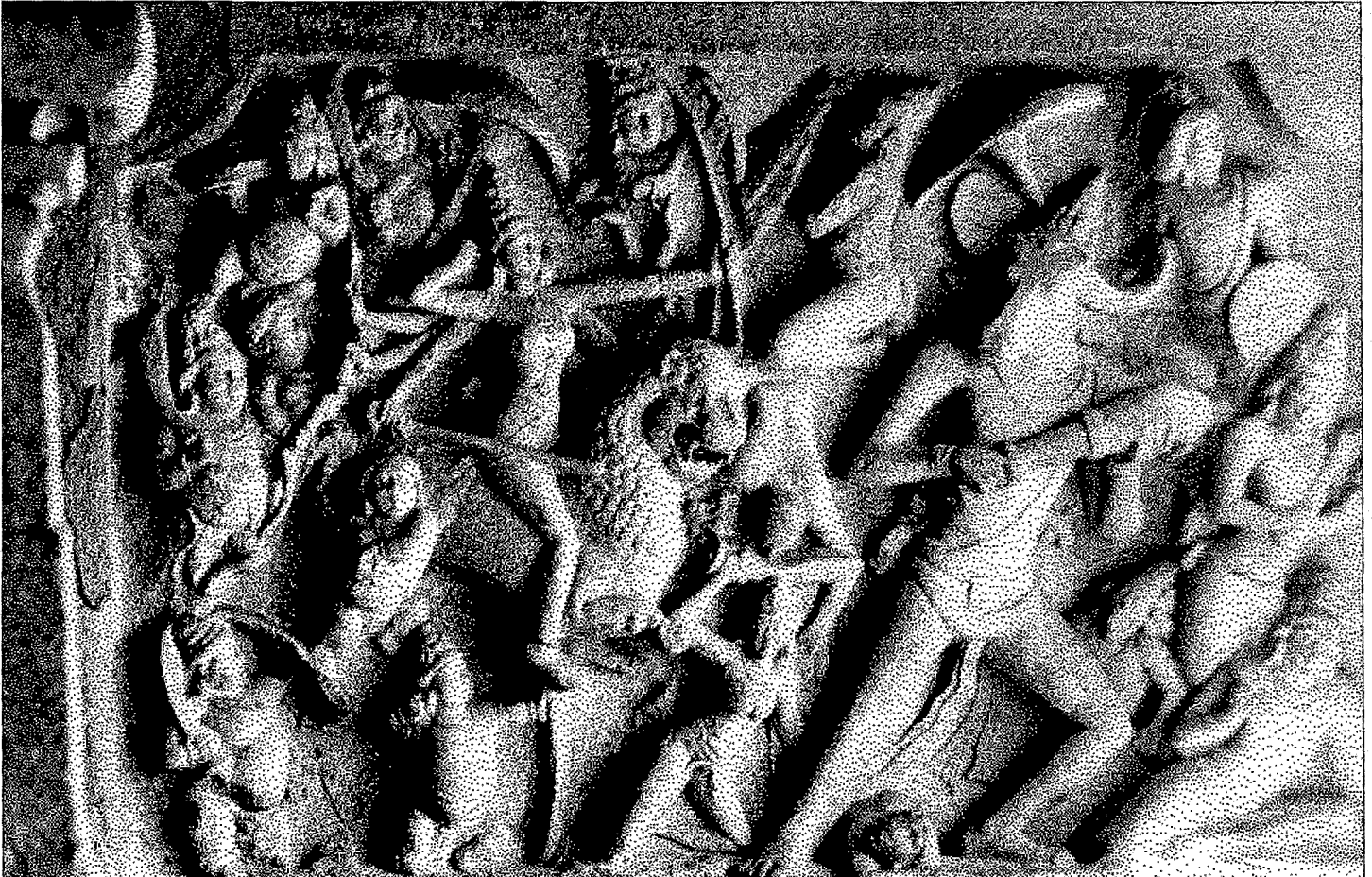


# Collaboration

Spring 1998

Journal of the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother

Vol. 24, No. 1



**Sri Aurobindo's last darshan • AUM '98 • Thoughts on the collective  
*The Tragedy of Earth* • Consciousness, evolution, and mysticism**

**T**hat kind of sense of gratitude that the Divine exists; that feeling of marvelous thankfulness which truly fills you with a sublime joy at the fact that the Divine exists, that there is something in the universe which is the Divine, that is not just the monstrosity we see, that there is the Divine, the Divine exists. And each time that the least thing puts you either directly or indirectly in contact with this sublime Reality of divine existence, the heart is filled with so intense, so marvelous a joy, such a gratitude as of all things has the most delightful taste.

There is nothing which gives you a joy equal to that of gratitude. One hears a bird sing, sees a lovely flower, looks at a little child, observes an act of generosity, reads a beautiful sentence, looks at the setting sun, no matter what, suddenly this comes upon you, this kind of emotion—indeed so deep, so intense—that the world manifests the Divine, that there is something behind the world which is the Divine.

—The Mother, from *The Great Adventure*

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

—*The Mother*

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**About the cover:** The cover image shows a frieze at Mahabalipuram, South India. (Photo by Paul Edmonston)

**About the artists in this issue:** *The Mother* studied art in Paris at the beginning of this century and associated with artists such as Manet and Rodin. **Paul Edmonston** is an artist and art teacher living in Athens, Georgia. **Lisa Rachlin** has a degree in commercial art and lives in Boulder, Colorado.



## Enthusiasm and gratitude: The surest links to the psychic being

*This selection is from Mother's Collected Works, Vol. 7, December 28, 1955.*

(Mother reads from "Self-Consecration," *The Synthesis of Yoga*): Here it is written: "Our one objective must be the Divine himself to whom, knowingly or unknowingly, something always aspires in our secret nature."

*What is this something which aspires, Sweet Mother?*

It is a part of the being which is not always the same in everyone, and which is instinctively open to the influence of the psychic.

There is always one part—sometimes indeed quite veiled, of which we are not conscious—something in the being which is turned to the psychic and receiving its influence. This is the intermediary between the psychic consciousness and the external consciousness.

It is not the same thing in everyone; in each one it is different. It is the point in his nature or character through which he can touch the psychic and where he can receive the psychic influence. It depends upon people; for each one it is different; everyone has a point like this.

You may also feel that there are certain things which suddenly push you, lift you above yourself, open a kind of door upon something greater. It can be many things; and it depends upon each one's nature. It's the part of the being which enthuses over something; it is this capacity for enthusiasm.

There are two principal things. This, the capacity for enthusiasm which makes one come out of his greater or lesser inertia in order to throw himself more or less totally into the thing which rouses him. As for instance, the artist for his art, the scientist for his science. And in general, every person who creates or builds has an opening, the opening of a special faculty, a special possibility, creating an enthusiasm in him. When this is active, something in the being awakens, and there is a participation of almost the whole being in the thing done.

There is this. And then there are those who have an innate faculty of gratitude, those who have an ardent need to respond, respond with warmth, devotion, joy, to something which they feel like a marvel hidden behind the whole of life, behind the tiniest little element, the least little event of life, who feel this sovereign beauty or infinite Grace which is behind all things.

I knew people who had no knowledge, so to say, of anything, who were hardly educated, whose minds were altogether

of ordinary kind, and who had in them this capacity of gratitude, of warmth, which gives itself, understands and is thankful.

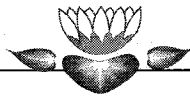
Well, for them, the contact with the psychic was very frequent, almost constant and, to the extent that they were capable of it, conscious—not very conscious but a little—in the sense that they felt that they were carried, helped, uplifted above themselves.

These two things prepare people the most. They are born with one or the other; and if they take the trouble, it develops gradually, it increases.

We say: the capacity for enthusiasm, something which throws you out of your miserable and mean little ego; and the generous gratitude, the generosity of the gratitude which also flings itself in thanksgiving out of the little ego. These are the two most powerful levers to enter into contact with the Divine in one's psychic being. This serves as a link with the psychic being—the surest link.



*The Mother. (Photo courtesy Sri Aurobindo Ashram)*



## EDITORIAL

### Thoughts on the collective

by Vishnubhai Eschner

The theme for this year's All USA Meeting (AUM) conference, "Becoming Collective," brings to mind the axiom that Sri Aurobindo's yoga is a collective yoga, one in which the individual transformation occurs within the context of a community. So the lack of a cohesive community structure among devotees of the collective yoga is surprising.

Over the years, the well-known resistance to dogma engendered in those who read Sri Aurobindo has seemingly been an obstacle to the growth of a vigorous community outside Pondicherry. While all around us numerous spiritual movements have grown fat with members, founded churches, built temples, and formed multinational nonprofit corporations offering everything from stock tips to enlightenment, the international Sri Aurobindo movement has remained a bit fragmented, apparently too paralyzed by philosophical debate to organize into a large-scale movement.

Now, however, through the self-reflective medium of e-mail we are beginning to recognize that, spontaneously and naturally, this international maze of centers, study groups, and isolated individuals has become a single community, connected through the heart-nexus of Pondicherry. What is also becoming clear is that we are a diverse, vibrant, opinionated, sincere, and dedicated community of die-hard individualists.

There have been many communities down through history, and it could fairly be asked why the supramental transformation would occur here when it has not occurred in any of the myriad communities of the past.

There is, without question, the direct action of Their Force. And on the side of human effort, it is hoped that we are making the best use of the tools promoting collective transformation that are inherent within the teachings.

In one place Sri Aurobindo says that "there can be no firm foundation in sadhana without equality" and that "it is this [equality] from which a Sadhaka deviates when he allows a vital movement to carry him away in feeling or speech or action." Though it has obvious advantages in a collective setting, equality seems to have little to do with the fiery controversies that rage on some of the online forums, and that flare up from time to time in affairs between devotees.

There are disagreements about Mother's intentions, about what Sri Aurobindo meant, about Auroville, about Web pages, about the design of Matrimandir, about quoting or not quoting Sri Aurobindo, about cellular transformation and the *Agenda*, about property matters, and a hundred other "issues" that can easily shatter a community into fragments of opposition.

This could be the sign of a healthy, vibrant community, except that the controversies still get resolved in the age-old ordinary way: by the complete acquiescence of one of the parties, following the wearily familiar call to bring a lawsuit or some other forceful action from firebrand extremists (to cite the recent example of what happened in the "official" vs. the "unofficial" Auroville Web page matter).

Dave Hutchinson, president of the Sri Aurobindo Association, mused recently, "Sri Aurobindo and the Mother worked through, and in, a tremendous number of situations in their time. Thousands of disciples and devotees asking this and that, money, an ashram to run, inner work to coordinate, etc. They were two different people, different physical bodies, different minds; they must have had differing thoughts on some matters. Yet as far as I know, they didn't come to the kind of blows we see between disciples or groups. I think we should rise to their level of harmony, intuition, compassion, direct action. Is that too much to ask?"

When Sri Aurobindo was in the ashram, he dictated very few broad injunctions against behaviors. I know of only four: 1) No alcohol and by extension, no intoxicants; 2) no smoking; 3) no sex; 4) no politics.

The first two are relatively unambiguous. The third one has acquired a number of interpretations. The fourth rule is simple on the face of it. Most obviously, it means no political activism, and perhaps, no discussion of politics.

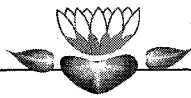
But a twist on the definition of politics unexpectedly furnishes a helpful precept for collective yoga. As a verb, politics can mean a kind of factionalistic scheming to gain power or advantage. Applying this definition to our community, we get:

*Factionalistic scheming for power or advantage is not allowed in our community.*

Factionalistic scheming occurs when someone, through vital charisma, bribery, or threat of force, gets 50 people who agree with him to shout down anyone he disagrees with. In the extreme it could mean going out and beating up people who interfere with an agenda.



SAA board members Chandresh Patel, Vishnubhai Eschner, Lynda Lester and David Hutchinson at AUM '97. (Photo by Girish Mantry)



Historically, **Stalin, Hitler, and subtle behind-the-scenes schemers like Tallyrand and Rasputin** have manipulated the collective for the **sakes of their own flawed agendas**.

That's history, **the past**. But, we're about the future and about attempting a **new way to harmonize** within a group.

In one place, **Sri Aurobindo** suggests we "avoid all debates, dispute or too **animated discussion** and simply say what has to be said and leave it **there**. There should also be no insistence that you are right and the others wrong, but what is said should only be thrown in as a **contribution** to the consideration of the truth of the matter."

To those who say, "Nice ideas in theory, but get practical," I respond, "I am getting practical. I'd like to try it."

I don't think that this method of resolving collective conflict has been tried very often, yet it may just be that the grace will only manifest in collective activities when there is enough individual faith in the shakti-power, and enough individual surrender within each person to enable us to propose an idea and then step back; to recognize and release our mental conceptions completely, and let the real truth manifest.

A small but radical first step on the road to collective yoga could be the ability to completely suspend judgment in the face of disagreement.

Are we ready for the second step?

*Vishnu Eschner is secretary/treasurer of the Sri Aurobindo Association and a resident director of the Sri Aurobindo Sadhana Peetham in Lodi, California.*

## NEW LETTERS ON YOGA

### Thumbs up

We've received the latest issue of *Collaboration*. It is an excellent issue.

—Eric Hughes, Matagiri, Mt. Tremper, New York

The new *Collaboration* is very well done, both in print and on the Web—congrats!

—Kenny Schachat, kennys@netcom14.netcom.com

I have just visited the *Collaboration* Web page. It is a beautiful publication, and the Web page is a treat to read.

—Ameeta Mehra, ameeta@viasdl01.vsnl.net.in

Was delighted to receive the latest *Collaboration*, surprised to see which photos and drawings of mine the designer chose to use, and pleased with the content, layout, and size of the whole issue! It seems to get better all the time. And it warmed my being to be communicating in the presence of so many folks I know. It was a few hours—overnight—before I received my first response

to my articles from a friend whom I have not seen or heard of for four or five years, and who had been at Baca and Phoenicia with me; so we have begun correspondence.

Needless to say, it made my day to receive this issue. I am elated at joining in the national network and having an audience for more. Thanks to you for all your help and counsel along the way!

—Paul Edmonston, edmonart@aol.com

Just got a call yesterday asking about *Collaboration*; thrilled to get it in today's mail. An excellent issue all around. Truly! Pranam for all your great work.

—Julian Lines, jhl@aol.com

The last issue of *Collaboration* is composed thoughtfully and artistically. And it also brought happy memories of AUM.

—Hansa Sehgal, Glenview, Illinois

### Compiler error

The AUM '97 conference reported on pages 10 and 11 of the "Current affairs" section in the last *Collaboration* doesn't seem to be properly compiled (confined to just four participants and their impressions with no coordinated overview . . . leaving a lot left unsaid!). The AUM conference deserves better reporting!

—Man Ravikant, Flushing, New York

### Businesses ≠ centers

With yet appreciation for the goodwill which prompted you to list our Auromère business under the "Centers" listings in your Fall 1997 issue, I feel it is inappropriate to list businesses under this heading. If there is interest, perhaps you could list businesses and other kinds of organizations connected with Sri Aurobindo's yoga separately from the centers.

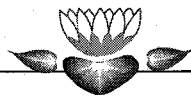
Thanks otherwise for a superb issue.

—Dakshina, Auromère, Lodi, California

### Living in the past?

*Letters under the following four topics were posted to Auroconf, an e-mail discussion group that examines issues related to Integral Yoga. To subscribe, send e-mail to auroconf-request@compatible.com. Leave the subject line blank. In the body of your message, type subscribe auroconf.*

My feeling is that there is a tendency among people with an interest in Sri Aurobindo to live in the past. It seems as if some think we are still in the years from 1924 to 1950, when Sri Aurobindo and Mother were physically accessible and the ashram



was a small community of strictly selected people living an almost secluded life.

It seems like nothing has changed since Mother's death (which, for reasons I have never really grasped, we keep calling "passing" or "leaving the body," as if having lost the possibility of a physical contact meant nothing).

Some also seem to take everything Sri Aurobindo and Mother wrote in the literal sense, as if it was *the* absolute truth, as if there were no context and no background at all: no specific moment in history, no specific person to whom the message or the action was addressed. We run the risk of becoming dogmatic.

The net result of all this seems to be that those years become more and more a mythical age devoid of contact with reality. Sri Aurobindo and Mother are more and more deified, less and less real persons. We trade their humanity and moral greatness, the amazing complexity of their personalities and lives, all that they fought and suffered, for icons of an unlikely omnipotence.

If this is true, I think it is a lost chance and the wrong way of showing our devotion and our day-to-day commitment to their work.

\*\*\*

Personally, I strongly feel this lack of common sense among us, especially in my generation—a generation who never met Sri Aurobindo and Mother, who may have insights and visions but never had the possibility of a reality check with them . . . a generation who grew up on books written by devotees and listened to numberless narrations by older sadhaks, who perhaps have read more books by sadhaks than by Sri Aurobindo and Mother themselves—in some sense, a generation of orphans.

I think this is a perfect condition to lose sight of reality, build up a myth, and live in the past. Call it living in the past or living in the future—it is never *here*, it is never where we really are, what we really are. It is being trapped in a dream, though a pious one.

What I observe again and again in this community, and in myself, is a set of behaviors and ways of thinking that take the place of real insights and are a caricature of what (I think) Sri Aurobindo and Mother meant.

In my opinion, the best devotion one can have is trying to understand deeply what one has been taught and the person who taught it, and then try to put it into practice. I have no illusion of ever understanding completely Sri Aurobindo and Mother, as I have no illusion either of understanding any human being. But this effort of understanding is, I think, a sign of love.

In the case of Sri Aurobindo and Mother, I feel further and further from the deified image that I think is common among us. I try to see their humanity and their context, that particular mo-

ment in history, the dominant world-vision of the time, the ashram conditions, the fact that the ashram was in India and most of the disciples were Indian so that they had to adapt. I even think of Sri Aurobindo's western education and Mirra's Jewish origins to explain what is typical of their vision (redeeming the world, a new society). That makes me appreciate them better.

