

Collaboration

Summer 1998

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Vol. 24, No. 2



**The ideal centre • Auroville Almanac • Heartbreak and challenge
Practice and experience • Conquering the money power • Beyond Man**

One thing seems obvious, humanity has reached a certain state of general tension—tension in effort, in action, even in daily life—with such an excessive hyperactivity, so widespread a trepidation, that mankind as a whole seems to have come to a point where it must either break through the resistance and emerge into a new consciousness or else fall back into an abyss of darkness and inertia.

This tension is so complete and so widespread that something obviously has to break. It cannot go on in this way. We may take it as a sure sign of the infusion into matter of a new principle of force, consciousness, power, which by its very pressure is producing this acute state. Outwardly, we could expect the old methods used by Nature when she wants to bring about an upheaval: but there is a new characteristic, which of course is only visible in an élite, but even this élite is fairly widespread—it is not

localised at one point, at one place in the world; we find traces of it in all countries, all over the world: the will to find a new, higher, progressive solution, an effort to rise towards a vaster, more comprehensive perfection.

Certain ideas of a more general nature, of a wider, perhaps more “collective” kind, are being worked out and are acting in the world. And both things go together: a possibility of a greater and more total destruction, a reckless inventiveness which increases the possibility of catastrophe, a catastrophe which would be on a far greater scale than it has ever been; and, at the same time, the birth or rather the manifestation of much higher and more comprehensive ideas and acts of will which, when they are heard, will bring a wider, vaster, more complete, more perfect remedy than before.

—the Mother, *Collected Works of the Mother*, Vol. 9, pg. 296

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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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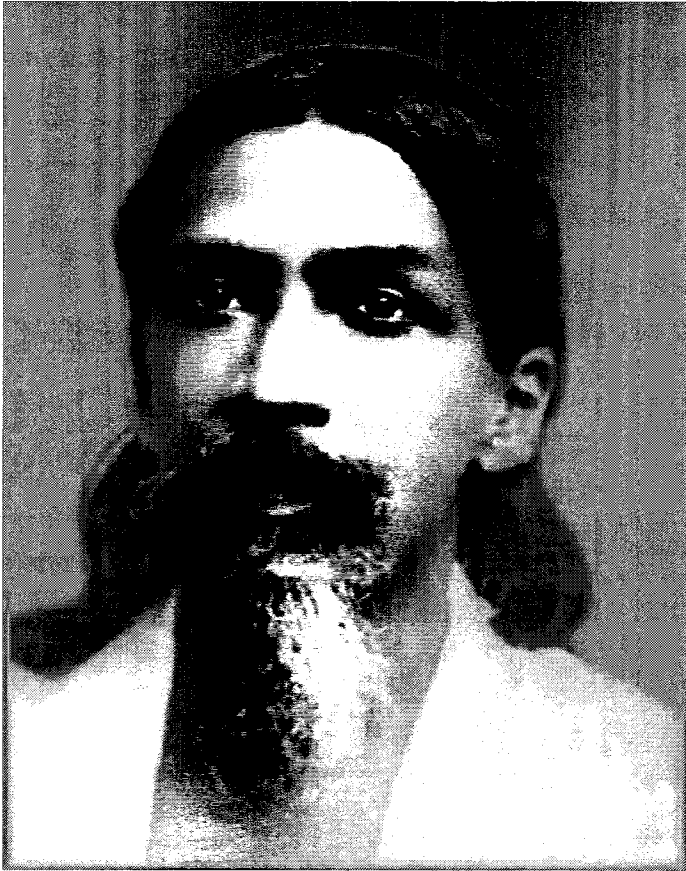
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About the artists in this issue: Mother was born in Paris in 1878 and studied piano, painting and higher mathematics. Margaret Astrid Phanes has been a digital artist for nine years and is an instructor at the U. C. Extension, Santa Cruz. John Robert Cornell is a writer and artist and works for a software company in Sacramento. He has published and edited *SUNSEEDS*, a journal dedicated to spiritual awakening, for more than ten years. Sam Spanier is a painter and the founder of Matagiri.



Sri Aurobindo

BEGINNINGS

The evolutionary aim of Yoga

By Sri Aurobindo

This selection is taken from The Synthesis of Yoga, Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, Vol. 20, pp. 2-4.

In the right view both of life and of Yoga all life is either consciously or subconsciously a Yoga. For we mean by this term a methodised effort towards self-perfection by the expression of the potentialities latent in the being and a union of the human individual with the universal and transcendent Existence we see partially expressed in man and in the Cosmos.

But all life, when we look behind its appearances, is a vast Yoga of Nature attempting to realise her perfection in an ever increasing expression of her potentialities and to unite herself with her own divine reality. In man, her thinker, she for the first time upon this Earth devises self-conscious means and willed arrangements of activity by which this great purpose may be more

swiftly and puissantly attained. Yoga, as Swami Vivekananda has said, may be regarded as a means of compressing one's evolution into a single life or a few years or even a few months of bodily existence.

A given system of Yoga, then, can be no more than a selection or a compression, into narrower but more energetic forms of intensity, of the general methods which are already being used loosely, largely, in a leisurely movement, with a profuse apparent waste of material and energy but with a more complete combination by the great Mother in her vast upward labour. It is this view of Yoga that can alone form the basis for a sound and rational synthesis of Yogic methods. For then Yoga ceases to appear something mystic and abnormal which has no relation to the ordinary processes of the World-Energy or the purpose she keeps in view in her two great movements of subjective and objective self-fulfilment; it reveals itself rather as an intense and exceptional use of powers that she has already manifested or is progressively organising in her less exalted but more general operations.

