Godhead preparing, though not itself actually, the descent of Supermind and Ananda. Krishna is the Anandamaya; he supports the evolution through the Overmind leading it towards his Ananda.

—Sri Aurobindo, 1935



APROPOS

Plants cannot do a lot of things. They cannot play tennis, go for a walk, or scratch themselves, but they do have one absolutely spectacular trick never found in the animal repertoire: they can eat the sun.—L.L.L. Cudmore, *The Center of Life: A Natural History of the Cell*, 1977

The immense mountains and precipices that overhung me on every side—the sound of the river raging among the rocks, and the dashing of the waterfalls around, spoke of a power mighty as Omnipotence—and I ceased to fear, or to bend before any being less almighty than that which had created and ruled the elements, here displayed in their most terrific guise.—Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley

At the moment of utter solitude, when the body breaks down on the edge of infinity, a separate time begins to run that cannot be measured in any normal way.—Marie de Hennezel, *Intimate Death: How the Dying Teach us How to Live*, 1997

Pleasure is frail like a dewdrop, while it laughs and dies—Rabindranath Tagore

Through everything you work, through every foot you move, through every lip you talk, through every heart you feel.—Swami Vivekananda, *God and Man in Vedanta*

Distributed intelligence, or composite mind, is a nebulous idea. On the other hand, we do not know of any intelligence that is not distributed, or any mind that is not composite.—George Dyson, *Darwin Among the Machines*, 1997

Time given to thought is the greatest time-saver of all.—Norman Cousins

Man's mind once stretched by a new idea, never regains its original dimension.—Oliver Wendell Holmes

I began to look more closely, not at things but at a world closer to myself, looking from an inner place to one further within, instead of clinging to the movement of sight toward the world outside.

I found light and joy at the same moment, and I can say without hesitation that from that time on light and joy have never been separated in my experience. I have had them or lost them together.—Jacques Lusseyran, *And There Was Light*

Often, during those long days and nights, I used to meditate on the meaning of time. Somehow, in my isolation, time seemed to be passing me by as through I were standing apart from it.—Terry Waite, *Footfalls in Memory, Readings and Reflections from Solitude*, 1995. Waite spent four years in solitary confinement in Beirut.

The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires.—William Arthur Ward

The brain seems to show a distributed style of functioning, in which the real work is done by millions of specialized, sophisticated systems without detailed instructions from some command center. By analogy, the human body also works cell by cell; unlike an automobile, it has no central engine that does all the work.—Bernard Baars, *In the Theater of Consciousness*, 1997

Consciousness is the process wherein potential reality becomes actual reality. It is the quiff popping.—Fred Alan Wolfe

It's a poor sort of memory that only works backwards.—Lewis Carroll

One of the greatest comforts of religion is that you can get hold of God sometimes and give him a satisfactory beating.—Sri Aurobindo, *Thoughts and Aphorisms*, Jnana

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