By this exercise, I come to the conclusion that we are often repeating literally what they wrote without realizing that in the meantime, the world has changed—often in the direction they wanted—and we run the risk of being the avant-garde of long ago.

Let me give some few examples. The science Sri Aurobindo writes about is the science of the end of last century, of determinism and positivism. Science is today quite different, and Sri Aurobindo's remarks could look quite out of place.

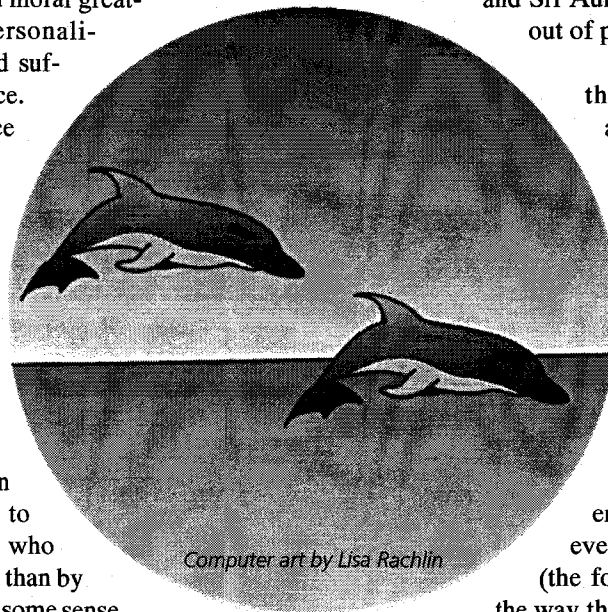
That is also true about religion. I think Sri Aurobindo's "polemic" against the refusal of life was appropriate to many Indian schools of thought. But read some recent developments in Christianity and Buddhism, and you'll see that times have changed.

—Carlo Chiopris,  
chiopris@webcom.com

What I infer from [another e-mail posting] is that at times we speak of Sri Aurobindo or the Mother in wistful, pious tones; we worship every little thing about their humanity (the food they ate, the way they dressed, the way they scribbled notes on paper).

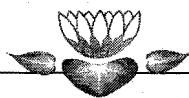
I'm not exalting or condemning such a pious, literal devotion—just noting that it happens. If we think that as a community we are "above" the common run of religious feeling and action and idolatry, that we are all following some kind of advanced spirituality which has far outstripped ritual and religion—we're fooling ourselves. As individuals and as a group, we pass through the same stages as other religions or spiritual movements.

—Dave Hutchinson, dbhutchinson@ucdavis.edu



## Not for rhetorical effect

**N**o deep and enduring change can occur in the human condition on our planet if all seekers consider only the "spiritual" aspects of Sri Aurobindo's yoga. It was not for rhetorical effect that he wrote, "All life is yoga." He meant every word of it, and in far more senses than one—which is why the Mother in the Agenda had some unflattering things to



say about those who make a trenchant dichotomy between the so-called spiritual life and the more mundane “nonspiritual” areas of the human endeavor on our planet.

All areas of personal or collective life need to be annexed to the Integral Yoga. Failure to do so will make our aspiration anything but integral, and the world we live in anything but safe. “I cannot promise you that the present human civilization will be saved,” she had warned in the last years of her physical existence on earth. Indeed, the question to ask ourselves is whether it deserves to be saved. Better, perhaps, that it goes the way of the mammoth and the sloth.

National and international collectivities are, or ought to be, as much a field of the collective yoga as the individual sadhana. All too often we assume that the collective sadhana is the prerogative of communities like the ashram in Pondicherry and Auroville in Tamil Nadu, while all those scattered around the world are somehow outside the field of the collective. Not so. Indeed, on a rough count, we may arrive at the safe guess that those whose lives have been deeply influenced by the profound insights of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother all over the globe outnumber by far all ashramites and Aurovillians combined.

Many of us blandly assume that the collective yoga is not our forte, and confine ourselves almost entirely to individual sadhana, or expend our energies largely on conferencing, speech-making, seminarizing, or generally intellectualizing about the intricacies of the Integral Yoga. A perusal of Sri Aurobindo’s volumes on the collective yoga (for instance, *The Human Cycle*, *War and Self-Determination*, and *The Ideal of Human Unity*) would help to correct this imbalance in our outlook and the lives we lead.

Having been an active participant myself in three sociopolitical and economic revolutions, albeit manmade ones, in my own lifetime (I’m 74-plus now), and then meeting Mother and learning everything about Sri Aurobindo’s own revolutionary beginnings—which culminated in his and the Mother’s embarkation upon the greatest revolution of all time, “the revolt against the entire universal nature,” as Sri Aurobindo put it—I realize how much more potent the revolutions I was part of might have been if I had only come by the marvelous insights they provided about the conduct of both individual and collective revolutions. Well, there will certainly be another life and another opportunity to do what I failed to do in this life.

Let’s take a cursory look at the actual state of the world as it is today. Those of us basking in the relative comforts of suburbia in North America, western Europe, Japan, and other developed countries have no idea what the real world is like, let alone what the mean streets of the inner cities in our own countries are like. For we dare not venture there to mingle with God, who chooses to live in the disguise of gangsters, prostitutes, pimps, conmen, and scoundrels. They too are ourselves, you know.

If you doubt that, read Sri Aurobindo’s *The Human Cycle*. To quote just one brief excerpt:

This is what a true subjectivism teaches us,—first, that we are a higher self than our ego or our members; secondly, that we are in our life and being not only ourselves but all others; for there is a secret solidarity which our egoism may kick at and strive against, but from which we cannot escape . . . and only by admitting and realizing our unity with others can we entirely fulfill our true self-being.

I think of the splendid men and women I have the immense privilege of knowing, loving, and supporting (in my small way) in nongovernmental organizations such as Amnesty International, or admiring from a distance—similar types who work for environmental groups and the like. They know nothing about Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, nor do they use Aurobindonian terminology. But in a fundamental sense, they are nearer to the spiritual than so many who swear by “spirituality.”

Their love and devotion to the well-being and healing of earth and men and indeed of all life puts to shame those who call themselves the children of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother—of HER who cared so much about earth, the beauty of earth, the promise of earth, the tomorrow of earth—our beautiful earth. But today, only a minority of humanity have come to the awful realization that never before in the history of life has Mother Earth been so mercilessly raped and plundered by her own children. We may be certain that “the revolt of the earth” (a phrase first used by Mother herself in the *Agenda*) is not too far in the offing. It does seem as though humanity only learns the lessons of catastrophe so providentially provided in *The Hour of God*.

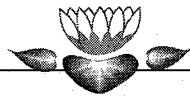
Forgive me, but some of us are like people who believe that SHE will do everything and we need only await the supramental to drop in one day for a chat over tea and cakes. Alas! We reduce Sri Aurobindo’s yoga to a ridiculous farce! “Life, life alone is the field of our yoga,” he declared categorically, and withal with such infinite patience and love. But the world was not ready.

Taken in the mass, it is very far from ready. “Three-quarters of humanity is obsolete,” the Mother once calmly observed. The question we need to ask in all sincerity is which fourth we might choose to belong to.

There are some among us who rest in the comfortable illusion that the discoveries of modern science and the exponentially multiplying push-buttons provided by the wizardries of modern technology will increasingly make for a better world. That was not how Sri Aurobindo saw it in a chapter of *The Human Cycle*.

I would urge upon this forum the importance of contributing to the discussion initiated by Kosha Shah on the application in our individual and collective lives of a vitally important dimension of the Integral Yoga that has thus far suffered relative neglect. Its noninclusion can only serve to impoverish our own realizations, which would be anything but integral.

—Devan Nair, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada



**I**t is interesting to follow the thread on Integral Yoga at the individual level. I feel that Devan has spoken my thoughts, but with great eloquence.

It is good to have high ideals and aspirations and take an active role in the divine manifestation. It is also easy to aspire to higher spiritual levels—such as opening schools, building hospitals, doing good—when we are thinking in terms of nameless and faceless humanity.

But how we live our daily lives is where the actual aspiration to serve the Divine should manifest itself, since all life is yoga. So, for example, will I be serving the Divine by opening a school to teach children about Integral Yoga if I turn around and have no patience or am unkind and cruel to the child next door?

What I am trying to say is that it is easy to embrace a high ideal. But we must be willing to change our human natures when the Divine presents us with day-to-day opportunities to see if the ideals we embrace are suitable to our natures or undertaken for egotistical reasons.

Whatever cause has to be undertaken with genuine love for humanity. This is what made Mickey Finn unique. He loved the people he came in contact with. If the cause is undertaken with love, then the love will manifest itself even to the hardest amongst us, thereby turning him or her around. Love has no boundaries; it encompasses all beings.

The Divine path is like a razor's edge. We need to walk it well, for if we don't, we have the power to wreak havoc with people's lives. We need to walk our talk.

I do not know much about Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga, being a beginner, but I do know that what we do in our individual levels will resonate in the collective.

—Bhadra S. Durgabakshi, Washington, DC

## The coming of the subjective age

**I**n his chapter "The Coming of the Subjective Age" in *The Human Cycle*, I believe Sri Aurobindo is talking about the present. He refers to many areas of life, including philosophy, psychology, art, and poetry, and goes on to tentatively suggest politics and economics; in each of these areas he identifies the signs of the dawning of a subjective age.

What I understand by "subjective" is the beginning of a real awareness and willingness to explore the subliminal—the subtle physical, the inner vital and mental; the beginning of an understanding of the meaning of the universal vital and mental; perhaps vague glimpses of the significance if not the experience of the psychic; and an understanding of a mental faculty beyond the intellect, namely, the higher mind.

Here are some relevant passages from Sri Aurobindo.

The first essential sign [of the subjective age] must be the growth of the subjective idea of life,—the idea of the soul, the inner being, its powers, its possibilities, its growth, its

expression and the creation of a true, beautiful and helpful environment for it as the one thing of first and last importance. The signals must be there that are precursors of a subjective age in humanity's thought and social endeavor.

These ideas are likely first to declare their trend in philosophy, in psychological thinking, in the arts, poetry, painting, sculpture, music, in the main idea of ethics, in the application of subjective principles by thinkers to social questions, even perhaps, though this is a perilous effort, to politics and economics, that hard refractory earth matter which most resists all but a gross utilitarian treatment. [This is being done, and has been for at least the last ten years.—DS].

There will be new unexpected departures of science or at least of research,—since to such a turn in its most fruitful seekings the orthodox still deny the name of science.

Discoveries will be made that thin the walls between soul and matter; attempts there will be to extend exact knowledge into the psychological and psychic realms with a realisation of the truth that these have laws of their own which are other than physical, but not the less laws because they escape the external senses and are infinitely plastic and subtle.—*The Human Cycle*, pp. 233–34

There are many specific individuals, psychologists, psychiatrists, philosophers, physicists, biologists, economists, painters, and composers today who are explicitly exploring and articulating what I believe Sri Aurobindo portrays as manifestations of the subjective age.

The fact that Nobel laureates in neuroscience and cognitive science correspond on the *Journal of Consciousness Studies* online group (many of whom at least privately, cite Krishnamurti, Sri Aurobindo, Ramana Maharshi, and others as inspiration), may further confirm that the signs of the subjective age are present.

When mainstream physicists form an organization for the exploration of subtle energies—naming, among others, Taoist Alchemy, Sri Aurobindo, Siberian Shamanic traditions, and so on as sources of information for the scientific exploration of the subliminal;

When Duane Elgin writes *Voluntary Simplicity* (about spiritual economics) and Jon Kabat Zinn writes *Full Catastrophe Living* (about applying a meditative perspective to the management of physical pain);

When Charlene Spretnak writes *States of Grace* (about spiritual politics) and Roger Walsh writes *Paths beyond Ego* (a psychiatrist writing about spiritual psychology);

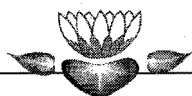
And when Alan Wallace writes *Choosing Reality* (about understanding how a close examination of the metaphysical assumptions underlying science inevitably lead to an elimination of the materialistic perspective and the opening to a spiritual perspective);

... it seems to me they are doing exactly what Sri Aurobindo is pointing to in the above passages.

Can anyone explain to me why this is or isn't so?

—Don Salmon, virtreal@erols.com





## Integrally psyched

I have begun a couple of responses to the discussion about psychology, all of which have seemed inadequate and incomplete. My initial reaction was that much of what has been proposed as integral psychology over the years is a rehash of Sri Aurobindo's *shastra* without much in the way of practical application to the needs of people who seek help.

I don't think that the attempts to find an equivalence between Sri Aurobindo's terminology and western systems (Auroconf has had a brief exchange about Jung and the yoga) to be of much use, as they are taken out of context, both of culture and of intent (yoga versus medical psychology). This is not to say that they are not talking about the same psyche or that we may not deepen our knowledge by a respectful comparison.

My own approach for many years has been to learn and use the western methods (primarily Jungian) and inform them inwardly with what I know and how I practice the yoga. The first and most important aspect is karma yoga: to offer the fruits of psychological and psychiatric healing work to the Divine, to trust that it is She and not my ego that is the agent of change, to do the work at a conscious ego level with as much integrity and impeccability as I can, and to be an instrument as much as possible of the Master of the Works.

As I have delved more deeply into the theory and practice, intuitions about links and similar understandings have borne fruit and become avenues of study and question. I would hope that these sorts of connections between phenomenological psychology and our common spiritual teachings will become the basis for a discussion of how we think about our work and what we actually do in the practice of psychotherapy.

In regards to the quote posted from *Letters On Yoga*, Vol. 1, p. 205 (remember that this was written in the 1930s)—“The so-called sciences which deal with the mind and men (psychology, etc.) are so much dependent on physical science that they cannot go beyond narrow limits. If science is to turn her face towards the Divine, it must be a new science not yet developed which deals directly with the forces of the life-world and of Mind and so arrives at what is beyond Mind; but present-day science cannot do that.”—I have always wished that Sri Aurobindo had known of Jung's later writings, especially his studies on alchemy, parapsychology (*Synchronicity*), the evolution of consciousness (*Aion*), and the Judeo-Christian myth (*Answer to Job*); these all came after Jung's near-death, out-of-body experience in 1944, which was followed by a period of deep spiritual experience.

Although holding to his position as an empiricist and phenomenological psychologist (based in part on the early influence of William James), Jung had a subjective basis in consciousness beyond the intellect from which to articulate both his own experience of the psyche and what he saw in others. The “wall between spirit and matter” had become quite thin for him, and the role of the ego enormously relativized.

In my early study of Sri Aurobindo and Jung, which began in the ashram in 1973 (the library has Jung's collected works), I railed against Jung's ignorance about the new yoga that Sri Aurobindo had made possible; but when I returned to the U.S. to finish my training in psychiatry and begin analytic studies, I was grateful to Jung for providing a bridge from the East to a western scientific and cultural body of knowledge. Roberto Assagioli was another possible link, along with the burgeoning transpersonal psychology movement.

As this forum has rightly pointed out, many others have developed experiential approaches and languages for formulating them in the years since Sri Aurobindo wrote. My own hope is that those of us on the list who have delved into one or more of these areas can begin to share our knowledge and experience with each other, and especially how it is informed by the practice of yoga.

—Richard Stein, rhstein@itsa.ucsf.edu

## Mental conundrum

*This discussion occurred on Synthesis, an e-mail discussion group studying The Synthesis of Yoga. To subscribe, send e-mail to [synthesis-request@compatible.com](mailto:synthesis-request@compatible.com). Leave the subject line blank. In the body of your message, type **subscribe synthesis**.*

In the chapter “Difficulties of the Mental Being” (the chapter currently being discussed in this group, and the 13th chapter in the “The Yoga of Integral Knowledge”), in what is perhaps the chapter's key statement, and a critical if not somewhat obscure passage, Sri Aurobindo writes:

There must be a positive transformation and not merely a negative quiescence of the waking mentality. The transformation is possible because, although the divine planes are above the mental consciousness and to enter actually into them we have to lose the mental in samadhi, yet there are in the mental being divine planes superior to our normal mentality which reproduce the conditions of the divine plane proper although modified by the conditions, dominant here, of mentality. All that belongs to the experience of the divine plane can there be seized, but in the mental way and in a mental form.

To these planes of divine mentality it is possible for the developed human being to arise in the waking state; or it is possible for him to derive from them a stream of influences and experiences which shall eventually open to them and transform into their nature his whole waking existence. These higher mental states are the immediate sources, the large actual instruments, the inner stations of his perfection (called in the Veda variously seats, houses, placings or statures, footings, earths, dwelling-places, *sadas*, *grha* or *ksaya*, *dhama*, *padam*, *bhumi*, *ksiti*.)—*Synthesis of Yoga*, pp. 381–82



Could someone enlighten me on what Sri Aurobindo is referring to here? Is he referring to the ascending order of mind planes—higher mind, illumined mind, intuitive mind, overmind, and supermind? Does anyone have any references from the Vedas on this?

This strikes me as a critical passage in understanding the yoga, and I have a far from clear idea about what is meant here by these “inner stations”—never mind how one moves from one to the other. I have a feeling that this is dealt with more in Part IV, “The Yoga of Self-Perfection,” but since it is raised here, I was hoping for some clarification, if possible.

—Ben Irvin, irvinb@ix.netcom.com

**S**ri Aurobindo suggests that certain deities represent these planes, and there are numerous hymns to these deities calling them into the being and also perhaps describing them, though in an ancient and symbolic language which may be difficult to understand. I think, for example, that Saraswati represents the illumined word, inspiration, a knowledge coming from higher spheres pregnant with truth.