Yogic methods have something of the same relation to the customary psychological workings of man as has the scientific handling of the natural force of electricity or of steam to the normal operations of steam and of electricity. And they, too, are formed upon a knowledge developed and confirmed by regular experiment, practical analysis and constant result. All Rajayoga, for instance, depends on this perception and experience that our inner elements, combinations, functions, forces, can be separated or dissolved, can be new-combined and set to novel and formerly impossible workings or can be transformed and resolved into a new general synthesis by fixed internal processes. Hathayoga similarly depends on this perception and experience that the vital forces and functions to which our life is normally subjected and whose ordinary operations seem set and indispensable, can be mastered and the operations changed or suspended with results that would otherwise be impossible and that seem miraculous to those who have not seized the rationale of their process.

And if in some other of its forms this character of Yoga is less apparent, because they are more intuitive and less mechanical, nearer, like the Yoga of Devotion, to a supernal ecstasy or, like the Yoga of Knowledge, to a supernal infinity of consciousness and being, yet they too start from the use of some principal faculty in us by ways and for ends not contemplated in its everyday spontaneous workings. All methods grouped under the common name of Yoga are special psychological processes rounded on a fixed truth of Nature and developing, out of normal functions, powers and results which were always latent but which her ordinary movements do not easily or do not often manifest.



NEW LETTERS ON YOGA

Spring favor

The new Spring issue of *Collaboration* is truly a joy to read. The writings of the group are so cogent and beautiful, so well edited and placed, and so clearly interspersed with the depths of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo's teachings, that I feel grateful to the whole enterprise, grateful to Mother and Sri Aurobindo for all they have given, and deeply impressed by the emergence of an authentic "collective yoga." I want to thank Dave, Lynda, Vishnubhai, and all the rest for the excellent work they are doing for the community.

—Richard Stein, rhstein@itsa.ucsf.edu

I received the Spring issue of *Collaboration*. Thank you and congratulations. It is great and interesting.

—Catherine Blackburn, Sacramento, California

Nolini-da

This is regarding the third paragraph of Arun Vaidya's article: "Nolini-da: To know him," published in the Spring 1998 issue of *Collaboration*, which begins: "Historically, Nolini-da in his previous western births was believed to be..."

I would like to know the published reference to this belief. Did Mother or Sri Aurobindo reveal this to him or did Nolini-da himself come to know by virtue of his spiritual growth?

My question is not born out of mental curiosity or out of any motive to counter the belief. It is true that the knowledge of past lives would be revealed to a person when the person becomes spiritually evolved and fit to receive such a knowledge, or when the guru can tell it to the shisya.

It was a nice article Arun wrote.

—Madhu Kanchi, Redlands, CA

I'm reading Nolini's *Reminiscences* now, and the first four chapters are about when he and his young cohorts were bumbling terrorists in the Indian Nationalist movement, blowing up people by mistake. It's a different aspect of Nolini than the one highlighted in "Nolini-da: To know him."

—Lynda Lester, Boulder, CO

Cellular evolution conference

I was surprised and disappointed there was no mention of the Cellular Evolution Conference held in Pondicherry and Auroville in February. I wish I'd taken more notes.

—Paula Harrison, Carrolton, OH

The deadline for accepting material for the Spring issue of Collaboration was January 1, and the conference was held in February. An account of the conference is on page 30 of this issue.—Ed

Citing sources

Received the copy of *Collaboration* today. Interesting. Good emphasis on the collective. By the way, it would be good if my article (and others too) say where they are taken from. A magazine in the Ashram had a problem recently for not mentioning the source and changing the title of the article.

—Kosha Shah, Baroda, India

The article entitled, "Whither Humanity," by Kosha Shah, in the Spring '98 issue of Collaboration originally appeared in the journal, Ritagni, published in Baroda, India, by the Sri Aurobindo Research Foundation.—Ed

Looking for explanations

The recent tragic shooting of schoolchildren by children in Jonesboro, Arkansas, prompted this discussion of life and yoga, excerpted from the Auroconf email discussion group.

I have been reading all the responses that came in response to my question yesterday about children and violence. Yes, there are many causes—some are karmic (individual and national), some can be attributed to society, parents, TV culture—but ultimately I think that something is seriously wrong with humanity when a child can get so enraged as to want to hurt another. What has happened to the psychic? Does this child feel any remorse? Does he even see his actions as "wrong"? What has happened to his soul?

I am truly numb with shock and feel a deep sadness that doesn't go away. Maybe with time the hope will return that we each can create a better world for our children.

—Lucy Patel, lucyptl@aol.com



What about the exploitation of the poor developing nations' cheap labor by the multinationals, what about the thousands of victims of Bhopal still suffering from the dirt that Union Carbide left there, what about the people in and around Middle East who are suffering the after-effects of the Gulf War, what about the voluntary killing of female children in some countries where it is considered preferable to have a male child, and so on?

These questions have always bothered me a lot, but so far, no human being has been able to offer a solution to the eradication of these problems.

The point is, this world is in a state of chaos, and the only solution to this has already been given to humanity by the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. Unfortunately, we are not open enough, but, some day...

—Kant Patel; kpatel@us.oracle.com

Sri Aurobindo has said that at the root of all suffering, at the root of all we take to be "evil," is what he called "a certain separativity of consciousness," what the ancient Indian sages called Ignorance. It is only when "I" perceive myself to be separate from "you" that it is possible for me to hate, envy, desire or fear. The vital, when it is separated completely from the psychic being, becomes the asura, without conscience, and literally, without a soul.