As a guide to the Veda on this, you might look in the index of Sri Aurobindo’s collected works for the names of various deities and then read in those places to find out what they represent. I’m not quite sure if the opposite approach would work, but you could try—i.e., look up terms such as “intuitive mind” then look specifically for references in *The Secret of the Veda*. These things are probably described more understandably in *The Life Divine*.

My understanding is that these stations would be stages of progress in the development of the yogic consciousness. A mental understanding is probably not of much use, as they are above the normal mentality and the whole point is to rise above it. So back to the fundamentals: psychic opening, quieting the mind, aspiration, surrender, rejection, and so forth.

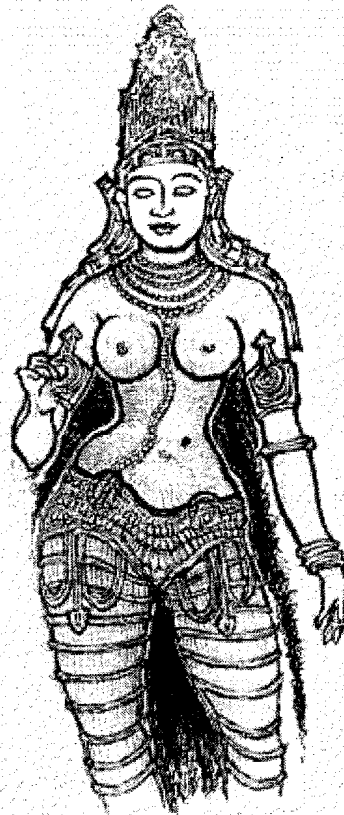
—Larry Seidlitz, lysz@troi.cc.rochester.edu

**I** think a mental understanding could be useful up to a point, perhaps more than we realize. Yes, the mind has to be quieted of its normal activity and focus, but the mental being has to remain open and awake to the higher planes. In fact this is the point of this chapter. The inescapable “Difficulties of the Mental Being” leave us with few options, and really just one in the Integral Yoga—namely that the mind must “call down the Divine into itself so that its mentality shall be changed into an image of the Divine, shall be divinized or spiritualized. This may be done and primarily must be done by the mind’s

power of reflecting that which it knows, relates to its own consciousness, contemplates.” (*Synthesis of Yoga*, pp. 380–81)

My point is that a mental understanding, although limited and potentially obstructive if too rigid and unyielding, could potentially be part of this process of the mind attempting to reflect that which it knows is above and beyond it. The mental understanding could be part of what initially bridges the chasm between the mental being and the Divine—but only, of course, until that chasm starts to close and the mental understanding is gradually dispensed with because it is progressively replaced by something else—something that corresponds to that inner station or footing, i.e., true intuition.

—Ben Irvin, irvinb@ix.netcom.com



“Indian divinity.” (Ink drawing by Paul Edmonston)

I agree with you that the mental understanding can be useful and we shouldn’t all burn our books and enter into silent meditation exclusively. And I agree we can learn something about the action of higher mind, illumined mind, intuition, and overmental consciousness by reading about them, particularly from someone who has realized them. It alerts us to the possibility of experiencing them, and perhaps of recognizing their action and distinguishing their action from the normal mental reasoning.

I meant simply to underscore the fact that mental understanding is different in kind from their action, and one cannot experience and realize them through mental understanding. One’s consciousness must become quiet enough to reflect or respond to their more refined vibration.

—Larry Seidlitz,

lysz@troi.cc.rochester.edu

I have the same feeling that these inner stations are dealt with more fully in “The Yoga of Self Perfection”—and that indeed, without these inner stations to which we as mental beings have access, the ascent to the supramental could not be accomplished and we would be relegated to

a practice that leads to quiescence and samadhi. Which is not what this yoga is about.

Instead, ours is an active yoga, just because these stations are available to us and we can climb them to self perfection. We humans have this ladder already in us waiting to be realized. Of course it is not easy, and even a few rungs are difficult, but it is worth the effort. It’s not that we just sit there and something comes and transforms us. The ladder is there and Sri Aurobindo has outlined in consummate detail how to use it.

—Janis Coker, janisfl@aol.com



## Conquering the most difficult impulse

*This exchange appeared on Auroconf as part of a discussion on yoga.*

This difficult work cannot even be started in earnest without first getting the mastery over the basic human drawbacks, sex impulse being one of the difficult ones.

—Chandresh Patel, cpatel@best.com

I discovered there is an impulse stronger than sex. It is called "the e-mail impulse."

—Girish Mantry, gmantry@cisco.com

## CURRENT AFFAIRS

### AUM '98 goes to California

The All USA Meeting (AUM), "Becoming Collective," will take place this year in California, August 28–September 1. The program will include a rich variety of talks, workshops, meditations, group interaction, and discussion. A partial, tentative list of speakers includes Anand Reddy from the Sri Aurobindo Ashram school, Devan Nair, Bhavana Dee from Auroville, and Peter Heehs of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Archives.

AUM '98 will be held at the Monte Toyon Retreat Center near the town of Aptos, located about two hours south of San Francisco and about an hour's drive south of San Jose. The retreat center is laid out on gentle slopes among giant redwoods, and the grounds will be cool and inviting in late August. Monte Toyon has a meditation chapel, an outdoor amphitheater, a volleyball court, hiking trails, and many other facilities.

#### Getting there

The AUM Organizing Committee requests that if you plan to attend AUM '98, you use the San Jose Airport if possible. Airlines that serve the airport are Alaska/Horizon, American, America West, Continental, Delta/Skywest, Mexicana, Northwest, Reno Air, Southwest, TWA, and United.

Transportation to and from the San Jose Airport is included in the registration fee. The trip takes about an hour, and vans will shuttle people to AUM every few hours on Friday, Saturday, Monday afternoon, and Tuesday. AUM volunteers will try to accommodate people who arrive at other airports (San Francisco or Oakland), but this may involve delays in transportation.

If you are driving, Aptos is between Watsonville and Santa Cruz. A quick way from San Francisco is to take Highway 101 south to Gilroy, Route 152 west to the coast, and Route 1 north to Aptos. From Los Angeles, take Interstate 5 north, take Route 152 west to Gilroy and on to the coast, then take Route 1 north to Aptos.

#### Help on the way

If you are on a limited budget, some partial scholarships are available. There will also be a work-exchange program whereby you can reduce your daily fee up to \$20 per day by participating for a few hours per day in some aspect of conference work. The amount of work available may vary from day to day. Please let us know as soon as possible if you wish to be involved in work exchange.

#### Children and families

Children and families are welcome. The rooms at Monte Toyon can accommodate families quite well, and there will be special activities for young children (including a children's room with toys, games, and a puppet theater). Child care will be available during major presentations.

The AUM committee is working to reduce the cost for children, and has established a "virtual parent" fund so that families will be able to afford to come to the conference. We need donations for this fund, if you can contribute, please contact the Sri Aurobindo Association at the address below.

#### Registration fee and accommodations

The registration fee covers all events, room and meals, and transportation from local airports at the beginning and the end of the conference. Accommodations at Monte Toyon vary from four-person semiprivate rooms to dorm rooms with ten persons per room.

**Registration fee:** Semiprivate room (four beds per room), \$85/day; dorm room (8–10 beds per room), \$65/day; single-day pass, \$50/day; children 12 years and younger, \$25/day or less, depending on size of the virtual parent fund.

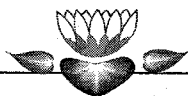
If you register for the full conference (four days) before April 15, 1998, you will receive a \$25 discount on the total cost. Registration deposit is \$100. If you cancel before July 1, you will receive 100% of your deposit back; if you cancel before August 1, you will receive 50% of your deposit back.

If you wish to have more private accommodations, motels and hotels are available in Aptos. Camping is available at nearby Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park and at New Brighton, Manresa, and Sunset State Beaches.

To register, please use the AUM '98 registration form. If you are not on the Sri Aurobindo Association mailing list and have not yet received a form, you may obtain one from the SAA at the address below.

#### Contact information

For more information and/or to obtain a conference registration form, please contact the Sri Aurobindo Association, Box 163237, Sacramento, CA, 95816; phone: (209) 339-3710, Ext. 6; fax: (209) 339-3715; e-mail, aum98@collaboration.org. For updates, photos and more, visit the AUM '98 Web site at <http://www.collaboration.org/aum/98/overview.html>



## "Becoming Collective" is theme for AUM '98

by the AUM Organizing Committee

**W**hy did we choose "Becoming Collective" for the theme of the 1998 AUM? Perhaps some history would help. A few years ago, people began to use the Internet for discussions, coordination of work, and dissemination of the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Daily "conversations" among disciples now include e-mail postings from India, Europe, and the United States. Clearly a new phase of collective work is upon us.

At AUM '97 in New York, it was apparent that many of us have been independently thinking about how our widespread community of disciples and sadhaks could move into closer contact with one another. Many perceive that the yoga force of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother is at work in disparate places, movements, and individuals. Something is afoot in the world, and whether we call it the Divine, the supramental, or the force of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, it is creating a progressive movement towards harmony, mutuality, and oneness.

The group sponsoring AUM '98 has been holding monthly retreats at the Sri Aurobindo Sadhana Peetham (SASP) in Lodi, California, since Fall 1996. Through work, meditations, informal hikes, readings, and our shared experience of aspiration in the yoga, these retreats have strengthened our growing sense of collective identity. When we sat down to discuss possible themes for AUM '98, the idea of "Becoming Collective" emerged and was chosen immediately. We see it as an emerging reality, and a promise for the future.

### What do we hope to achieve?

During the past 15 years, AUM conferences have brought together people for different purposes. Sometimes the focus has been Auroville, at other times it has been specific points of sadhana, and yet other AUMs have been wide-ranging. In *The Ideal of Human Unity*, Sri Aurobindo says that a group, "like the individual, has a body, an organic life, a moral and aesthetic temperament, a developing mind and a soul behind all these signs and powers for the sake of which they exist."

For AUM '98, we want to explore and strengthen the body, temperament, mind, and soul of our collective consciousness.

### Individual and collective

Recognizing the basic psychological barriers between individuals, we will provide a structure that allows each person to meet and know everyone else, so that there are no "outsiders" versus "insiders." From the moment someone arrives, she will be welcomed and introduced to individuals and the yoga. This will be done through presentations that introduce the major groups and centers in the U.S. and through such simple things as name badges and a bulletin board with photographs. Long-standing

sadhaks will be encouraged to seek out and make meaningful contact with newcomers.

### Active participation

Recognizing the value of active participation, we will organize presentations at the conference to encourage group interaction and discussion. We will work closely with each presenter and suggest ways that speakers can include the audience. We will also encourage participation in the details of the AUM itself through a work-exchange program, so that everyone who wishes to do so can play a part in conference implementation. There will be collective art, music, and literary projects throughout the AUM so that the group may express and create its vision in many ways.

### Common goal and aspiration

Recognizing the great power in a common goal, aspiration, and action, we will provide regular group meditations, which will be focused by specific writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on the subject of community. We will provide presentations on the works and goals of individual centers so that these may be understood by all and as far as possible coordinated throughout our larger community of disciples. There will be many opportunities for discussion to further clarify and connect our common aspirations.

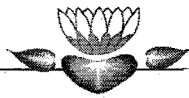
### Unity in the Divine

Recognizing that our true unity lies in the recognition of the Divine in each other, we will provide specific exercises that aim at going beneath the surface and finding this spiritual reality. We will also explore the meaning of a gnostic community, which the Mother says must exist as a "real, concrete unity and identity of everyone with the other members of the community, that is to say, everyone must feel himself not as a member somehow united with the others, but as all in one, in himself."

In short, we hope to create the conditions where participants can rise to the highest level individually and collectively, where our common aspirations and visions can be explored and linked, where a spirit of "unity, mutuality, and harmony" prevails.

*The AUM '98 organizing committee includes Dian Kiser, Theresa Boschert, L.K. Rashinkar, Parag and Preeti Bhatt, David Hutchinson, Bhavi and Jyoti Saklecha, Chandresh and Lucy Patel, Paul Molinari, Girish Mantry, Vishnu Eschner, John Robert and Karen Cornell, and Sarasija Parthasarathy.*

**W**e see it as an emerging reality, and a promise for the future.



## NEWS

### International association to study integral psychology

Inspired by an online discussion on psychology and yoga, members of the Auroconf e-mail forum are founding an international association dedicated to developing an integral psychology based on the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

The new Association of Psychology of Integral Consciousness has a fourfold purpose:

- To gather, organize, discuss, and distribute material in Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's writings pertaining to psychological practice and theory
- To join together (online at first, eventually in person) in a forum specifically created to foster discussion, planning, and development
- To create a bibliography of work by disciples and others that will lead to a theory and practice of integral psychology
- To support each other in research and writing that can further develop a body of knowledge in this new psychology

Future projects may include a journal for publishing the association's findings and a conference to highlight the central tenets and growing implications of the new psychology.

A special e-mail discussion group has been created for people interested in becoming a part of this effort. To subscribe, send e-mail to [psych-request@compatible.com](mailto:psych-request@compatible.com). Leave the subject line blank. In the body of your message, type **subscribe psych**.

A Web site has also been established at <http://www.serv.caiw.nl/~biedel/>.

### Scholars to tour

Two important scholars will be touring the U. S. in the fall of 1998: Arabinda Basu and Georges Van Vrekham. Prof. Basu is a highly respected expert on Sri Aurobindo's philosophy, while Mr. Van Vrekham is the author of *Beyond Man*, a new book about Sri Aurobindo and Mother that is receiving high praise in Holland and India and will be published soon in an American edition.

For more information about Prof. Basu's visit, please contact Debashish Banerji at the East West Cultural Center: phone (310) 390-9083; e-mail, [ewcc@earthlink.net](mailto:ewcc@earthlink.net).

If you would like to sponsor a talk by Georges Van Vrekham, if you have contacts at a university or other forum who would benefit from a talk on the vision of Sri Aurobindo and Mother or Auroville, or for more information about Mr. Van Vrekham's visit, please contact Julian Lines at Matagiri: phone (914) 679-5358; e-mail, [jhl@aol.com](mailto:jhl@aol.com).

—Notice courtesy *Matagiri Newsletter*



Man Ravikant

### Man Ravikant remembered

We regret the passing of a dear friend, Man Ravikant, on January 28, 1998. A joyful singer of devotional songs and an inspired sadhak, Man embodied a wonderful confidence and sense of purpose. His illnesses—cancer, kidney failure, weakened bones, and finally respiratory failure—were all placed in the context of the yoga. He endured them with tremendous dignity and high aspiration, even though his training as a medical nurse gave him a deeper factual knowledge of the problems associated with each more difficult complication. Some *Collaboration* readers may have met him at last year's AUM.

He has left a small treasure trove of blessings packets and photos to Matagiri, where his memory will be cherished.

—Julian Lines, [jhl@aol.com](mailto:jhl@aol.com)

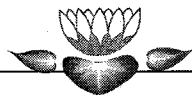
### The cat who went to heaven

Friends of Matagiri would want to know of the passing of Baruch, the white cat, at the ripe age of 20 (almost 21). Sam and Eric were both with him. His devotion was so great that his cause of death was uremic coma, the same as Sri Aurobindo.

He usually meditated with those who lived at Matagiri. An accomplished hunter and alpha cat among many dogs and cats at Matagiri, Baruch was, to the end, affectionate: loud in purrs, demanding of petting and scratches, and generous with licks.

Baruch is now buried near the new apple tree in the lower garden. He is survived by Sam, Eric, and Yukki.

—Julian Lines, [jhl@aol.com](mailto:jhl@aol.com)



## Work started on Sri Aurobindo library

Sam Spanier reports that in October 1997, work was begun on the renovation of a building to house Matagiri's Sri Aurobindo Library and Archives. We would like to thank all those who have already so generously contributed to this project, and as funds are still needed, invite anyone who would like to help make this dream a reality to send tax-deductible donations payable to Matagiri, 1218 Wittenberg Road, Mt. Tremper, NY 12457 USA.

We are also interested in having donations of archival material such as letters and notes of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, photographs, books, and correspondence. We already have materials from devotees who have died, including Marilyn Widman, Rutledge Tompkins, Gene Maslow, and Lalit (Scott Fullman). We invite others to consider making provision in their will for such material to be donated to Matagiri.

The Matagiri Sri Aurobindo Library is one of the largest in the U. S. and is used by devotees and scholars alike. The library will be dedicated on August 15, 1998, along with an observance of the passing of Eugene "Mickey" Finn of Boston, who asked that his ashes be brought to Matagiri at that time.

—Notice courtesy *Matagiri Newsletter*, available from Matagiri Sri Aurobindo Center, 1218 Wittenberg Rd., Mt. Tremper, NY, 12457 USA (or online from [matagiri@aol.com](mailto:matagiri@aol.com))

## AUROVILLE ALMANAC

### Help needed to purchase Auroville land

by Guy

The site chosen for the international township of Auroville lies close to the Bay of Bengal in the South Indian state of Tamil Nadu, a few kilometers north of Pondicherry. Here, on February 28, 1968, in the midst of a severely eroded plateau extending eastward to the sea, young people representing 124 nations and 23 Indian states each placed a handful of earth from their countries in a simple lotus-shaped urn: a gesture symbolizing the start of the international township and birth of a new unified world.

Auroville, its charter states, belongs to nobody in particular, but to humanity as a whole. Based on the vision of two great spiritual leaders, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, Auroville aims to realize, materially and spiritually, a true human unity.

The town plan layout for Auroville, as seen from above, looks like a spiral galaxy with four radiating sectors (the international, cultural, industrial, and residential zones) leading out to a surrounding greenbelt. These four sectors are focused on the Matrimandir, the geographical heart and spiritual soul of the township.

Between 1964 and 1973, some 2,000 acres of land were acquired for the project. These purchases consisted of parcels of varying sizes and configurations, occasionally contiguous, more often interspersed between village or government-owned lands; and it was on these scattered plots that the present pattern of Auroville settlements was established.

An early priority for Auroville was an intensive effort of environmental regeneration and reforestation, which has turned the formerly barren area into a green and sustainable environment. At the same time, emphasis was placed on the need for nonpolluting development using appropriate technology and alternative energy-generating systems, such as solar photovoltaics, wind, and biogas.

**The time has come to secure Auroville's future.**

Since 1973, a further 700 acres have been acquired, largely with funds provided by Auroville residents and friends. These were plots required for the area around Matrimandir, expansion of settlements, consolidation of existing holdings, or the establishment of projects specific to certain areas of the township. But given all the other needs of Auroville, general land purchase was not seen as a matter of highest priority.

### Briefs

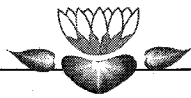
▲ Surama Bloomquist announces that the East Bay Sri Aurobindo Center in Berkeley, California, has officially closed.

▲ The 1998 Auroville color calendar is available. Send a check for \$10 made payable to the Auroville Information Office, P.O. Box 676, Woodstock, NY 12498. Sales support the acquisition of land for Auroville.

▲ Cassia Berman's book of poetry, *Divine Mother within Me*, is available from her; write to Cassia Berman, 11-1/2 Tannery Brook Rd, Woodstock, NY 12498.

▲ Surf Collab! *Collaboration* is now available on the World Wide Web at [www.collaboration.org](http://www.collaboration.org).

▲ Errata: In the last issue of *Collaboration*, Ben Irvin's e-mail address was incorrectly listed; the correct address is [irvinb@ix.netcom.com](mailto:irvinb@ix.netcom.com). Ameeta Mehra's name was incorrectly spelled as "Meera." The photo above the story on the Pavilion of Tibetan Culture was actually the Matrimandir. We apologize for the errors.



## Auroville's development threatened

Today, Auroville's development according to its original plans is being threatened by:

- Rapidly escalating land prices caused by the urban and industrial expansion of the nearby city of Pondicherry
- Increasing real estate speculation on the Auroville plateau
- Dumping of untreated waste from Pondicherry on lands in and around Auroville
- Systematic spraying of pesticides on privately owned cashew plantations adjacent to Auroville land, which undermines the community's attempts to produce organically grown food and creates a health hazard for all people living in the area

## Auroville's future has to be secured

With these factors threatening the growth and future of the township, it is clear that the time has now come to secure the remaining land for Auroville's future.

In the area of the central township, some 300 acres still need to be acquired. Once this area has been consolidated, it will become possible to lay down the infrastructure essential for coherent future growth: roads, electricity and telephone cabling, water supply, sewage and waste treatment, etc. Acquisition of the land will also facilitate development of a number of other much needed projects.

In the greenbelt, a further 2,600 acres need to be purchased to link up existing areas of forest and organic farming land into a continuous greenbelt around the township. The present sanctuaries for natural regeneration—already recognized internationally as an inspiring example of successful reforestation—can only become fully secure and viable when the extra land around them is purchased.

## An urgent appeal

To date, only 49% of the land required for Auroville has been acquired, and purchase of the remaining land has become imperative. It is clear that the bulk of monies needed to complete the work will have to be raised through appeals to friends outside. Furthermore, the promptest possible action is essential: a few more years of escalating prices could put lands essential to Auroville's future beyond reach, and could seriously impede implementation of the project.

With these considerations in mind, we appeal to people all over the world inspired by Auroville and its aims to help us, as a matter of urgency, buy the land that is still needed.

## How to contribute

Tax-deductible contributions for the Auroville Land Fund may be sent to Auroville International USA, P.O. Box 601, Sausalito, CA 94966 USA; phone, (415) 788-AURO.

*Guy lives in Auroville and works with the Auroville Land Fund.*

## CENTER TO CENTER



*A collective retreat at the Lodi ashram in August 1997. (Photo by autoimer)*

## Sri Aurobindo Sadhana Peetham: A place for tapasya

*by Dakshina*

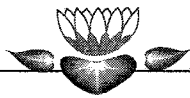
In Sanskrit, a *peetham* is described as a sacred place or seat for tapasya (spiritual discipline). In 1993 this name was given to us by a revered elder of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram after our center reincorporated with the aspiration to become a true place for practicing the sadhana of Sri Aurobindo's yoga in a collective ashram environment.

Two-and-a-half years ago, we moved to Lodi, north California, to a three-acre homestead property with a 100-year-old house surrounded by towering elms, a few oaks, and one majestic old pine tree. The immediate outlying areas are mainly vineyards and agricultural plots.

At present we are four full-time residential members, though a growing number of friends come on a regular basis to join in the work and other activities. Every evening there is a collective meditation at 8:00, with a study group being held on Saturday evenings.

On the second Saturday of each month, there is a collective yoga retreat attended by friends from the surrounding Sacramento and Bay areas of north California. During the retreats, we have group meditation, bhajans, study circles, or poetry and play readings, but one of the main and most appreciated activities is the collective karma yoga where we have the chance to put the teachings into practice by working together.

Usually there is a theme to each retreat, such as "Sincerity," "Devotion," "Savitri," or "Silence." About 15 to 20 regular attendees come to these monthly gatherings, and over the course of the one-and-a-half years we've been holding them, we have no-



ticed a kind of growth and refinement of the collective group consciousness, which is inspiring.

When the friends and visitors have departed, we are left to our few members and reliance on the divine help and presence of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo to manage with the work, maintenance, and growth of the ashram (which can often appear overwhelming when we imagine that we are doing the work by ourselves). Though we do, as a nonprofit organization, receive donations that help a lot, there is an ashram-owned and sponsored business, Auromère, which imports and distributes Sri Aurobindo books, incense, and ayurvedic products from India as the main financial support. We also contribute to other Sri Aurobindo organizations and the Matrimandir in Auroville from the Auromère proceeds.

But most importantly, the aim of this small ashram is to provide a place for those who, in the Mother's words, "wish to serve the Divine" and offer themselves in all their parts and activities in a collective sadhana of Sri Aurobindo's yoga, in a place where food, shelter, simple basic necessities, and a field of work are provided for this purpose.

For those interested in visiting, membership, retreats, or work-exchange programs, more information is available. We also publish a descriptive catalog of Sri Aurobindo books that is free on request. Write or call Sri Aurobindo Sadhana Peetham, 2621 W. Highway 12, Lodi, CA 95242 USA; phone, (209) 339-1342, ext. 5; e-mail, [sasp@mindsync.com](mailto:sasp@mindsync.com).

*Dakshina is a resident director of the Sri Aurobindo Sadhana Peetham.*

## CHRONICLES & REFLECTIONS

### Sri Aurobindo's last darshan

by Rhoda P. LeCocq

*The following selection is taken from pp. 198–202 of The Radical Thinkers, a book published in 1969 by the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press and now out of print. The account describes the ashram atmosphere during November and December 1950, immediately preceding and subsequent to Sri Aurobindo's leaving the body.*

**A**t last it was the morning of November 24. At Golconda, rumors flew. Although thousands had now arrived for this darshan, it was said that Sri Aurobindo was ill and might find it impossible to appear. Then at the last minute, we were told he was well enough.

A long line led from the main building around the block: people of every color, every style of dress, government officials and high-ranking professors, young and old, from dozens of countries, wanted to see the philosopher-sage. Each of us finally

climbed the stairs to the floor where, at the end of a long narrow room, Sri Aurobindo in white and the Mother in a gold sari sat side by side upon a slightly raised platform.

As a westerner, the idea of merely passing by these two with nothing being said had struck me as a bit ridiculous. I was still unfamiliar with the Hindu idea that such a silent meeting could afford an intensely spiritual impetus. I watched as I came up in line, and I noted that the procedure was to stand quietly before the two of them for a few silent moments, then to move on at a gesture from Sri Aurobindo. What happened next was completely unexpected.

As I stepped into a radius of about four feet, there was the sensation of moving into some kind of a force field. Intuitively, I knew it was the force of Love, but not what ordinary humans usually mean by the term. These two were "geared straight up"; they were not paying attention to me as ordinary parents might have done; yet, this unattachment seemed just the thing that healed. Suddenly, I loved them both, as spiritual "parents."

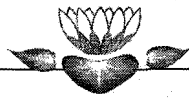
Then all thought ceased. I was perfectly aware of where I was; it was not "hypnotism," as one Stanford friend later suggested. It was simply that during those few minutes, my mind became utterly still. It seemed that I stood there a very long, an uncounted time, for there *was* no time. Only many years later did I describe this experience as my having experienced the Timeless in Time. When there at the darshan, there was not the least doubt in my mind that I had met two people who had experienced what they claimed. They *were* gnostic beings. They had realized this new consciousness, which Sri Aurobindo called the supramental. Later, this same experience made me understand what Heidegger meant by "standing presence."

Several days later, an English doctor staying at Golconda warned me that the condition of Sri Aurobindo's health was becoming worse. At 1:30 in the morning on December 5, 1950, he passed away of a kidney infection. About 3:30 that same morning, this was announced to everyone in the ashram. With great sorrow, I realized I had been at the last darshan at which both of them would appear together!

During the day of December 5, I hovered about the ashram grounds, feeling desolate. Already it has been decided, despite the objections of the French colonial governor, that Sri Aurobindo would be buried in the courtyard of the main building beneath a huge spreading tree. The male ashramites, including the visiting doctor, began to build the tomb. I watched the doctor, who had confided to me that he expected Sri Aurobindo to "reveal himself as an avatar," and he beat with his sledgehammer on the concrete slab as if he would destroy death itself.

There was weeping but no hysteria. By afternoon, men and women passed baskets of earth from hand to hand, as the digging continued beneath the tree. Then there was a new announcement. For all of us there, there would now be a second darshan. In lesser numbers, we filed through to view the body of the poet-philosopher lying upon his couch in the upper chamber.



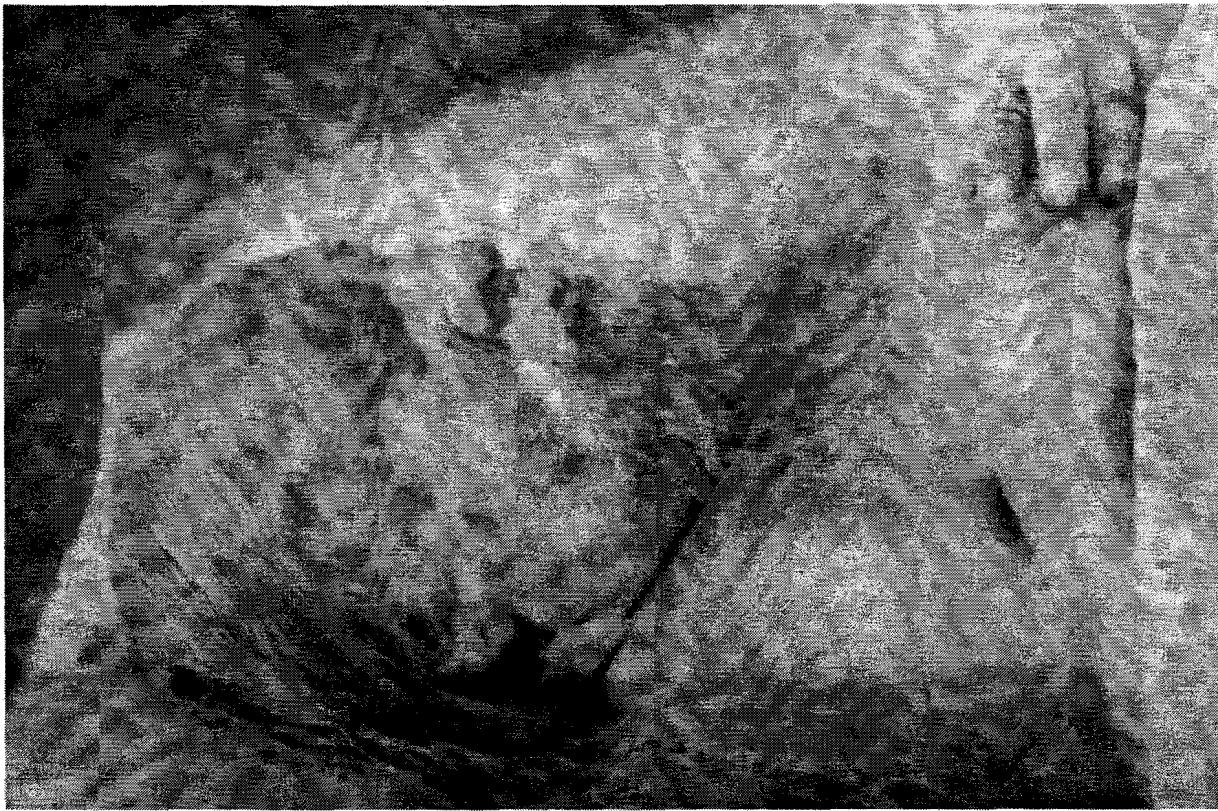


Again, the following morning on December 6, we all filed past. The “force field” which I mentioned earlier seemed to remain about the body and throughout the room. Dressed in white, upon a white couch before the windows, Sri Aurobindo now lay in state. Bowls of flowers stood around the couch; and at the bed’s head and foot, disciples of long standing sat quietly, heads bowed.

Unexpectedly, in the afternoon, there was another darshan. Sri Aurobindo’s face still did not look deathlike. The skin was golden in color, the white hair blowing on the pillow in a breeze from a fan. The aquiline profile continued to have a prophetic look. There was no odor of death and little incense was burning. To my astonishment, the repeated viewings of his body had a comforting effect.

From the French colony, already exploding with disapproval and its officials much disturbed by the burial plans, came the rumor that the body must have been “shot with formaldehyde” secretly, to preserve it. Moreover, said the officials, the ashram was not only breaking the law in burying anyone in the garden, it was worse to keep it so long unburied. (The legal regulation was that no body should be kept unburied longer than 48 hours.)

On the morning of December 7, therefore, a French doctor representing the government, a Dr. Barbet, arrived to inspect the body of Sri Aurobindo. At the end he reported it was a “miracle”; there was no deterioration, no rigor mortis. It was an unheard of occurrence; the weather had continued to be hot during the entire time. After this official and scientific approval, nothing further could be done to prevent another darshan.



*Sri Aurobindo lying in state. (Photo courtesy Sri Aurobindo Ashram)*

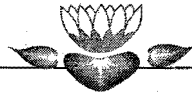
By December 7, everyone momentarily expected the funeral. This was, after all, a tropical climate. Bodies were usually burnt as quickly as possible in India. Even the planned burial in earth was a major departure from the usual Hindu custom. The grave had now been completed with large cement blocks lining the tomb. But instead of the burial, an announcement came from the Mother:

“The funeral of Sri Aurobindo did not take place today. His body is charged with such a concentration of supramental light that there is no sign of decomposition and the body will be kept lying on his bed so long as it remains intact.”

Visitors were flocking from all over India; and the Indian newspapers now proposed that Sri Aurobindo be suggested, posthumously, for the Nobel Peace Prize.

This time, I suspected it might be the last time. Everyone and anyone was allowed into the ashram to pass by Sri Aurobindo’s body: beggars in rags, curiosity seekers, villagers, ashramites, and visitors.

By December 8, silence was observed throughout the ashram grounds. Only latecomers who had just arrived in Pondicherry were allowed to view the body.



Tension grew among the ashramites, and incredible speculations became the order of the day. An Indian representative of *Life* magazine came around, wanting to talk to those of us from America. He told us that this phenomenon of bodily preservation after death had never taken place anywhere in India. Why, even yogis who specialized in "live" burial had never performed such a feat. No Indian "living saint" in history had preserved his body after death in this fashion. The Indian magazine representative wondered if Sri Aurobindo was not, after all, still alive and only in some kind of trance state or coma.

On December 9, at noon, a notice was posted that there would be a final darshan for those in the ashram at one o'clock. Later the time was changed to 2:30 p.m. and visitors from outside were allowed in first. The night before, a plane chartered by 19 people from Darjeeling had flown in. By now, in Golconda, everyone was sharing his or her room; bedrolls crowded the floors and halls of the guest house.

I had, of course, postponed my planned departure date. All of this, I realized, was a situation which would remain entirely unduplicated in my own life. I intended to remain until the end.

On the afternoon of December 9, at 5:00 p.m., the burial service finally took place after another final darshan. A feeling of force and energy remained in the atmosphere around Sri Aurobindo's vicinity, but that force had now weakened. Afterwards, in absolute silence, everyone in the ashram sat in the courtyard. The gates were locked against further curiosity seekers.

There was no orthodox religious service at the burial. The coffin, of rosewood with metal gold rings, much like an old and beautiful sea chest, was borne from the ashram and lowered into the earth. French officials, all dressed in white, made a line to the left, their faces stern, a bit superior in expression and definitely disapproving of the entire affair. Over the coffin, concrete slabs were laid. Then everyone lined up and, one by one, we scattered earth from wicker baskets. It was dark under the spreading tree when each of us had made this last farewell.

On the morning of December 10, when I visited the grave, it was already covered with flowers, incense sticks burning. It was announced that the Mother would carry on at the ashram and that a new International University would be opened.

Although the Mother had announced there would be two weeks of meditation during which she would see no one, she graciously granted me a farewell interview on December 15, at 6:00 p.m.

At 5:30 I went into the meditation hall, still very much mentally and emotionally upset by everything that had occurred. She appeared at the top of the stairs, dressed in white. When I smiled, she nodded and said: "Come on up."

All the questions I had meant to ask seemed to vanish. I was intensely aware that the interview itself was an imposition, when she had so recently lost the companion of 30 years. "They say you wish to see me," she said quietly.

Before I could think I blurted out that I seemed to be full of fears, fears of new wars, fears of this or that in my personal life.

"One must not fear," she said. "By fear you bring about what you fear." I nodded, then she added, and I had a feeling she spoke to the world, not just to me: "It's ego! Ego!"