As Satprem says in *The Adventure of Consciousness*, (p. 170):

We had believed ourselves small and separated from one another, a man and a man in the midst of separate things, and we needed this separation to grow under our shell, else we would have remained an undifferentiated mass in the universal plasma, a member of the flock without our own life. Through this separation we have become conscious; through this separation we are incompletely conscious; and we suffer, we suffer from being separated—separated from others, separated from ourselves, separated from things and from all, because outside that single point where all things unite.

We in America live in a society which Sufi teacher Llewellyn Vaughn-Lee calls the most extraverted society in the world: highly individual, separate from each other, alienated from our souls, and highly susceptible to collective vital suggestions that

are divorced from anything Divine. The Divine itself has been largely banished from our official secular culture, heightening the feelings of alienation, fragmentation, and general suffering, not only in our inner cities but in our wealthier suburban enclaves.

We are taught in our schools that we live in a largely dead, meaningless world, one without purpose or meaning.

Kant, I believe you are right: Sri Aurobindo and Mother showed us the way to purify our outer beings, awaken our souls, and open to Her force. We can begin to do this right now, to stop taking ourselves to be so important, to see that, paraphrasing Rodney King "We're all in this together." The Upanishads say, "Where there is no 'other,' how can there be fear" (or, I might add, how can there be hate, envy, or desire).

The Mother, in a conversation with the children of the Ashram, (*Adventure of Consciousness*, p. 170), says:

"The only way of putting everything right is to become conscious once more; and this is very simple. There is but one origin. This origin is the perfection of the Truth, for that is the only thing which truly exists. And by exteriorising, projecting, scattering itself, that has produced what we see and a crowd of little heads, very gentle, very brilliant, in search of what they have not yet found but which they can find, because what they seek is within them. The remedy is at the centre of the evil."

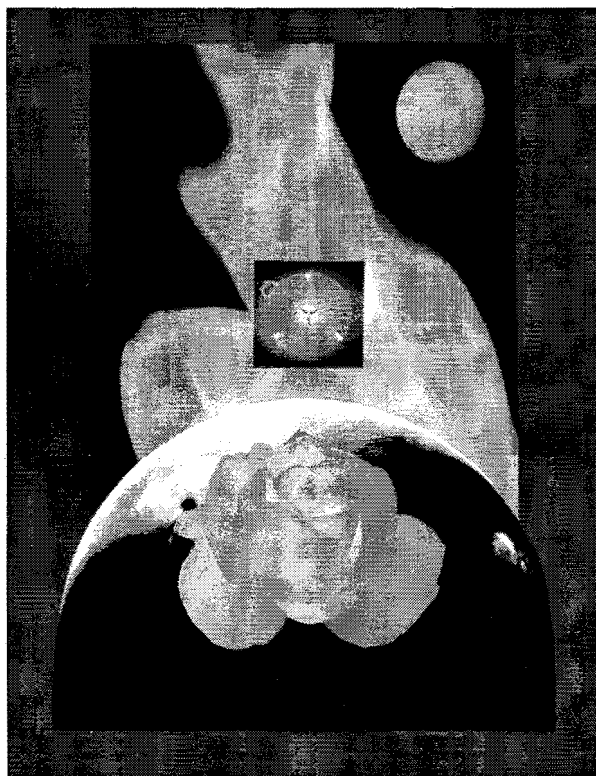
—Don Salmon,
virtreal@erols.com

To me, awakening our souls means going to the center of the ill. If not going there deliberately and courageously, then being *taken* there by the circumstances of life. Being brought face-to-face

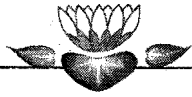
with the ill (by mass media or family or any other circumstance). And then finding its center. And the center is always within. It means finding the ill within. Inside "my" mind, "my" images, "my" impulses. Even the impulse of the child to kill another child.

Finding it within, going to the center of it, and accepting it. Acceptance has a marvelous, miraculous power to transform. I believe that acceptance, that power is the Hidden Guest himself, the action of his "birth mid mire and stone."

—John Robert Cornell, jonrobai@spider.innercite.com



Divine Love (Digital art by Margaret Phanes)



Food for thought

The most anticipated gaming event of 1998 has arrived. *Resident Evil* the sequel is the Consumer's Choice: Best Playstation Game Overall. Plunges horror fans into the most intense, the most terrifying game experience ever crafted. You see Evil. You hear Evil. You're overwhelmed by Evil, as you fight through hordes of flesh starved zombies, bloodthirsty beasts and other mutations of modern science. Will you survive the horror?

—from an advertisement in *Nintendo Power Magazine* and *Electronic Gaming Monthly*
(submitted by Richard J. Carlson, wxex@aol.com)

First, how can the psychic emerge if none of the teachers live in their psychic? America has clearly a mental and physical culture and atmosphere. The question of psychic awareness I don't think arises, particularly once a child attains the age of 12 years after being educated in public schools and through the media. It is the vital being in its raw and unregenerate form. It is this that must be transformed, or nothing can be done.

Now, I think it is important to remember some advice Mother gave, in case pessimism enters our consciousness due to world events.

In *Notes On the Way*, p. 256, referring to someone feeling pessimistic, she replied:

That is a bad attitude. . . All that does not want the Divine creates this atmosphere purposely to discourage those who want the Divine. You must. . . you must not pay attention. That, that is the way of the devil. Pessimism is the demon's weapon and he senses his situation (*gesture of shaking*). Well, if what I see as possible is realized, it will be truly a decisive victory over the adverse forces—naturally, he defends himself as best he can. . . That, it is always the devil: as soon as you see even the tail of pessimism, it is the devil. That is his great weapon.

—dhruvajyoti, swatson@giasmd01.vsnl.net.in

When Mother was asked if children should be allowed to play with toy guns, she replied that it would be better to instruct them in how to use a real gun. This may shock some of our moralistic notions, but Mother was not worried about political correctness, and saw the need to somehow initiate children into the reality of the consequences of weapons. Of course this was under the premise that they were undergoing an education that would assist the psychic being to the fore.

—Richard J. Carlson, wxex@aol.com

When I was about ten years old, my older brother got a BB gun for a present. At the time, wielding a gun seemed heroic, adventurous, powerful. We had been raised on movies and television shows of the Wild West, of World War II. One day my brother was shooting at birds from a window in the house. I was given a chance to try—and killed a bluebird on the first shot.

Immediately I felt a huge sense of grief, as if my own heart had been ripped out. I buried the bird, but that act has stayed with me for decades. Even after witnessing many other deaths of animals, children, and adults, violent or otherwise, the thoughtless killing of another left a lasting mark on my psyche.

At times I have been guilty of "wounding" another person by word or thought, and the effect is the same: a deep pain. The psychic within us is a sure guide, in children and adults, but it is often shouted down by the other parts of our being, or the general noise of living.

Later in life I've seen children go through similar experiences, where they act thoughtlessly—perhaps mistreating a small animal—and then immediately their natural sentiments come to the front, and they realize the error. This sensitivity can be strengthened, nurtured—and it can be blunted, erased—by both the culture and the individuals in our life. At every moment in life we have the opportunity to rise to the highest level possible, and to help raise the general consciousness.

—Dave Hutchinson, dbhutchinson@ucdavis.edu

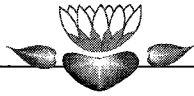
The words of the Mother sent in by Dhruvajyoti are so profound and true. In one sweep they completely took away all the doubts, pessimism, unrest and pain.

The past centuries have seen so much violence towards race, women and animals. Now there is a definite change in the earth consciousness with more emphasis towards equality, brotherhood and peace. When such a big change has occurred in the world consciousness, a few violences and disturbances are bound to happen in the weak spots. So let us move forward with the inner strength to fortify these weak spots when we see them in ourselves and around us, not to look aside. The individual effort that has been made by Sri Aurobindo, the Mother, and all the other great avatars is slowly moving towards a higher harmony. We should not expect sudden change but a gradual and smooth transition towards the new consciousness.

—Bhavi Saklecha, bhavis@holontech.com

One of the greatest beauties of this yoga is finding the Divine in the subjective forces that rest behind our hearts—not the controlling, pervertible mental being, but the quiet, silent, only-known-through-discovery, intuitive being. Otherwise known as the psychic.

We see how we can be alienated from ourselves when we temporarily lose that perspective; so too are those that never have a chance to find it. All the political and sociological perspectives



are irrelevant if society doesn't demand that people learn to look at and value that level.

One can see "good Christians" and "bad Christians" just on the basis of *do they or don't they trust their intuitive when they talk of their religious perspectives*. The same goes for good and bad cops, business people, teachers, parents, automotive repair people, etc.—and children.

—Tom Cowan, tcowan@suffolk.lib.ny.us

I think what Don and Tom are pointing out here is really the central, key issue in understanding, as well as possibly healing (at least within ourselves), the problem of cruelty and violence in our societies. The media, parenting, and cultural trends, perhaps all play a role, but they themselves are only instrumental, and stem from a preceding quality of human nature, namely, "separativeness."

What allows us to cause harm to one another, whether slightly or profoundly, is precisely the fact that we simply see others as "other" and not as extensions or parts of our Self.

What prevents us from harming one another is either a moral rule (but that's not the real thing) or a certain empathy, a certain sense of the inner connectiveness between that in us which acts, and that which is acted upon. We love and care about and protect from harm that with which we identify: *our* family, *our* friends, *our* race, *our* gender; we can harm only that with which we do not identify: other species, other races, other genders, or those who have become "other" by harming us in some way. If everyone is "ours" then no one can we harm.

In yoga, as Don points out, this truth emerges: that there are indeed no others, that all beings are indivisibly and harmoniously one. We begin to feel this in many ways—not mentally so much as through the heart—and this feeling can of course be extended to all things, including inanimate objects (which the Mother has described somewhere as actually "brimming over with consciousness," as being alive and responsive to all of our contacts). Even these can be identified with as being a part of ourselves, which we can care for and avoid harming, wasting, or treating carelessly or unconsciously.

This truth can even begin to emerge outside yoga. Like in the film *The Deer Hunter*; after returning from the horrors of the Vietnam War, Robert DiNiro stalks a deer. When he gets the animal in his sights, he is unable to pull the trigger because he identifies with the deer. He now knows what it is like to be hunted.

Another example is science fiction novelist Arthur C. Clarke's, *Childhood's End*, where some aliens attending a bullfight cause everyone in the stadium to feel the pain of a sword entering their own side, just as the matador plunges the sword into the defenceless bull, causing the simultaneous roar of agony of tens of thousands of voices. Needless to say bullfighting is banned shortly thereafter.

We can never harm that which we truly consider to be ourselves.

—Benjamin Irvin, irvinb@ix.netcom.com

Ben's analysis brings together various truths one has already known, into one truth of existence.