Several personal matters were discussed, and then of spiritual development she said: "One must have a spirit of adventure about all this, you know."

When our brief talk was over, she took a double French marigold from a bronze bowl on the edge of a small dark table, against which she had leaned an elbow while we talked. With a long look, she handed the flower to me.

Only much later, many years later, did I realize how fortunate I had been. Within the space of a year, far from my own shores, I had met three of the world's greatest human beings: Jung, the Swiss psychiatrist, who had said that man had *outgrown* his concept of God; and these two: Sri Aurobindo and Mirra Alfassa, or the Mother, who together, had attempted to *give* the world that new needed concept of God, as those of spiritual genius always do.

Because of them, life continues to have hope and meaning.

*Rhoda LeCocq received a Ph.D. from California Institute of Asian Studies in San Francisco.*

## Darshan Day in Pondy, February, 1997

by Girish Mantry

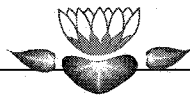
I woke up around 3:00 in the morning, quickly had a shower, and proceeded to the ashram for the collective meditation around the samadhi. The moon was greeting us on the West, and though the actual meditation would be between 6:00 and 6:30 a.m., preparations for seating people had already started. Queues formed behind the ashram main building. People were let in to the ashram courtyard one by one and seated on mats on the ground; some were seated upstairs. The organizers did their best to seat everyone.

Around 4:30 a.m., all were seated, and if anyone came after this time, it must have been tough luck for him. Not an inch of space was left in the ashram courtyard in all directions.

We sat there for an hour and a half. I almost slept during this time, as I had not had sufficient sleep. Buzzing and noise continued for a while, until silence dominated the scene.

Just before 6:00 a.m., the lights were turned off and the bell rang to begin the meditation, which lasted until 6.30. After that, we began to disperse.

Many people queued up to go to the samadhi to offer pranam. After seeing the difficulty of getting to the samadhi, I opted to come back later and proceeded towards the dining room for



breakfast. There also, huge lines had formed. They extended onto the streets.

An hour before noon, we had lunch in the dining room, then returned to the ashram. We found lines allotted for different time slots, and got in line for the 12 to 12:30 slot. We stood there for a while facing the hot sun before we advanced far enough to be seated on the ground under the umbrellas. Then we were let in to the main ashram building from the back side and shown upstairs to Mother's room.

After all the trouble we had taken, it was gratifying to have the darshan of Mother's room. I felt a different vibration altogether. Such a nice smell. There was a picture of Mother in the center of the room, and people were passing by her offering quick, standing pranams and prayers and collecting the Darshan Day messages before leaving the room.



*The samadhi. (Photo courtesy Sri Aurobindo Ashram)*

The line moved quickly. Everyone got a chance to be near Mother's gracious picture for about half a minute or so. I had my chance too. After all the roaming around and standing in lines, I was very happy to feel her presence there more or less concrete. I felt as if she was accepting each and every one of those who came for the darshan, irrespective of who they were. All were her children. And she was uplifting and transforming each of them, no matter if they understood the philosophy or not. I prayed to her that she be the sole guide and leader in my life, and I believe she heard it.

After the darshan I fell down with fever—possibly because of the change in weather, a lack of sleep, and excessive physical strain. Both my parents nursed me liberally with their amateur homeopathic expertise and I was out of fever in a day.

But I must say a few more words about the Darshan Day. There were nearly 12,000 visitors that day. Most of them were Tamil people from the areas surrounding Pondicherry and other places in Tamil Nadu. It is interesting to see the increasing influence of Sri Aurobindo and Mother on the local people in the state. If you notice, most of the disciples and visitors who came to the

ashram in the early years were from North India, from the regions of Bengal, Orissa, Gujarat, and Maharashtra. Not many South Indians were there, and fewer Tamils, despite their geographical proximity to the ashram. Now things have changed. The local Tamils are the majority among the visitors on darshan days.

The influence of Sri Aurobindo and Mother on the rest of India and the world is only going to increase in the coming years—and the size of the crowds is also going to increase. What are the ashram authorities going to do? Nobody knows. No one knows what is the right thing to do. They are all perplexed. Mother has not given any guidelines regarding this, and it is not fair to stop the visitors coming for the darshan. It will be an interesting puzzle to watch in the years to come.

*Girish Mantry is a software programmer in San Jose, California.*

## The Mother's child

*by Shyam Kumari*

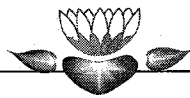
I was born and brought up in a family where the old Hindu religion and tradition were an integral part of life. My early education took place in a Vedic school founded by the great reformer Swami Dayananda Saraswati, who revived the ancient truth of Vedic culture through his Arya Samaj movement. At the same time, the education imparted in the school and later in college was western in concept as well as content.

Thus I had a catholic upbringing, and the agnostic in me wrestled with the person who wanted to follow in the hoary ancient Hindu tradition.

I was a voracious reader, and as a recognition of my hunger for reading, our school made a special concession and issued me four books a day. I had read about 1,200 books of our small school library by the age of 14. The hand of grace brought me in contact with a neighbor who lent me almost all the English classics.

Due to the vast reading at an early age, a great inner leap forward was taken. It seemed to me that there was nothing in the world worth living for. By the age of 16, I decided that religion, philanthropy, and communism were insufficient to fulfill my spirit's sacred thirst. I had done a bit of social service and interacted with a number of communists. Also, to find some meaning somewhere, I had studied a little about Islam and Christianity, but found no anchor. The idea of the Gita, of the Vedanta, and even of Sri Ramakrishna left me dissatisfied. I wanted something that would make this beloved world beautiful and perfect.

Now, having prepared the ground, the divine grace brought me in contact with a couple who were devotees of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. When I heard about the Mother, all heaven seemed within reach.



I was married off. Then in 1959, at the age of 24, finding it impossible to live a worldly life, I traveled for four days and three nights to meet the Mother. One look at her and all my problems were resolved. I didn't know that she had come to bring heaven or more to humanity, which had been my dream. To see her was all my heart needed. I asked her to accept me. She said to an ashramite, "Her heart is so developed that she is ready to take up yoga, but she needs more experience of life."

I went back, and with her consent, took my master's degree, secured a first division, and stood second in a class of nearly 100 students. Then she approved my taking up a research for a doctorate in Hindi. In 1968, I heard that the Mother was very ill and I left everything to lay myself at her feet. She accepted me and my eight-year-old son and made me a professor in her Sri Aurobindo International Center of Education.

Since then I have lived here in Pondicherry as her child. About 15 years back, I began to write.

*Shyam Kumari has lived at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram for 29 years. She edited the four-volume series How They Came to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and the three-volume series Vignettes of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.*

## Nolini-da: To know him

by Arun Vaidya

Nolini Kanta Gupta was considered the *manas putra* (mental son) of Sri Aurobindo and regarded by the Mother as a collaborator. He was a trustee and secretary of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and editor of *The Advent*, *The Bulletin*, *Vartika*, and other Bengali publications. He was dean of the Faculty of Languages of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education and author of eight books in English and ten books in Bengali. He was also a freedom fighter, athlete, linguist, thinker, ardent exponent of truth and beauty, and one of the foremost followers of Integral Yoga.

Taking a clue from Nolini-da himself—"The full flowering of the human soul, its perfect divinization, demands the realization of a many-aspected personality, the very richness of the Divine within it" (1)—let's attempt to understand him.

Historically, Nolini-da in his previous western births was believed to be the French poet Pierre Ronsard; Le Notre, the gardener of Louis XIV; Andre Chenier, the poet of the French Revolution; Virgil; and Sir Francis Walsingham, the secretary of state under Queen Elizabeth I. Likewise, in the eastern culture, Nolini-da was believed to have been Mahatma Yuyutsu during the Mahabharata era (2) and Satyakama Jabala in still more ancient pre-Upanishadic times in India.

Like any pursuer of Integral Yoga, Nolini-da had his share of despondency, loneliness, weariness, and age-old questions

("Why, what, where, and which way?") during his stay in Alipore Jail as a freedom fighter of *Bharat Mata* (Mother India) from May 1908 to May 1909. And like any reasonable seeker of enlightenment, for solace he turned to good books, such as Vivekananda's *Colombo to Almora*, Bacon's essays, Shakespeare's *King John*, the *Vishnu Puranas*, and Oscar Wilde's *De Profundis*. (3)

He established equanimity within himself in Alipore Jail and had the experience of a something that was clear and bright and calm: "The horizons grew bright, the winds felt delightful"—the experience of the Universal Being.

But the journey of yoga is not a one-step solution or a one-phase self attainment, as evident from Nolini-da's sentiments in relating the words of Rabindranath Tagore: "Thou hast found a shelter for everyone, O Shankara, O Lord of the Worlds, But to me thou hast assigned the road alone." (4)

Nolini-da's transformative years are a poignant reminder to us that even the most chosen of the disciples have to endure the challenges of the path of Integral Yoga and that we should remain resolute in our pursuit with faith in our truth of the being and the soul's mission.

After his release from Alipore Jail, Nolini-da was undecided about his future and was wandering about like floating dust—a state to which most of us can relate. But a sincere aspiration and honest commitment to the divine cause were his assets and guiding force.

Sri Aurobindo chose him to work for the publications of *Dharma* and *Karmayogin*. At the tender age of 20, Nolini-da's first article was published in *Dharma*.

Sri Aurobindo settled in Pondicherry in 1910, and after six months Nolini-da followed him. This initial period symbolized their relationship as comrades and as tutor and student.

When Mother came, she made the disciples realize through her own conduct that Sri Aurobindo was the guru and lord of yoga. Nolini-da's feelings mirrored what Arjuna expressed having seen Sri Krishna's *virat swarupa* (all-encompassing, gigantic form):

By whatever name I have called you, O Krishna, O Yadava, O Comrade, thinking in my rashness that you were only a friend, and out of ignorance and from affection, not knowing this thy greatness; whatever disrespect I have shown you out of frivolity, whether sitting or lying down or eating, when I was alone or when you were present before me,—may I be pardoned for all that, O thou Infinite One. (5)

It was Nolini-da's willingness to adapt and his unconditional dedication to his spiritual guardians that molded his character, and humility became his hallmark.

In the book *Tribute to Nolinida Gupta*, (6) Jayantilal observed that "Nolini never projected himself as a thinker, a writer, a worker, or a sadhak. He lived unobtrusively like a quiet white shadow of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. He never displayed



any restlessness of ambition. Personality, ambition, self-importance, self-assertion of an individual were lost in his identity with Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.”

In the book *Nolini: Arjuna of Our Age*, (7) Indra Sen noted that Nolini-da’s articles on matters occult, spiritual, literary, social, and cultural were clear and illuminating. V. Madhusudan Reddy believed Nolini-da to be a pilgrim of the infinite and a sadhak of *purna yoga*, regarding him as one of the conscious instruments of a new world.

Around 1940, Sri Aurobindo told Nirodbaran, “I always see the Light descending into Nolini.” “His is the pure mind,” said the supreme guru at another time.

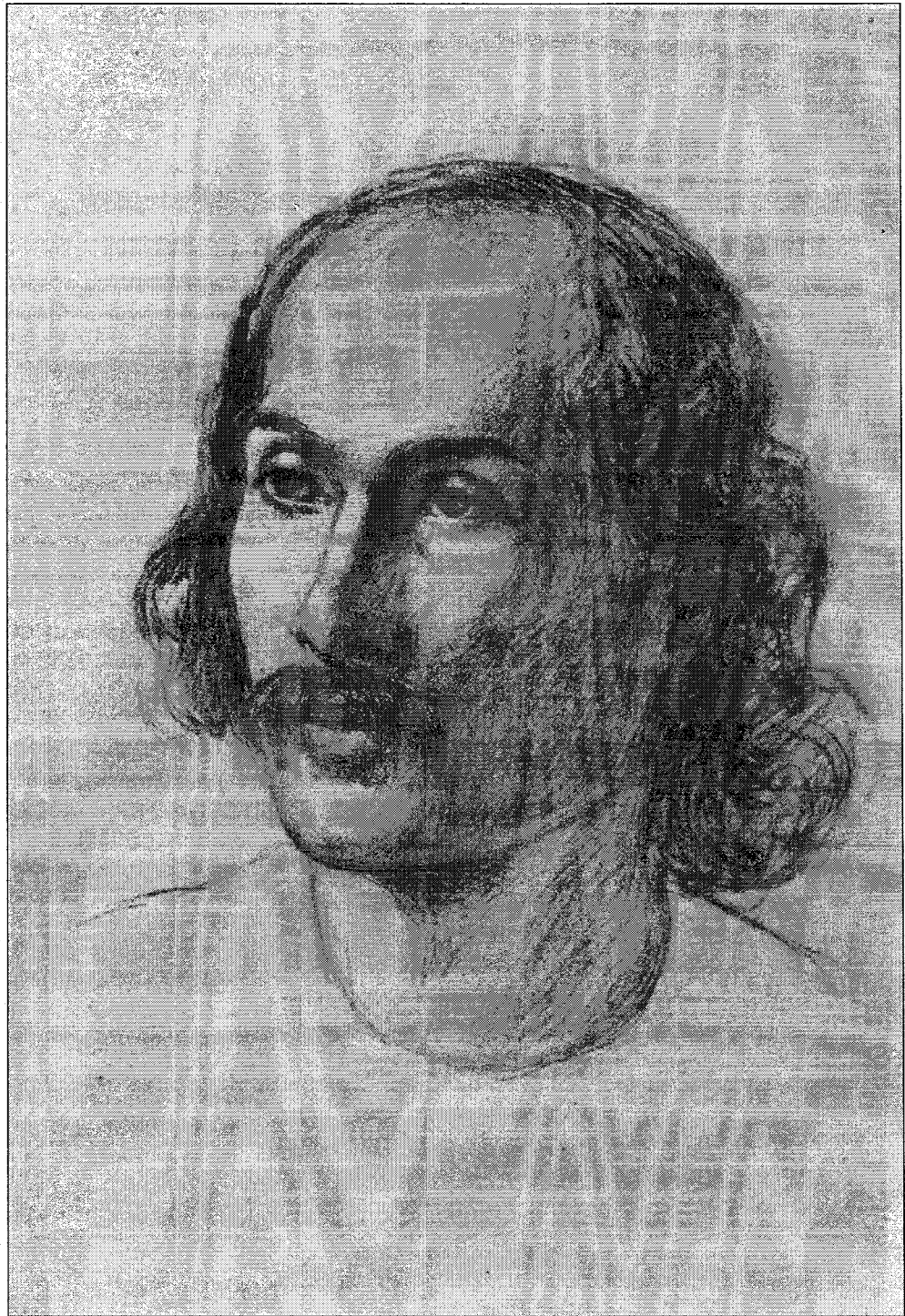
Nolini-da’s life itself is a legacy to encourage us in discovering our own truth of being. According to the Mother, “Some give their soul to the Divine, some their life, some offer their work, some their money. A few consecrate all of themselves and all they have—soul, life, work, wealth; these are the true children of God.”

Nolini-da was a true child of the Mother. To attempt to understand and know him is to undertake a journey towards the world of truth-knowledge-infinity (*satyam-jnanam-anantam*) and to venture into Integral Yoga to manifest that Divine state on earth.

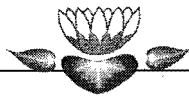
Arun Vaidya ([avaidya@erols.com](mailto:avaidya@erols.com)) lives in Haverford, Pennsylvania.

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Nolini Kanta Gupta. (Drawing by the Mother)



## THE POETRY ROOM

### Eternally now

Dappled light  
Diamond glistening  
On dew-dropped leaves.  
Sistine Chapel Wings  
Flutter, then flit  
Before my foot falls on the path.

I stop,  
Caught in the moment  
To take a breath  
In wonder.

O the magic here!  
Remembering  
I behold in pure delight  
This blue-winged,  
Orange lighted,  
Multicolored flight.

Joyfully,  
Breathlessly  
Eternally now in this moment  
I am.

—Gale Arnold

### Vedic poetry

In thy fires those greater fires of thee nurse every desirable good; they, they race, they run, they drive on in their impulse without a break. Bring to those who laud thee the force of thy impulse. (V.6.6)

O Fire, come to us along they own paths, rapturous, taking pleasure in the comradeship of the gods; making the high plateaus of earth to roar with his rushing strengths, with his tusks of flame he burns the woodlands, all he burns in his desire. (VII.7.2)

O thou of the bright flame-force, fair to vision is thy front when nearest thou shinest out like gold, thy strength moves like the thunder of heaven, rich in thy brilliance thou showest thy light like a Sun. (VII.3.6)

—from *Hymns to the Mystic Fire*,  
Vedic translations by Sri Aurobindo

### Appearances

*. . . the psychic always prevails in the end and the Divine Help proves effective. Trust in that and persevere—then the goal is sure.*

—Sri Aurobindo, *Letters on Yoga*

The mystery of the puzzle surrounded us  
in our darkness

Could we ever discover the magic, transmute  
the gloss of our elusive world

into earthly delight in the eternal  
dance of a mysterious universe?

True, a drear existence seemed the lot  
of many on the earth

though ancient Vedic seers had affirmed the world  
in original luminous vision

We struggled, dreamed  
in the stark reality

The human strife  
The misery of the streets

And there was delight!

For they dwelled side by side in the teeming  
cities of our world

In the pilgrimage of the journey  
we plodded on in penurious wounds

questing toward Fire and the lift  
to a better state

And on oracular paths  
the conundrum was unriddled, the mystery

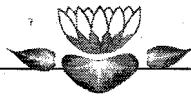
illumined in the flame  
Life blossomed, transfigured,

redeemed in light  
We saw this world

just as the ancient seers  
as the beatitude

of Brahman, eternal  
radiance of the Divine

—Joseph Kent



## Vital yoga

You don't understand  
 I'm not really like this—  
 This is just the last of it.  
 It will be all over soon,  
 Then I'll emerge free.  
 That's why I allow it now—  
 I'm only giving it its last chance.