It brings to mind the deep, irreconcilable differences between the Native Americans ("Indians") and the European settlers, which were based on a profound difference in their world experience. For the Europeans, the widest self-identification was with other humans of the same race, or even national origin. But for the Native Americans, all of the creatures of earth, even the stones and rivers and sun and moon, were seen as brothers and sisters, as "peoples," with whom one could enter into intimate (inner) relationship. So the very idea of "owning" land, trees, grasses, buffalo, was inconceivable to them.

—Will Moss, willmoss@aol.com

There is consciousness in each physical thing with which one can communicate. Everything has an individuality of a certain kind, houses, cars, furniture, etc.

—Sri Aurobindo,
Letters on Yoga, p. 717

The senseless massacre last week at Jonesboro, Arkansas, Westside Middle School has penetrated deeply into our collective psyche. We are searching for reasons and in the process are bringing to light many of the ills of our society.

The day after two young boys gunned down four students and a teacher, a newscast announced that 11-year-old Andrew alone in his bare-walled jail cell was crying for his mother. That announcement touched me deeply. It struck me immediately that this child had no concept of the consequences of his action, no realization that his victims were really dead and the lives of their families changed forever.

We can see the boys as victims rather than perpetrators, victims of our society today, a society which delegates rather than participates fully in life. We delegate the education of our children, food production and preparation, entertainment, and child care to others, to impersonal organizations and huge industries. And we pay for it by both parents working out of the



home, leaving the children to each other to TV, day-care, after-care and mischief.

And sex did enter the picture. On the evening news it was disclosed that the older boy, Mitchell, has been charged with allegedly sexually assaulting the two-year-old daughter of his father's live-in girlfriend in Minnesota.

Children see and hear about violence and shootings everyday—on TV, video, movies—but they know it's just on the screen and the real actors will get up and walk away. Nintendo villains don't die; they are barraged by bullets and pop up again and again for the next round.

Another root cause of the Jonesboro massacre, in my opinion, is the isolation of children. In one-parent families especially, but even in two-parent families, the parents may be working or, even when they are home, too busy to listen to and talk to their children, too busy to find out what happened at school that day, what they are thinking and feeling. The youngsters have nowhere to go for conflict resolution, no place where they can talk things out, gain insight, explore their own feelings—nowhere except with other children.

We live in a violent society: violence to unborn children, guns at school, drug wars, road rage, hardened criminals hired to "care for" the elderly in nursing homes. We are violent to our Mother Earth, clear-cutting her forests, pumping cattle and chickens full of steroids and other chemicals, destroying habitat in the name of development, and polluting our oceans. The latest to hit the news is one of the worst: hazardous wastes are being spread on the nation's farm fields in the name of recycling. Hundreds of millions of tons of lead, arsenic, dioxin, and dry-cleaning solvents are blended in fertilizers and applied to land. The practice has been accepted since 1976 when Congress passed the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, which allows industrial waste to be recycled into fertilizer.

Mother says we are besieged by this enormous world of hostile forces—oceans of forces. And this ocean is festering, oozing, so we can see it, see what has to be changed and transformed.

Mother and Sri Aurobindo have promised us a better world, but we as devotees still have our part to play in its effectuation. What can we do to demonstrate that a better life can happen here and now? Start a school? A community? A place where children and grown-ups and the earth can receive the care and love and respect they need and deserve?

—Janis Coker, janisfl@aol.com

This whole conversation has been helpful in understanding how and why such a thing can happen in a seemingly civilized society. Janis' thoughts resonate with me and reinforce what I and others are thinking/believing: that the two boys are also the victims; victims of a sick society of which we are a part.

Janis said: "Mother and Sri Aurobindo have promised us a better world, but we as devotees still have our part to play in its effectuation. What can we do to demonstrate that a better life can happen here and now? Start a school? A community? A place

where children and grown-ups and the Earth can receive the care and love and respect they need and deserve?"

Everytime I am faced (actually daily in some way or another) with the overwhelming way our "system" controls how we live our lives, I always come back to knowing that the only thing or person I can change is myself (and even that with great difficulty). So for me, it seems that we start with ourselves and then hopefully that radiates and ripples outward. At some point I feel that we are all called to "act" in some way from the place in our hearts where we feel compassion for ourselves, all humankind and the earth. However, to "act" on these things usually means in ways that are counter to our culture and thus requires us to go deep within to hear the Divine's call as to what work we are called to do—each of us has a unique work that addresses the problems of our culture—then putting that work together with others' work becomes a collective action. It seems to me that it is hard to find what that work is because our ego and desire-mind usually dictate our directions... so perhaps we need to seek out our divine work in the silence between the thoughts?

—Carolyn Vaughan, CarolynV@aol.com

... As a sign perhaps, of the decline of civilization and decomposition of society, has come a growing vulgarity which seems to have taken possession of human life, individual as well as collective, particularly on the level of aesthetic life and the life of the senses.

—The Mother, *On Education*, p. 32-3.



CURRENT AFFAIRS

Money-Power: Reconquering a universal force for the Divine

by Chandresh Patel

A group of Mother's children is setting up a foundation with the purpose of understanding, harnessing, and rechanneling the universal force most commonly known in daily parlance as "money." We are trying to understand its true movement as a spiritual flow of energy that should be placed in the service of the Divine, and how we, the Integral Yoga practitioners around the globe, can collectively become the Mother's instruments in effectuating its right use.

Sri Aurobindo describes to us the nature and value of the money-force in the book *The Mother*:

Money is the visible sign of a universal force, and this force in its manifestation on earth works on the vital and physical planes and is indispensable to the fullness of the outer life. In its origin and its true action it belongs to the Divine. But like other powers of the Divine it is delegated here and in the ignorance of the lower Nature can be usurped for the uses of the ego or held by Asuric influences and perverted to their purpose.