You'll see.  
 I'm noble inside—  
 I'll be on top soon, very soon.  
 I'll put a stop to it, in just a few days—  
 It won't last more than another week—  
 I'm going to quit.  
 Then it will be done forever.

I know I've said it before  
 (Too many times to recall)  
 But this time I mean it.  
 This time it really will end  
 And I'll never fall to this condition,  
 Ever again.

And so you can realize  
 Why I may be forgiven,  
 And for the moment,  
 Excused.

—Lynda Lester

## A miracle

*Written in memory of Eugene (Mickey) Finn*

Mickey oh Mickey a miracle you  
 were;  
 You taught me about life and  
 you taught me about Her.

You saved me from death and  
 changed my whole life  
 And shortly thereafter you made  
 me your wife.

The Mother was good to us right  
 from the start,  
 And I'll believe in Her always  
 with all of my heart.

You were the instrument and She  
 was the light  
 Who taught me forever what's wrong  
 and what's right.

I'm grateful to both of you with  
 every breath,  
 And nothing will end even with  
 death.

I'll follow the yoga as I know  
 it's true—  
 For She gave me my miracle when  
 She sent me you.

—Mary (Angel) Finn

*Gale Arnold and Lynda Lester live in Boulder, Colorado; Joseph Kent lives in Berkeley, California; Mary Angel Finn lives in Boston, Massachusetts.*

## YOUTH CORNER

### The ones of innocence

Children, children are said to be “the voice of innocence.” Often I hear, “Stay gold child, stay gold.” Gold, the color of purity. As I hear these words, I watch the lies come seeping through the language I'm taught.

I see the world we would live in without the lies; its beauty draws me near. But as the years go by I'm pulled away, away from the innocence that was meant to be ours. I'm handed battles that aren't mine to fight; now I'm left no choice, no voice. Now lies are seeping through my new voice and I struggle to push them away. I step back and have to ask myself, “How long can I remain one of innocence?”

—Kelley Delaine Haerer, age 17

### Special place number one

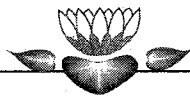
You can't get to my special place number one even if you traveled everywhere in the universe, because it is somewhere only I can get to.

How can I get there if you can't? Because it is in my mind, that's how. There at home and safe. It will always be with me.

—Tanya Goldhaber, age 9



“My Three Young Friends.” (Drawing by the Mother)



## NOTES FROM THE FIELD



"Nepalese Goddess." (Photo by Paul Edmonston)

### Some characteristics of the aesthetic experience

by Paul Edmonston

**T**he aesthetic moment often occurs when a person is solitary (in the sense of being alone, not lonely), whether he or she is actually or physically alone, or feeling subjectively alone while actually in a group or even a crowd. An example of this is seen in testimonies of exhilaration while attending group performances such as a symphony, the ballet, or a play.

At such times, the person experiences a sense of being both an observer as well as a participant, a sense of being both detached and yet involved. A sense of timelessness in the event often occurs, and time is expressed as being either compressed or dissolved; that is, it is described as being extremely focused in a moment or a person or a place, while at other times it opens out and expands into a sense of the infinite, the limitless in scope or space.

The former is often experienced by persons engaged in making or creating an object, or in a dramatic act of some sort, in which they completely lose the sense of passing time. The latter occurs, for example, when the narrow sphere of the ordinary self's preoccupations is opened out or widened by contact with nature or music, making the self feel more extended, more universal than habitually felt.

At these times, also, a sense of oneness or unity or identification with nature or the object is described, an experience in which the feeling of separateness or alienation either from nature, God, or others is overcome. Such a feeling can be experienced while hearing music or poetry by human beings long since dead in the past, or by reflecting on the nature of existence engendered by the special qualities or subtle influences of their thought.

The aesthetic seems also to occur when the person has been relieved or separated from the usual pressures and preoccupations of the manmade world, whether by accident, design, or choice, such as stumbling upon a strange and beautiful and remote portion of landscape, or standing before the monumental in nature, such as a mountain, the Grand Canon, or a raging sea.

There is often a peculiarly heightened sense of wonder, elation, or awe accompanied by a fresh awakening to the sense of one's smallness in the face of the vastness, the limitlessness, the grandeur of "the other" whether it be designated as nature, God, or some indefinable mystery or omnipresent force.

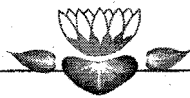
While such an experience involves often a sense bordering on delight or even impersonal equanimity or calm, it also may bring feelings of terror, provided no immediate threat to the person's life is involved. Examples of this are perhaps among the oldest natural events known to man, namely, lightning and storm, earthquake, flood, and fire.

When the aesthetic is experienced with other persons, a series of uncommon, unpremeditated, and intense responses in both parties is often described, an event in which all of one's previous expectancies having to do with human encounters may be upset, and one's behavior truly and remarkably enriched, deepened, beautified, transformed.

Such encounters, in which the boundaries between two isolated selves are broken down so that a kind of indescribable or mystical fusion takes place for the duration of the meeting, has been admirably and eloquently described by Martin Buber in his profound little book, *I and Thou*.

However and whenever it occurs, the aesthetic dimension would seem to clarify and intensify, to deepen and extend and





redefine what might otherwise be described as the happenings of everyday life. Under its aegis and because of its invasion, the ordinary takes on the character of the extraordinary, the normal becomes the supernormal, the usual becomes the unusual, taking on the ineffable character of mystery—and while remembered and even relived in later reflection or tranquility, it remains unique to the primary occasion in which it transpired, not usually reproducible by an act of the will, although an attitude of openness and receptivity to its potential appearance can be cultivated and desired.

One of the usual questions that arises in connection with the telling or sharing of such experiences is whether they may be contaminated or dissipated in the telling, never to be regained in their intimacy as when they are recalled in moments of reflection that are private and protected.

One answer usually given is that artists, poets, authors, storytellers, and wise men would never exercise their art of spellbinding others with their experiences if this were the case. Another is that once such experiences are expressed or compressed into a medium, they become second hand, even to the person who underwent them. Thus, telling makes a person detached from his own experience; it becomes difficult if not impossible for him in time to distinguish the components that were present in the original even from those that have been captured, transmitted, or imagined in the telling or the artifact.

Perhaps this will remain unanswerable, but we might point to the fact that modern science assures us that nothing whatever that we experience can ever be lost from the organism to which it occurs. And yet, both from experience and the wisdom of aesthetic reflection, we who are engaged in the arts know that in being formed in a medium, or in whatever way we attempt to communicate it, all our experience is somehow transformed, made new, become something else.

Perhaps we might take a cue or a bit of advice from the yogic literature that advises against the telling of special or heightened spiritual experiences or states as a protection, in the case of the novice, at least, against the energy that sustains them being lost in the telling, with no assurance that the special state of being may easily be regained. Or be guided by the qualification that any spiritual experience (for which we may here substitute the aesthetic) may be communicated without harm or loss if it is sufficiently past, or if we have reached that advanced stage of spirituality in which spiritual elevation and divine contact is continual, unbreakable, and undiminished, so that no fear of loss by communicating from that lofty height need be entertained.

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## Consciousness in work: The gnostic way

by Ameeta Mehra

*... On not blaming circumstances or people, but examining inner causes for outside lapses and problems*

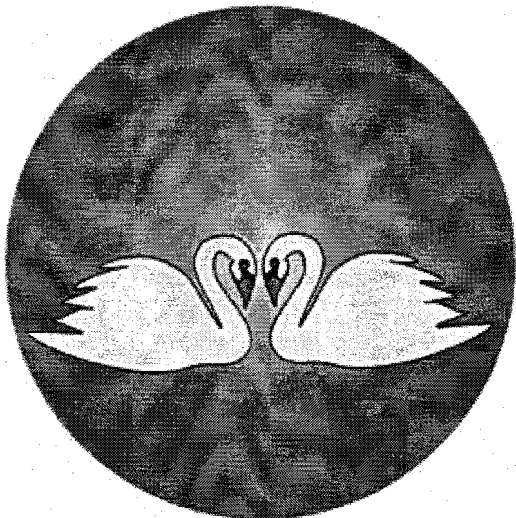
Someone asked Mother for sympathy regarding his circumstances. She replied:

I am full of sympathy, but unshakably convinced that each one meets in this life the circumstances which he has, inwardly and outwardly, built for himself. It is always a mistake to complain about the circumstances of our life, for they are the outward expression of what we are ourselves.

I remember many occasions when I have recalled these words, especially when things were not moving smoothly; and having resolved to work according to this principle, the growth in consciousness and in quality of work has been substantial.

Even as a group, we in the Delhi Gnostic Center have consciously adopted this method. When a new member joins the team, this perhaps is the most difficult thing to accept—that one cannot blame others or even circumstances for one's failure in work or inability to get on harmoniously. It is a bit of a knock, for a particular characteristic of *Homo sapiens* is that we always look outside ourselves for the cause of our problems.

Various small things happen during the day—it may be that the newsletter does not come out in time, and one can cite very plausible reasons why: the printer delayed it, the scanning had to be redone, the weekend arrived, and so on. But here at the center, we ask ourselves first: "As this responsibility was given to me, where did I fall short? Did I not fully accept the responsibility, or was I a bit lackadaisical? What can I do to make sure this never happens again?" And so on.



Computer art by Lisa Rachlin



This takes courage!

But are we here to repeat once more what has already been done by others—to create one more efficient institution, to do some good humanitarian work and fulfill the egoistic demands of human nature?

No. We are here to go beyond the egoistic motives from which we normally act, and to consecrate ourselves to the highest truth of existence. Our first and foremost endeavor is to become examples of the truth we stand for, and for that, our whole way of looking at life and circumstances must change.

Perhaps the mantra is the conscious invocation of the word *gnostic*. It demands another way of looking, thinking and acting.

ARE WE READY?

*Ameeta Mehra has worked in human resource development, integral psychology, and Indian philosophy. She is chair of the Gnostic Center in Delhi, India. The center has a Web page at <http://members.tripod.com/~ameeta/>.*

## ESSAYS

### Whither humanity?

by Kosha Shah

Today humanity faces the question as to where it is headed. We face a crisis on all fronts—social, political, economic, cultural, and spiritual. The assurances given by spiritual and secular leaders on the fate of humanity are not adequate to allay our apprehensions. That neither have arrived at a workable and lasting solution so far is an eloquent testimony to facts. The task at hand is so vast that we really do not know where to begin, or having begun, how to proceed.

It appears as though nothing short of a divine intervention can push humanity beyond its present preoccupations and limitations, that nothing other than a widespread calamity can make us rework out the priorities that we have set for ourselves.

Need we wait for nature to force us to search for what is beyond our immediate needs? Is it possible to seek out the higher possibilities available to us and to make the change deeper and more radical? Is the possibility of possessing a divine nature open to humanity?

Sri Aurobindo's approach to life has been unique in that he spoke of a further evolution beyond humanity, of a divine gnosis beyond the mind. It would be the spirit, not the ego, guiding this evolution. It is this spiritual and integral view that will mark a turning point in the history of humanity.

The change has to come from within. What should be our next move towards a spiritualized society of which he spoke, as a collectivity? Would it be possible to create a set of outer circumstances by proposing some transitional systems that could lead to a freer and truer growth?

The Sri Aurobindo Research Foundation in Baroda, India, proposes to study applications of Sri Aurobindo's vision of the future in the present crisis of humanity in various fields of activities with a particular reference to India. Its journal *Ritagni* is to be a modest beginning towards that endeavor.

We will attempt to articulate questions that haunt humanity today—whether social, political, economic, educational, cultural, or spiritual—and to put forward points of view based on the vision of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. In fact, we would like the journal to be an instrument that would put each of us in touch with our inner selves so that we can find our own way to the true life—both as individuals and as a collectivity.

As Sri Aurobindo puts it:

Man's road to spiritual supermanhood will be open when he declares boldly that all he has yet developed, including the intellect of which he is so rightly and so vainly proud, are no longer sufficient for him, and that to uncase, discover, set free this greater light within shall be henceforward his per-

### Who is a sadhak?

by A.J. Jani

Who is a sadhak?

The one who has an indomitable urge, an intense passion, a surging aspiration to realize:

- (i) That one's existence is for the Divine only
- (ii) That all existence is a manifestation of the ultimate divine energy
- (iii) That this whole existence is a cosmos—including life and man—governed by the law of harmony (*ritam*)

What is sadhana?

Sadhana is living a life as a sadhak.

Living life is an action of the divine energy, the consciousness-force (*chit*).

Sadhana is doing all action for the Divine . . . only.

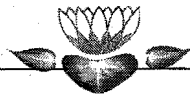
Sadhana is doing all action as an instrument of the divine power.

Sadhana is doing all action as originating from the divine *shakti*.

Sadhana is perceiving all action as done by the Divine—the master of works—through his own *tapas-shakti*.

Sadhana is to realize progressively, consciously, and uninterruptedly that all is integrally one and that the one divine essence is present in all.

*A.J. Jani lives in Tampa, Florida.*



vading preoccupation. Then will his philosophy, art, science, ethics, social existence, vital pursuits be no longer an exercise of mind and life, done for themselves, carried in a circle, but a means for the discovery of a greater truth behind mind and life and for the bringing of its power into our human existence. We shall be on the right road to become ourselves, to find our true law of perfection, to live our true satisfied existence in our real being and real nature.

—*The Human Cycle*, p. 230

*Kosha Shah is founder of the Sri Aurobindo Research Foundation and editor of Ritagni, which is available from the Sri Aurobindo Research Foundation, B-103, Amrakunj Apartments, Racecourse Circle, Baroda 390 007, India.*

## The Great Becoming, Part 1

by C.V. Devan Nair

This is the first part of the address Devan Nair gave to the Sri Aurobindo 125th Anniversary Commemorative Conference (the All USA Meeting) in Phoenicia, New York, in July 1997.

Those of us who indulge in nail-biting anxiety about the way the world, or our own lives, are going, and busily contribute our own frenetic opinions as to what should or should not be done about the entire mess, might usefully recall the delicious irony of the answer Sri Aurobindo once gave to some know-all who thought the world was being grievously mismanaged: *The power that governs the universe is at least as wise as you and it is not absolutely necessary that you should be consulted or indulged in its management; God is seeing to it.*

In her own unique way, Mother observed:

Nobody knows the exact truth of things here. And each one speaks as if he knows, but in fact nobody knows.

If the Truth were revealed one day to all, most of the people here, like everywhere, would be terrified by the enormity of their ignorance and of their wrong interpretations.

So I advise all to be in peace and to abstain from all judgment—it is the safest. (1)

As we approach the beginning, on August 15 this year, of the 125th anniversary of the birth of Sri Aurobindo, we need to remind ourselves of the eternal landmark in the Universal Becoming which that birth represented. The Mother was categorical: *Sri Aurobindo does not belong to the past or to history. Sri Aurobindo is the future advancing towards its realization.*

We might also recall a message Mother issued on June 20, 1972, about 17 months before she left her mortal mold: *Sri Aurobindo is an emanation of the Supreme who came on earth to*

*announce the manifestation of a new race and a new world: the supramental.*

The entire universe is a Great Becoming, which began, according to our scientists with what they call “the Big Bang.” They are not qualified to tell us who or what caused the Big Bang.

Billions of years later, our little earth, less than a tiny speck in the appalling immensities of the physical universe, was tossed out from a minor sun at the rim of a rather mediocre galaxy stretching hundreds of thousands of light years across space—a fiery little ball spinning in ceaseless orbit round its sun. That tiny ball concealed in its very makeup the womb of yet another Great Becoming.

No need for an inferiority complex because of the inconsequential speck of dust our earth is in the universe. For Sri Aurobindo tells us: *Earth-life is the self-chosen habitation of a Great Divinity and his aeonic will is to change it from a blind prison into his splendid mansion and high heaven-reaching temple.*

The all-seeing Eye of the transcendent Divine was, and is, the only witness of ITS own becoming in time and space. But becoming is only a relative word for time-bound, earth-bound creatures like ourselves—not for the all-seeing Eye that embraces in a single, simultaneous vision past, present and future: *trikala drshiti*, as the rishis of old called it.

But here, all we can do is to keep our noses to the grindstone of becoming. And the sooner we can become what we are willy-nilly driven to become, the better for ourselves and for the world we inhabit.

We need note now only the following significant landmarks in that Great Becoming. There were others on which we need not dwell here. Most of them are hidden in what Shakespeare called, in an astonishing line of a sonnet: “. . . the dark backward and abysm of Time.”

First to emerge from the sleep of inconscient nature was life in cell, plasm, and germ. Then with a seemingly aeonic graduality, at first barely noticeable, but later with a calculably, exponentially increasing acceleration, came plant, animal, ape, and just a few million years ago, mental man. The mental interregnum, like each one of its premental predecessors, is only a drop, a very tiny drop, in the ocean of time. There is much more to come after the human.

No doubt jellyfish, shark, lion, and ape before us regarded, each its own species, as the apex of creation. But these were merely transit stations on the evolutionary road. And so are we humans—*transitional animals*, as Sri Aurobindo called us. So no need either for a superiority complex. Many of us, and in particular our presidents, prime ministers, congressmen, members of parliament, and similar know-alls of all stripes, succumb to the same egregious illusion of being at the apex of creation.

Sri Aurobindo and Mother came to shatter that illusion, and several other illusions besides—whether of grandeur or of futility. They SAW and KNEW differently. We recall certain lines in *Savitri*:



"No doubt jellyfish, shark, lion, and ape before us regarded, each its own species, as the the apex of the creation." (Drawing by the Mother)

All life is fixed in an ascending scale  
And adamant is the evolving law;  
In the beginning is prepared the close.  
This strange irrational product of the mire,  
This compromise between the beast and god,  
Is not the crown of thy miraculous world.  
I know there shall inform the inconscient cells,  
At one with Nature and at height with heaven,  
A spirit vast as the containing sky  
And swept with ecstasy from invisible founts,  
A god come down and greater by the fall. (2)

On November 27, 1971, Mother asked Satprem to prepare for All-India Radio the text of a worldwide communication for Sri Aurobindo's centenary. She outlined the theme of what should be said and, of course, provided the necessary force and inspiration to do so. It occurred to me that the best I could do today is to quote that text here (translated from the French original), directly inspired as it was by the Mother herself, and still of enormous relevance for the 125th centenary of that seminal birth.

### **Sri Aurobindo and the Earth's Future**

by Satprem

Sometimes a great wandering thought sees the ages still unaccomplished, seizes the Force in its eternal flow and precipitates upon earth the powerful vision, which is like a power of realizing what it sees. The world is a vision becoming real. Indeed its past and its present are not the result of an obscure impulse coming from the womb of time, of a slow accumulation of sediments which little by little molds us—and stifles us and imprisons us. It is the powerful golden attraction of the future which draws us in spite of ourselves, as the sun draws the lotus from the mud, and forces us to a glory greater than any our mud or efforts or present triumphs could have foreseen or created.

Sri Aurobindo is this vision and this power of precipitating the future into the present. What he saw in an instant the ages and millions of men will unwittingly accomplish. Unknowingly they will seek the new imperceptible quiver that has entered the earth's atmosphere. From age to age great beings come amongst us to hew a great opening of Truth in the sepulcher of the past. They come with the sword of Knowledge to shatter our fragile empires.

This year, we are celebrating Sri Aurobindo's birth centenary. He is known to barely a handful of men and yet his name will resound when the great men of today or yesterday are buried under their own debris. His work is discussed by philosophers, praised by poets, people acclaim his sociological vision and his yoga—but Sri Aurobindo is a living ACTION, a Word becoming real, and every day in the thousand circumstances that seem to want to rend the earth and topple its structures we can witness the first reflux of the Force he has set in motion. At the beginning of this century, when India was still struggling against British domination, Sri Aurobindo asserted: "It is not a revolt against the British Government [that is needed] . . . It is, in fact, a revolt against the whole universal Nature." (3)

For the problem is fundamental. It is not a question of bringing a new philosophy to the world or new ideas or illuminations, as they are called. The question is not of making the prison of our lives more habitable, or of endowing man with ever more fantastic powers. Armed with his microscopes and telescopes, the human gnome remains a gnome, pain-ridden and helpless. We send rockets to the moon, but we know nothing of our own hearts.

It is a question, says Sri Aurobindo, "of creating a new physical nature which is to be the habitation of the Supramental being in a new evolution." (4) For, in actuality, he says, "the imperfection of Man is not the last word of Nature, but his perfection too is not the last peak of the Spirit." (5) Beyond the mental man we are, there exists the possibility of another being who will be the spearhead of evolution as man was once the spearhead of evolution among the great apes.

"If," says Sri Aurobindo, "the animal is a living laboratory in which Nature has, it is said, worked out man, man himself may well be a thinking and living laboratory in whom and with whose conscious cooperation she wills to work out the superman, the god." (6)

Sri Aurobindo has come to tell us how to create this other being, this supramental being, and not only to tell us but actually to create this other being and open the path of the future, to hasten upon earth the rhythm of evolution, the new vibration that will replace the mental vibration—exactly as a thought one day disturbed the slow routine of the beasts—and will give us the power to shatter the walls of our human prison.

Indeed, the prison is already starting to collapse. "The end of a stage of evolution," announced Sri Aurobindo, "is usually marked by a powerful recrudescence of all that has to go out of the evolution." (7) Everywhere about us we see this paroxysmal shattering of all the old forms: our borders, our churches, our



laws, our morals are all collapsing on all sides. They are not collapsing because we are bad, immoral, irreligious, or because we are not sufficiently rational, scientific or human, but because we have come to the end of the human! To the end of the old mechanism—for we are on our way to SOMETHING ELSE.

The world is not going through a moral crisis but through an “evolutionary crisis.” We are not going towards a better world—nor, for that matter, towards a worse one—we are in the midst of a MUTATION to a radically different world, as different as the human world was from the ape world of the Tertiary Era. We are entering a new era, a supramental Quinary.

**We send rockets to the moon, but we know nothing of our own hearts.**

We leave our countries, wander aimlessly, we go looking for drugs, for adventure, we go on strike here, enact reforms there, foment revolutions and counterrevolutions. But all this is only an appearance; in fact, unwittingly, we are looking for the new being. We are in the midst of human evolution.

And Sri Aurobindo gives us the key. It may be that the sense of our own revolution escapes us because we try to prolong that which already exists, to refine it, improve it, sublimate it. But the ape may have made the same mistake amid its revolution that produced man; perhaps it sought to become a super-ape, better equipped to climb trees, hunt, and run, a more agile and clever ape. With Nietzsche we too sought a “superman” who was nothing more than a colossalization of man, and with the spiritualists a supersaint more richly endowed with virtue and wisdom.

But human virtue and wisdom are useless! Even when carried to their highest heights they are nothing more than the old poverties gilded over, the obverse of our tenacious misery. “Supermanhood,” says Sri Aurobindo, “is not man climbed to his own natural zenith, not a superior degree of human greatness, knowledge, power, intelligence, will . . . genius . . . saintliness, love, purity or perfection.” (8) It is SOMETHING ELSE, another vibration of being, another consciousness.

But if this new consciousness is not to be found on the peaks of the human, where then, are we to find it? Perhaps, quite simply in that which we have most neglected since we entered the mental cycle, in the body. The body is our base, our evolutionary foundation, the old stock to which we always return, and which painfully compels our attention by making us suffer, age, and die.

“In that imperfection,” Sri Aurobindo assures us, “is the urge towards a higher and more many-sided perfection. It contains the last finite which yet yearns to the Supreme Infinite . . . God is

pent in the mire . . . but the very fact imposes a necessity to break through that prison.” (9)

That is the old, uncured Illness, the unchanged root, the dark matrix of our misery, hardly different now from what it was in the time of Lemuria. It is this physical substance which we must transform, otherwise it will topple, one after another, all the human or superhuman devices we try to graft on it. This body, this physical cellular substance contains “almighty powers,” (10) a dumb consciousness that harbors all the lights and all the infinities, just as much as the mental and spiritual immensities do.

For in truth, all is Divine and unless the Lord of all the universe resides in a single little cell he resides nowhere. It is this original, dark cellular prison we must break open; for as long as we have not broken it, we will continue to turn vainly in the golden or iron circles of our mental prison. “These laws of Nature,” says Sri Aurobindo, “that you call absolute . . . merely mean a groove in which Nature is accustomed to work in order to produce certain results. But, if you change the consciousness, then the groove is also bound to change.” (11)

Such is the new adventure to which Sri Aurobindo invites us, an adventure into man’s unknown. Whether we like it or not, the whole earth is moving into a new groove, but why shouldn’t we like it? Why shouldn’t we collaborate in this great, unprecedented adventure? Why shouldn’t we collaborate in our own evolution, instead of repeating endlessly the same old story, instead of chasing hallucinatory paradises that will never quench our thirst or otherworldly paradises which leave the earth to rot along with our bodies?

“Why be born if it is to get out at the end?” exclaims the Mother who continues Sri Aurobindo’s work. “What is the use of having struggled so much, suffered so much, of having created something which, in its outer appearance at least, is so tragic and dramatic, if it is only to learn how to get out of it—it would have been better not to start at all . . . Evolution is not a tortuous course that brings us back, somewhat battered, to the starting point. Quite the contrary, it is meant,” says Mother, “to teach the whole of creation the joy of being, the beauty of being, the grandeur of being, the majesty of a sublime life, and the perpetual development, perpetually progressive, of this joy, this beauty, this grandeur. Then everything has a meaning.” (12)

This body, this obscure beast of burden we inhabit, is the experimental field of Sri Aurobindo’s yoga—which is a yoga of the whole earth, for one can easily understand that if a single being among our millions of sufferings succeeds in negotiating the evolutionary leap, the mutation of the next age, the face of the earth will be radically altered. Then all the so-called powers of which we boast today will seem like childish games before the radiance of this almighty embodied spirit.

Sri Aurobindo tells us that it is possible—not only possible but that it will be done. It is being done. And perhaps everything depends not so much on a sublime effort of humanity to transcend its limitations—for that means still using our own human strength to free ourselves from human strength—as on a call, a



conscious cry of the earth to this new being which the earth already carries within itself.

All is already there, within our hearts, the supreme Source which is the supreme Power—only we must call it into our forest of cement, we must understand the meaning of man, the meaning of ourselves. The amplified cry of the earth, of its millions of men and women who cannot bear it anymore, who no longer accept their prison, must open a crack to let the new vibration in. Then all the apparently ineluctable laws that bind us in their hereditary and scientific groove will crumble before the joy of the “sun-eyed children.” (13)

“Expect nothing from death,” says Mother. “Life is your salvation. It is in life that you must transform yourself. It is on earth that you progress and on earth that you realize. It is in the body that you win the Victory.” (14)

“Nor let worldly prudence whisper too closely in thy ear,” says Sri Aurobindo, “for it is the hour of the unexpected.” (15)

—“Sri Aurobindo and the Earth’s Future” is taken from the *Agenda*, Vol. 12, pp. 327-331.

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## Consciousness, evolution, and mysticism

by Marco Masi

**I**n recent years a new scientific debate has arisen regarding the phenomenon we call consciousness. Scientists from all over the world are taking more and more seri-

ously questions like these: What is consciousness? Will machines ever be conscious? Is consciousness only a biochemical reaction in our brain or is there much more behind it? Is a single cell conscious of something? If it is, then of what is it conscious? Last but not least, does consciousness really exist as an independent essence or is it only a label that we put on some exterior material phenomenon stemming from an evolutionary process?

Many different theories are defended by different scientists, but they can be divided with a certain approximation into two main positions: On one side there are the material monists, who assert that consciousness is nothing else than a sophisticated computer algorithm in our brain circuitry, and any idea of transcendence that goes beyond matter comes from our more or less unconscious hope for life after death. On the other side there are the dualists, who dare to propose in front of a scientific community that mind and consciousness cannot be described only as a material, biochemical process.

**I**t seems as if something is now trying to convince us that the intellect itself may be the biggest of all self-delusions.

It is interesting to note that these questions, which were previously considered purely religious or philosophical speculations and which were (and still are for most scientists) taboo in the scientific community, are posing themselves with more and more insistence. Is this a sign of the “subjective age” that Sri Aurobindo foresaw?

It may be indeed that science is becoming more and more aware that the ultrarationalist position based on the pure intellect is not the highest and most evolved tool that man can use in science, and that something “overintellectual” is slowly but definitively trying to replace the mind.

Until now, it was thought by every good scientist that any material phenomenon that is not, in principle, understandable by the intellect is only an illusion.

It seems, however, as if something is now trying to convince us that the intellect itself may be the biggest of all self-delusions. Probably even the dualists, who accept in principle the possibility of a nonmaterial realm, are not completely conscious of this process and simply feel that their intellect receives, from time to time, some intuitive flash, believing that it comes from a subconscious, mental origin.

If a nonmaterial reality exists—which by its very nature is not subject to the rules of logic—then it cannot be understood by mind. A tool that stands on a higher level is needed.



This has caused many scientists to reconsider their position vis-à-vis the mystical experiences reported by many religions (especially Buddhism), spiritualities, and mystics. Words such as yoga, transcendental meditation, and cosmic consciousness are becoming common in some communities.

Unfortunately, discoveries of Sri Aurobindo and Mother that may be of great scientific interest are still almost completely unknown to scientists. The idea of a mind as an exterior appearance, a mere crust of something that is much vaster than it (an intuitive mind, overmind, and supermind) is still not felt as a key in the understanding of the world.

Scientists speak often of an evolution that produces consciousness and are seldom aware that the contrary may be true: it is consciousness that causes evolution.

Medicine slowly begins to accept the fact that our health is strongly conditioned by mental and psychological factors and states. But most of those who subscribe to the relevance of psychosomatic medicine have rarely heard of Sri Aurobindo's and Mother's discovery that the body has a consciousness of its own and the cells a mind (after all, what does that mean?)

This often creates misconceptions and confusion. Scientists who don't know anything about esotericism, mysticism, and yoga still confuse mind with consciousness or feelings with mind, and many are still in quest about who or what gives rise to the subjective experience of thoughts, memory, and feelings.

Finally, there are the transhumanists. Transhumanism foresees the advent of a new race after man, but it hopes to achieve this with the technological means of the obsolete *Homo sapiens*. They place their hope in nanotechnology, brain implantations, and other ultratechnological devices. But these marvels, if realized, would only change our outer beings while leaving the real spiritual being in us unchanged.

### A new approach

As a result of e-mail discussions in the online forum Auroconf, a number of disciples of Mother and Sri Aurobindo have established a Web site dedicated to development of a gnostic science. We propose a true transhumanism and a new approach to science.

We believe that if science wants to manage the apparent mystery of the existence of life, evolution, matter, and consciousness and wants to attain a knowledge that leads to a real improvement in and out of us, it must be based on a paradigm that goes beyond reductionist sciences or pseudoholistic New Age approaches that have been unable to give us satisfying answers to these questions and needs.

On the Web site, we provide an introduction to the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and Mother, placing special emphasis on its evolutionary aspect and its physical and scientific implications. Descriptions of higher states of consciousness such as overmind and supermind and the consequences of cellular yoga and transformation of the body and of matter are especially considered, given their scientific interest. We try to show that their dis-

coveries may be useful for medicine, biological and evolutionary research, psychology, and physics, as well as generally enhancing the scientific debate about consciousness and mind.

We also present the main ideas of how a gnostic science might develop in general as well as in specific fields such as psychology, physics, medicine and biology. We hope to arouse interest in these topics on the Web site, which is dedicated to scientists who feel that science must find new means for investigating nature. The Web site is available at <http://wwwserv.caiw.nl/~biedel/gs.html>.

We are also searching for a designer who can help us with Web editing and graphics. If you are interested, please send e-mail to Marco Masi, [marco@spiro.fisica.unipd.it](mailto:marco@spiro.fisica.unipd.it).

*Marco Masi lives in Padova, a city near Venice, Italy. He studies physics and works occasionally in a city planetarium as a science educator.*

## REVIEWS

### **The Tragedy of Earth**

by *Sonia Dyne*

*This review is reprinted by permission from the newsletter of the Singapore Sri Aurobindo Society.*

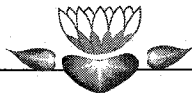
**La Tragedie de la Terre, by Satprem.  
Robert Laffont: Paris, 1996.**

Many of our readers will no doubt be disappointed to learn that Satprem's latest book is not yet available in English. We have come to expect something remarkable from this most passionate advocate of Sri Aurobindo and devoted disciple of the Mother. *The Tragedy of Earth* lives up to our expectations.

The first surprise is a double frontispiece consisting of two full-face portraits: Sophocles and Sri Aurobindo side by side, an invitation to compare and contrast the historical significance of these two great lives.

The second surprise is to see *Savitri* quite extensively quoted in French—the author's own translation. (As far as this reviewer is qualified to judge, it is very well done.) Sri Aurobindo's interpretation of the Vedas also appear in a French translation.

But most surprising of all are the graphic accounts of Satprem's personal experiences of a new way of being human in a body that, as he describes it, challenges death with every breath.



*The Tragedy of Earth* is such an unusual book that the reviewer can do no better than to let Satprem explain in his own words the idea behind its conception:

**S**ophocles, a contemporary of Socrates and Buddha, incarnates a great turning point in the history of our human consciousness and destiny at a moment when we were balanced on the brink of the modern barbarism of our post-Socratic era. "Are we then slaves?" asks Sophocles. "Are we then fated to come to nothing?" And he looks at death with another unspoken question: "O Monster yet unconquered . . . !"

At the other end of this Age of Iron, which has been the age of the great religions and of science, and some ten thousand years after the extraordinary Vedic seers who hymned the dawn of mankind, Sri Aurobindo, a revolutionary of consciousness and evolution, looks at the same questions but through Vedic eyes and wills the will to DO SOMETHING this time around.

Between the post-Socratic West, believing only in a mechanical mastery of matter, and post-Vedic Asia, believing only in liberation from matter, Sri Aurobindo incarnates another great turning point of our human destiny, perhaps the final one, when we must recover our own "divine power over matter," as the Vedas affirmed it—the reality of our immortality in matter itself—or perish from the powerlessness of our mechanisms. The cosmogony of a world plays out its Greek tragedy, but it is Earth itself that must either escape from its imprisoning walls or, like Antigone, suffer yet another defeat.

For Satprem, no poet in history surpassed Sophocles in his power to evoke the stark tragedy of human life on earth. No poet ever asked more searching questions, or hinted more poignantly at the profound mystery of the hope that "springs eternal" as if in defiance of human destiny haunted by defeat and death.

Until Sri Aurobindo. The birth of Sri Aurobindo signals another great turning point: this time a poet of genius will not simply express the longing in the soul of man in language of incomparable beauty and grandeur, but will incarnate the power to bring about a decisive change.

Sri Aurobindo will rediscover the secret lost to mankind for countless ages: the secret of the Vedas, as he called it, a secret that can be known only as it is lived. If the Vedas are the "old" testament then *Savitri* is the new; and Sri Aurobindo the last of the Angirasa rishis, the "human fathers," discovers of the "great passage" through death to immortality.