The Mother elaborates further (*Collected Works of the Mother*, Vol. 3, pp. 45-46):

The power of money is at present under the influence or in the hands of the forces and beings of the vital world. It is because of this influence that you never see money going in any considerable amount to the cause of Truth. Always it goes astray, because it is in the clutch of the hostile forces and is one of the principal means by which they keep their grip upon the earth. The hold of the hostile forces upon money-power is powerfully, completely and thoroughly organized and to extract anything out of this compact organization is a most difficult task. Each time you try to draw a little of this money away from its present custodians, you have to undertake a fierce battle.

It is that battle we are engaging with the Money-Power project. Our struggle is with the very sense of money being "mine" to do with "as I please." It is not ours; it belongs to the Divine. This is not another charity fund that we seek to establish, but a means of changing our consciousness about money and pooling it together for a Divine purpose. And it is not only a pooling together of funds, but a releasing of the hitherto largely untapped

money-force to create a self-perpetuating and growing source of funding for the manifestation of Divine work in the world.

What does it mean to win the money-power from the asuric forces? What can we, the (hopefully) humble practitioners of the Integral Yoga of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, do to win back the money-power from the giant players in the financial markets? These are the burning questions which got us started on the project and we have put forth a kind of battle plan for our collective action.

An example and a beginning

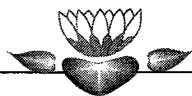
In the sixties, a devotee of the Mother in the USA contributed a large estate (close to a million dollars) for the Mother's work. This pool of money is entrusted to the board of directors of a non-profit foundation. In the past years, these trustees have overseen the distribution of interest income from the \$1 million principle to various projects (such as Auroville and various other activities around the world) that are advancing the Mother's work. As the principle is not dispersed, the interest can perpetually continue to support the Divine work.

What a great first step has been made through the vision and surrender of one individual, and yet it is only a drop in the ocean of this great universal force that has been placed back in the service of the Divine. Imagine what could be accomplished if the global collective would pick up the baton of this initial seed effort.

Ex-students from the Sri Aurobindo International Centre for Education (SAICE) and sadhaks of the Ashram are now living around the globe; they are the torchbearers of the Mother's light, consciously (or otherwise) working towards the path set by her. Other sadhaks and seekers worldwide are also sincerely working for her in their own capacity.

Just imagine how an additional \$100,000 a year in interest can help Mother's work—perpetually.

This global Aurobindonian community needs to work collectively to understand the money-force, its universal movement, and its proper place in spiritual development individually and collectively for the earth consciousness. As Sri Aurobindo said, "some even put a ban on money and riches and proclaim poverty and bareness of life as the only spiritual condition. But this is an error; it leaves the power in the hands of the hostile forces. To reconquer it for the Divine to whom it belongs and use it divinely for the Divine life is the supramental way for the Sadhaka."



Battle plan

The plan is to collectively build, through an income of small regular contributions from devotees around the country (and the world), a money pool on par with the one mentioned above. Just imagine how an additional \$100,000 a year in interest can help Mother's work—perpetually. A sum of a million dollars sounds very large for us average sadhaks. But let us look at the potential synergistic power of a determined group of money-power warriors working with a collective consciousness.

As a first scenario, let us take a hundred of us ex-students from SAICE who are now living abroad. The Mother tenderly supported and nurtured our childhood growth and education with care and love and consciousness. If each of us contributes a sum of \$10,000, we will have \$1 million *now*.

This may not be feasible for many of us. But, not to worry, alternatively, we can each come up with \$2,000 a year (in monthly contributions). In five years, then, we will have a million-dollar pool. Just from the ex-ashram students.

As a second scenario, let us consider a thousand sadhaks around the globe. If each sadhak contributes \$1,000 to Mother's work, we will have \$1 million *now*. Again, this may not be immediately possible for many. Alternatively, if these 1,000 sadhaks contribute \$100 a month for a year, we will acquire \$1 million before the year is out.

So here is an open call to all of us, a way to join the collective battle to win back the money-power for the Divine. The first \$10,000 has already been pledged. But it will be a definite battle, as the Mother throws light on the all-too-familiar vital power that controls the money-force:

The vital power controlling money is like a guardian who keeps his wealth in a big safe always tightly closed. Each time the people who are in its grasp are asked to part with their money, they put all sorts of careful questions before they will consent to open their purses even a very little way; but if a vital impulse arises in them with its demand, the guardian is happy to open wide the coffer and money flows out freely.

—*Collected Works of the Mother*, Vol. 3, pp.45-46.

Logistics

The first collective \$1 million pool, called "Mother's Millennium Fund," will be gathered and managed under the auspices of a nonprofit, public-benefit foundation. The fund is being set up in California under the nonprofit umbrella of the Sri Aurobindo Association until the foundation has incorporated. All donations to the fund will be tax-deductible.

In the beginning, one fund will be created, along with a board to administer it, but the goal is to set up a progressive series of such one-million-dollar funds around the globe. When the first fund reaches the "critical mass" of \$1 million, all subsequent donations and a portion of the first fund's interest will go towards creating a second fund, and so on for a third, fourth, and

subsequent funds. Each fund will be administered by a separate board that will have to follow general guidelines set down in a global charter.

Self-sustenance

When ten money pools around the globe have been established, a miracle will happen. Each money pool will provide one month's combined interest (\$100,000) to a new common pool, leaving the other 11 months to continue with Mother's work. Thus we have a new fund started solely from already established money pools. We have tapped into a self-sustaining, self-growing river flow of money-power. But it is only by working together that we can make this happen.

Divine use of money

The Mother has said, "Money is not meant to make money, money is meant to make the earth ready for the advent of the new creation."

Therefore, the collective work of building the fund is not merely to write that small (or large) check and forget about it. Collectively we have to learn the highest, proper spiritual use of the money-power that we are in the process of wielding.

The Mother has outlined the ideal to be aimed at:

... money is a force intended for the work on earth, the work required to prepare the earth to receive and manifest the divine forces, and it—that is, the power of utilising it—must come into the hands of those who have the clearest, most comprehensive and truest vision.

—*Collected Works of the Mother*, Vol. 15, p. 53.

... people who have abolished in themselves or in some way got rid of every personal desire and every attachment. To this should be added a vision vast enough to understand the needs of the earth, a knowledge complete enough to know how to organise all these needs and use this force by these means.

—*Collected Works of the Mother*, Vol. 13, pp. 275-77.

This will require a great deal of aspiration and sincerity not only on the part of the fund's board members, who will screen and evaluate applications from individuals and groups around the world, and recommend projects for funding from among those submitted—but also on the part of the regular donors to the fund who will each get to vote on which nominated projects get approved. Two main areas where funds are in great need are integral education and communities/centers. A lot of the funding will focus on these areas. However, the wide aim is to provide funding for a Divine life on earth.

Again, Mother gives us the guidelines:

But if people understood that one should be like a receiving and transmitting station and that the wider the range (just the



opposite of personal), the more impersonal, comprehensive and wide it is, the most force it can hold ("force" that is translated materially: notes and coins). This power to hold is proportional to the capacity to use the money in the best way — "best" in terms of the general progress: the widest vision, the greatest understanding and the most enlightened, exact and true usage, not according to the warped needs of the ego but according to the general need of the earth for its evolution and development. That is to say, the widest vision will have the largest capacity.

—*Collected Works of the Mother*, Vol. 13, pp. 275-77.

For this project therefore there is an outer goal, but also an inner one. It is a major aspect of life on the material plane that cannot be left behind in the integral transformation we aspirants of this yoga are aiming at.

As Sri Aurobindo concludes in Chapter 4 of *The Mother*:



Sky Mother. (Computer art by John Robert Cornell)

In the supramental creation the money-force has to be restored to the Divine Power and used for a true and beautiful and harmonious equipment and ordering of a new divinised vital and physical existence in whatever way the Divine Mother herself decides in her creative vision. But first it must be conquered back for her and those will be strongest for the conquest who are in this part of their nature strong and large and free from ego and surrendered without any claim or withholding or hesitation, pure and powerful channels for the Supreme Puissance.

The Money-Power Project is being introduced at the AUM '98 conference at Monte Toyon, California. Further information will be available after the conference. If you would like to participate in this project, you can send donations to the Sri Aurobindo Association. Contact Chandresh Patel, 408-773-8992, or email cpatel@best.com for more information.

Music from Her

by Sunil Kumar Bhattacharya

Some twenty years ago I heard for the first time the Mother of our Ashram improvising on the organ. In the beginning the music sounded strange to me. It was neither Indian nor Western— or shall I say it sounded like both? The theme she was playing came very near to what we know as *Bhairav*, the whole closely knit musical structure expanding melodiously. Then suddenly it started; notes came surging up in battalions, piled one on top of another, deep, insistent, coming as if from a long way down and welling up inevitably; the magnificent body of sound formed and gathered volume till it burst into an illumination that made the music an experience.

Thus she revealed to me the secret of a magic world of music where harmonies meet and blend to make melodies richer, wider, profounder, and infinitely more powerful.

I have tried to take my music from her.

My music is my labor and my aspiration for the Divine and what I try to convey through it are the voices of my inner experience.

My grateful thoughts are with her who has been my guide, guru, mentor and mother. One day it was her light that sparked my heart, it is her light that has sustained its glow, it is her light that I seek through my music. If this music brings some comfort, some delight, or some message to someone, I have achieved that for which she has placed her trust in me.

Friends say goodbye to Sunil

by Mauna van der Vlugt

On Thursday, April 30th, 1998, at 1 p.m. Sunil Bhattacharya gently passed away in the Ashram Nursing Home.

Many Ashramites and Aurovilians paid homage to his person on the first floor above his Art House at No.2, J. Nehru Street in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, where his body lay in state, carried and embraced by his music and the love and dignity of the people surrounding him.

Sunil was born in Calcutta in 1920 and came from a musical family that was devoted to Sri Aurobindo. For many years he played the sarod, an Indian lute, but after a hand injury he dedicated himself to composing.

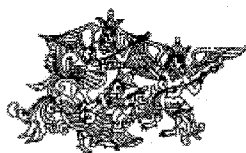
He came to the Ashram in 1942 with a masters degree and taught botany and science in the Ashram School. In the early fifties he started picking up a chord played by Mother and composing his music based on that. This became his great gift to Mother, and to all of us.

Old-timers among us know and deeply appreciate how distinctive a feature of Mother's world his music became—as with the fragrance of a "Psychological Perfection" (plumeria) or of Cottage Rose incense—when Sunil's music would unfold itself, sweetness, yearning, silent joy, and gratitude for Mother was there, stretching out into the vastness of psychic vision and love.

During the last half year Sunil-da's health was causing him trouble and he became a regular visitor in the Ashram Nursing Home. His New Year's Music for 1998 was practically composed there and is remarkably strong.

Sunil leaves behind his wife and his sister, both residing in the Ashram.

May you listen to his music and bid him farewell.