An unusual letter was published in the February 1996 issue of *Mother India* under the title, "A letter from a westerner who visited India for the first time." The writer describes an experience remarkably similar to the description given by Satprem, so it may interest our readers to read both accounts. The westerner writes:

After a while the meditation near Sri Aurobindo's relics began. Soon after I sat down, the great force came into me. It was absolutely new. It was rushing in alike a mighty stream through the entire front of my body from the side of the relics and filling me as if I were an empty vessel. (It was not like other times when the force was descending from above like a pressure.) My thoughts were still and I felt all the outlines of my body and only the fast beatings of my heart. The only thing I could do was to watch like an impartial person what was going on and try also not to burst out!

After the meditation I felt there was nothing separating me from the surroundings, as if some wall had fallen down. It was a real, strong, physical sense which my skeptical mind accepted with wonder. Sometime ago I had read Sri Aurobindo's words describing the Supermind: "You can say that the Supermind is harder than diamond and yet more fluid than gas." (*Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo* by A.B. Purani, p. 478.) I was overjoyed. I have found it is the exact characterization of the Force and the way I had felt it!

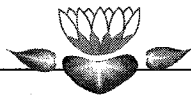
Let us turn now to what Satprem has written about his experience of the past ten years:

The remarkable thing is the continuity of the phenomenon. Once the initial shock of the chaos is admitted, accepted, and recognized by that wonderful cellular base, the chaos continues—a perpetual chaos—but certain lines or trackways of the implacable onslaught stand out, the body becomes aware that the dense flow is somehow linked to the movement of respiration: it is exactly as if another way of breathing were making use of the mechanical support of the old bronchial tubes—you breath in and out but instead of stopping there and filling only the lungs, that new respiration invades the entire body all at once: in a fraction of a second it goes down as far as the feet and seems to rebound below the ground and back up in another fraction of a second (the "expiration"), and then it begins again . . . on and on like the movement of breathing: going up and down, up and down, like a power hammer that never stops. IT HAS STARTED.

The phenomenon has started and one can no more call a halt to it than one can call a halt to breathing. It keeps pouring down from above in a tremendous flood (but isn't oxygen the downpour needed by us?). This is another kind of oxygen, and that is where words fail us: it is fluid, but crushing in its density, as if the air had become solid, and it is as swift and instantaneous as a flash of lightning. Sri Aurobindo said: "The Supermind is harder than diamond and more fluid than gas."

It is a different principle of life. Perhaps—(comparisons are misleading because they refer to different models of the same physical nature)—perhaps it is as if a fish tried to breathe the open air. But this is a totally different "air" unknown on





earth or never directly breathed by the old species. And the body learns that it is Life itself, as if Life had never been here but only Living Death. Sadly this old living corpse continues to have the same physical substance and knows neither how to assimilate “that” nor how to bear it. But it is touch and go. Every second is a death to be fought off or fought through, because his whole system is against it (except those marvelous cells).

Indeed one passes through Death: it is an air that passes through the walls that make up our death—for how could a fish breathe the open air and still remain a fish? How could an astronaut breathe without his space suit? Our comparisons mislead us because they always refer to a physical environment that we know—and we are speaking of another “environment,” one that is supreme and divine and knows what it is doing and is free from the unconscious brutality of the mechanistic phenomena familiar to us.

Yet the difficulty remains, the old physiological diving suit has the habit of breathing its old mortal air at the accustomed pressure. But that other “air” wants to do away with every trace of death in our system.

What is happening here? To Satprem the answer is clear: he seems to be experiencing in his own body the possibility of an evolutionary change too astonishing to comprehend: the physical change predicted by Sri Aurobindo as a prelude to the supramental transformation itself.

We can only salute his courage, for the process sounds uncomfortable to say the least. In a letter to a disciple, Sri Aurobindo wrote:

The process is a spiritual evolutionary process, concentrated into a brief period; it could be done otherwise (by what men would regard as a miraculous intervention) only if the human mind were more flexible and less attached to its ignorance than it is. As we envisage it, it must manifest in a few first and then spread, but it is not likely to overpower the earth in a moment. It is not advisable to discuss too much what it will do and how it will do it, because these are things the Supermind itself will fix, acting out of the Divine Truth in it, and the mind must not try to fix for it grooves into which it will run. Naturally the release from subconscious ignorance and from disease, duration of life at will, and a change in the functionings of the body must be among the ultimate elements of a supramental change; but the details of these things must be left for the supramental Energy to work out according to the Truth of its own nature.

The descent of the supramental is an inevitable necessity in the logic of things and is therefore sure. It is because people do not understand what the Supermind is or realise the significance of the emergence of consciousness in a world of inconscient matter that they are unable to realise this inevitability.

We all have a tendency, as soon as we try to imagine a supramental change, to “fix for it grooves in which it will run,” as Sri Aurobindo says. It pleases us to imagine the descent of light and joy, love, beauty, and power, a transformation without tears. Then we remember the Mother’s tribute to Sri Aurobindo, who “worked, struggled, suffered, hoped, endured so much,” and we pause to acknowledge our debt to those bold pioneers who try in all sincerity to follow the selfsame path.

*Sonia Dyne is editor of the newsletter of the Singapore Sri Aurobindo Society.*

## New Age music made simple

by Stephen Hill

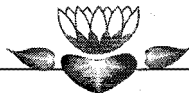
*“Hearts of Space” is a syndicated radio program that combines contemporary electronics, classical adagios, quiet chorales, space-jazz, contemplative sounds, and musics from exotic cultures around the world. This article, © 1988–98 Stephen Hill, is available via the World Wide Web on the Hearts of Space home page at <http://www.hos.com>. It is reprinted with permission.*

During the 1970s a new international musical movement began to emerge. Initially unfocused and multidirectional, it had never had a clear identity. In 1986 it reached critical mass commercially, and the record industry settled on a name: New Age music.

In the early days, when New Age was just one of many references that were floating around to describe the nascent genre, listeners, reviewers, and even the musicians creating it were unclear about the meaning of the term, since a wide variety of contemporary, experimental, and traditional styles were swept together under the New Age umbrella.

As a description of grassroots spiritual movements, the term “New Age” has been around at least since the neospiritualist movements of the late 19th century. It is here that the genre found its original audience and probably its more recent reputation for intellectual flakiness.

The idea that society is about to enter a New Age is a provocative vision that has energized the hearts and minds of progressive people for many generations. Aided by the astrological popularizers, we remember how quickly society accepted the idea of the “Age of Aquarius” in the 60s. How and why music serves as an expression of this vision is the question here, but the connection is not all that obvious. To understand the role that this music plays in our culture, we really need to know something about the underlying psychological forces acting on both the musicians and the audience.



In his book *Through Music to the Self* (Shambhala Publications, 1981; out of print), German composer Peter Michael Hamel writes of “a new auditory consciousness, capable of being applied to all today’s varieties of music—whether classical, pop, jazz, avant-garde . . .”

Because the contemporary listener now has the entire panorama of the world’s music available through recordings, the application of this new consciousness to the music coming down through the ages has reconnected us with certain psychic and emotional experiences which have not been dated by the passage of time, but remain relevant. The extraordinary popularity of pieces like the Pachelbel “Canon in D” is perhaps the best example of this, although entire musical genres such as the Gregorian chants of medieval Europe, as well as traditional Japanese classical music, Balinese gamelan, and other types of what is called “world music” have come to the surface and enjoy renewed attention, especially among New Age listeners.

Certainly a new auditory consciousness would be expected to create new musical forms. Although the deepest roots of New Age music are planted in some of the very oldest forms of music, there are several aspects that deserve to be called “new.” In the categories which follow, I’ve attempted to create a perspective for understanding both the basic motivation and the psychological characteristics of most of the music that is presently being called New Age. The descriptions are in terms of the sound imagery, the content, and the overall experience of the music.

I acknowledge both the distaste for categories among many listeners as well as the inherent problems of categorizing music. Categories that are broad enough to include an entire era or dimension of musical style or meaning are often of little descriptive value; on the other hand, those which are too specific give no insight into the overall musical direction of which the particular piece is an example. The situation is further confused by the fact that categories may be organized by historical epochs (Baroque), by musical form (symphonic), by the means of production (electronic), etc.

Please consider that the categories below describe the pure form of each type of music. Many, perhaps a majority, of individual works will fall somewhere between two categories or share the characteristics of several. Still, in many years of living with this framework and testing it against new material being released, I have found very few exceptions.

### **Space and travel music: Celestial, cosmic, and terrestrial**

This New Age subcategory has the effect of outward psychological expansion. Celestial or cosmic music removes listeners from their ordinary acoustical surroundings by creating stereo sound images of vast, virtually dimensionless spatial environments. In a word—spacey.

Rhythmic or tonal movements animate the experience of flying, floating, cruising, gliding, or hovering within the auditory space. Terrestrial space music employs natural outdoor

ambiences—sounds of water, birds, insects, thunder, etc. In either case, the major effect of this music is to take the listener out of their body or at least out of their normal sound environment.

### **Innerspace, meditative, and transcendental**

This music promotes a psychological movement inward. It has been precisely described by Peter Michael Hamel as “a contemplative music . . . which is itself capable of being a vehicle, energy-form, and magic force for spiritual self-absorption, which works by virtue of its own inner laws, as soon as the listener learns how to open himself totally to it. It carries him away—to himself.”

Transcendental innerspace music attempts to convey the listener inward and upward to higher planes of consciousness, and is often spoken of as “uplifting.” Continuous drones or slowly changing, endlessly repeated rhythmic structures (also popular in so-called minimalist music, although the composers only talk about the technical characteristics of their work) as well as overall ascending or descending tonal movements are common characteristics of this subcategory.

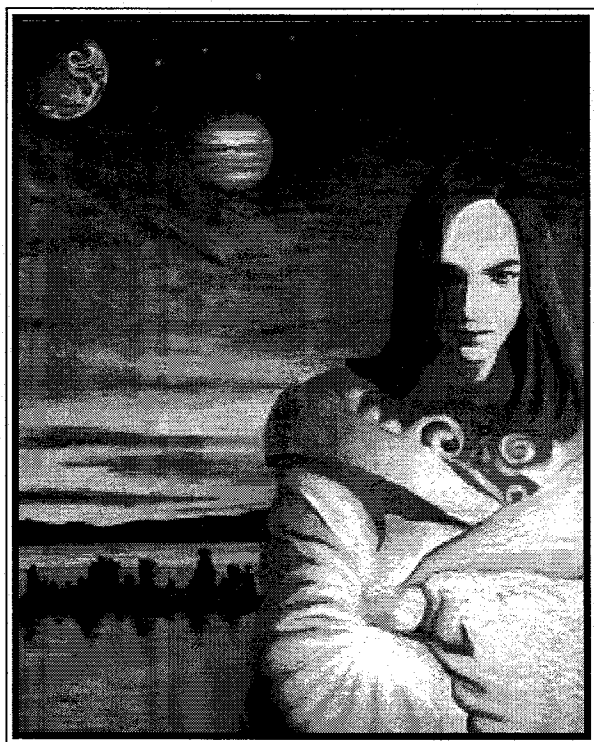
### **Cross-cultural fusions**

Cross-cultural fusions have been happening for centuries through the medium of travel, as musicians have moved around the planet. However, 20th century radio and recording technologies have stimulated an exponential acceleration of the process. The New Age music audience has been especially receptive to this trend, welcoming the opportunity to extend their psychological experience beyond western cultural paradigms and immerse themselves in the musical ideas and emotions of other worlds. Modified or derived forms are usually more popular than the ethnic originals, but this is not exclusive to the New Age field. From pop to classical, cross-cultural influences are an important aspect of virtually all areas of progressive contemporary music.

### **New Age religious and gospel**

Though not as commercially successful as New Age instrumental music, this category includes any vocal music regardless of style, whose lyrics contain messages about spiritual beliefs or belief systems. The impulse to share or broadcast one’s belief system to others—be it religious, spiritual, or philosophical—appears to be deeply ingrained in human nature, and New Age gospel in its purest form conveys the belief that we are entering a new era for humanity. This is an extension of the ancient use of music as a medium for the communication of important cultural myths.

At its best, such music can create a context for dramatic internal experiences as the ideas expressed by the lyrics are amplified by the emotional power of the music. Religious and gospel music of all kinds, as well as New Age vocal music, continues this tradition, stimulating the full gamut, of emotional intensities from lightly sentimental through cathartic to overwhelming.



"Beyond the galaxy." (Acrylic painting by Lisa Rachlin)

### Why a resurgence?

Listeners with an analytical bent will naturally ask, why should there be a contemporary resurgence of music directed toward relaxation, psychological expansion, inner experience, and statements about metaphysical and religious beliefs? Granting that questions like these cannot be given definitive answers, the following observations may be helpful.

**Stress:** The constantly accelerating pace of urban life since the 1940s, driven by technological advances in communications and accompanied by increasing levels of daytime noise "pollution" and other distractions with an irritating effect on our sensibilities, have increased the need for a soothing, masking, slow-paced sonic ambience.

Of course, "easy listening" and "beautiful music" FM stations, as well as the infamous Muzak, have been doing just this for years and have succeeded in captivating large audiences in the over-50 age group. Amazingly, as late as the 70s, so-called beautiful music was the most successful syndicated radio format, and there were more stations broadcasting such music in the U.S. than rock or pop.

But the programming of such stations and background services is based mainly on "sweetened" instrumental reworkings of popular songs. This approach, which apparently satisfies many older people in their search for a comforting, mindless nostalgia, is generally alienating to the middle-age audience, who prefer the more intense and artistically significant original versions (thus the "golden oldies" radio formats of the

early 80s) and is incomprehensible to the young, who have no tie to the original songs and whose biosystems have not yet succumbed to the effects of self-administered overstimulation.

With pop and rock presumably serving the needs of most of the 13- to 28-year-old audience, a gap existed in music programming for the more sensitive members of the 28- to 50-year age group that was not being addressed by any of the existing radio music formats. It is this age group in which stress-related diseases are most pervasive and problematic.

More or less by default, a portion of the jazz and classical repertoire was called into service for these listeners, but what was really needed was a contemporary music that is physically soothing, yet not emotionally trivial or devoid of significant cultural meaning. This is the need that the quieter forms of New Age music are attempting to fill. That it should have existed in commercial broadcasting is remarkable, since this is the demographic bracket which is most desirable to advertisers, but even in the 90s, radio exposure for this music is almost exclusively on noncommercial stations.

**Personal development:** Many aspects of today's culture have played a role in supporting the use of music to influence awareness. Drugs, meditation practices, psychological approaches to inner work, and new religions have all contributed to the process. Individual taste in music is inherently related to, and may play a part in, psychological growth.

When used for this purpose, music acts as a nonverbal language for conveying the experience of a virtually unlimited range of psychic and emotional states. Conscious involvement with challenging musical or sonic experiences can be a powerful method for accelerating personal development. Although the lowest quality New Age music has deservedly been criticized as "yuppie Muzak," the best of the genre invites substantial commitment and concentration from the listener, falling into the realms normally associated with "serious" listening.

But as Peter Michael Hamel points out, it is really not the same kind of listening that one applies to classical, jazz, ethnic, or other established types of music. The attention is both personal and holistic—an awareness of individual emotional response as well as the quality of the enveloping ambience being created. The music is experienced primarily as a continuum of spatial imagery and emotion, rather than as thematic musical relationships, compositional "ideas," or performance values.

Perhaps the current cross-cultural and transtemporal melange of musical directions is one emerging form of the global language whose arrival has long been predicted by cultural visionaries. Composer Jon Hassell calls it "fourth world music": classical by structure, popular by textural appeal, global minded.

*Stephen Hill received a graduate degree in architecture at the University of Pennsylvania in 1969, but soon became involved in music and sound technology. In 1973 he created "Music from the Hearts of Space" as a live weekly radio program in Berkeley, California. National syndication followed in 1983.*



## APROPOS

GENEVA, SWITZERLAND—World Health Organization officials expressed disappointment Monday at the group's finding that, despite the enormous efforts of doctors, rescue workers and other medical professionals worldwide, the global death rate remains constant at 100 percent. Death, a metabolic affliction causing total shutdown of all life functions, has long been considered humanity's number one health concern. Responsible for 100 percent of all recorded fatalities worldwide, the condition has no cure.—From a news story in *The Onion*, a humor newspaper

"New Crispy Snack Cracker To Ease Crushing Pain Of Modern Life."—Headline in *The Onion*

If God dwells inside us, like some people say, I sure hope He likes enchiladas, because that's what He's getting!—Jack Handey, *Deep Thoughts*

Acceptance without proof is the fundamental characteristic of western religion; rejection without proof is the fundamental characteristic of western science.—Gary Zukav, *The Dancing Wu Li Masters*

Bob was as perplexed as a hacker who means to access T:\flw.quid55328.com\aaakk/ch@ung but gets T:\flw.quidaaakk/ch@ung by mistake.—Ken Krattenmaker

"Out of mind. Back in five minutes."—Bumper sticker

And Jesus said unto them, "And who do you say that I am?" They replied, "You are the eschatological manifestation of the ground of our being, the ontological foundation of the context of our very selfhood revealed." And Jesus replied, "What?"—From the Internet

Not to perambulate the corridors in the hours of repose in the boots of ascension.—Translation on sign in Austrian hotel catering to skiers

If you ever reach total enlightenment while you're drinking a beer, I bet it makes beer shoot out your nose.—Jack Handey, *Deep Thoughts*

When cryptography is outlawed, bayl bhgynjf jvyy unir cevinpl.—Anon.

The root and full practice of the arts lies in the recognition that art is power: an instrument of communion between the self and all that is sacred.—Peter London

TrO{gO DsA[M,bN HyAqR4tDc TgrOo TgYPmE WeljTyH P;AzWqS,—Top reason dogs don't use computers

When I thought of the poetics of such a confrontation in the blackness of eternity, I laughed sardonically, in a dry voice, to myself.—From rejected manuscript at *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine*

God never takes His works seriously; therefore one looks out on this wonderful universe.—Sri Aurobindo

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