Sunil lives on in his music

Shelley wept for Adonais. We need not mourn for Sunil. For imperishable strains chose to express themselves through that lovable but perishable frame. They will continue to inspire and transport countless seekers in times to come, who care to develop ears to hear, and the capacity to lose themselves and flow in vast, majestic, magical movements of supernal sounds. Sunil is among the immortals who tread the regions which were the origin of his divine inspirations. Without hesitation, we can confidently cry: LONG LIVE SUNIL!

—Devan Nair

Painting of the Mother by Sam Spanier.



About sadhana I should like to ask you: why not do sadhana through your music? Surely meditation is not the only way of doing sadhana. Through your music bhakti and aspiration can grow and prepare the nature for realisation.

—The Mother, *Collected Works of the Mother*,
Vol. 12, p.240





News

Library to open

The new library and archives dedicated to the works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother was completed for the joyful celebration of the Mother's birthday on February 21, 1998. The Celebration included a musical tribute by the "Deep Listening Band." Activities began Friday, February 20, and ended Sunday.

This will be the largest Sri Aurobindo library and archive in the U.S. and it will be a working library. The official opening will be celebrated August 15, 1998.

—Sam Spanier



Sri Aurobindo Library, Matagiri Center, Mt. Tremper, New York.

Center for Integral Education to establish school

by Prapanna Smith

On Darshan Day, April 24, 1998, a group of devotees of Mother and Sri Aurobindo founded the nonprofit Center for Integral Education (CIE) in San Jose, California. The Center seeks to establish the first school in the USA based upon the principles of education formulated by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

CIE will inaugurate the school in September 1999 with a kindergarten class, a first grade class, and a second grade class. Afterwards, a grade level will be added each year until a full K-12 institution is in place in the 2009-2010 school year.

The mission of CIE is to create a beautiful and engaging environment whose purpose is to enable children of all ages to become aware of themselves, and to grow into conscious, fully developed, creative, and responsible individuals who can then contribute and participate actively in building the community of

the Future. From the teachers, the curriculum, and the physical environment at the Center, the children will experience the joy of pursuing knowledge for itself, discover their unique and special aim in life, and learn how to embody beauty, integrity, and harmony in all aspects of their lives.

The Integral Education program at CIE draws its inspiration from the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and its practical knowledge from more than fifty years of experimentation and practice in education conducted at the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education (SAICE) in Pondicherry, India. Recognizing that it is not possible to transplant all the features of SAICE to American soil, CIE participants are making a sincere attempt to incorporate the key elements of integral education and to constructively apply them within the milieu of the American experience.

For more information, please send inquiries to Center for Integral Education, 12 S. Market St. #530, San Jose, CA 95113; send email to cic@integraleducation.org; or see the website at <http://www.integraleducation.org>

Prapanna Smith is a teacher with a master's degree in education administration.

One for Mickey

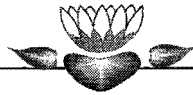
The Sri Aurobindo Center of Boston is creating a new fund to support the work of Sri Aurobindo and Mother in India and America. This fund will be in the name and spirit of Eugene "Mickey" Finn, the Golden Bell of Sri Aurobindo and Mother in Boston.

Mickey died last year. For 30 years he gave unstintingly of his money and time to the yoga. Despite limited financial circumstances, he provided most of the financial support to the Sri Aurobindo bookstore in Boston during its five years of existence. He also sent \$200 a month to Auroville for at least 20 years. He introduced hundreds of people to the yoga, including the great majority of people who lived at Matagiri.

The intention of this fund is to continue manifesting Mickey's devotion, commitment, and love for the yoga. The fund will be set up as a trust, and the interest will be disbursed to Auroville, Matagiri, and the Boston center. We still feel Mickey's one-pointed presence, and this money will continue the work Mother gave him to manifest in the world. The Foundation for World Education has pledged to add 20% to any amount given. Our suggested donation is \$1,000 over two years, but any amount will be appreciated.

For further information contact the Boston center by email to johnschlor@aol.com or phone 617-277-9683. Make checks to Sri Aurobindo Center of Boston and mail to Mary Finn, 108 Kil-marnock St., #102, Boston, MA 02215. Thank you for your love and support.

—John Schlorholz



White Eagle Village Inn for sale

The White Eagle Village Inn in Crestone, Colorado, is for sale for approximately \$500,000.

Rod and Kirti Hemsell and another couple are interested in purchasing and operating this facility and are seeking a partner(s) who would purchase 40% equity. It will be operated as a family venture for the Mother and a site for *Savitri* workshops. It would be nice if the future partners knew and supported this too.

The White Eagle Village Inn is a 36,000 square foot hotel with 64 rooms, (including 8 apartments), a restaurant, a conference hall with a 200-person capacity, a swimming pool, and a golf course next door. Up the mountain a couple of miles are a Zen Monastery, a Carmelite Monastery, the Haidakhandi Ashram, the Tashigomang Stupa, the Sri Aurobindo Learning Center, and numerous mountain trails. Monarch ski resort is about 45 minutes away, along with several hot springs.

The hotel is off the regular tourist route and is meant for consciousness rather than profit, although with marketing it should be capable of growth in both.

—Rod Hemsell

Rod Hemsell has managed a special education project and a charter school for the past six years. He currently lives in Colorado Springs and can be reached by phone at 719-471-7860 or by email to globe@rmi.net

AUROVILLE ALMANAC

Light beginnings: The 1998 New Year's report from Auroville.

by Mauna van der Vlugt

Namaste.

Hoping that all of you/us have started out this new cycle of life in good spirits, with optimism in our outlook and love in our hearts. I come to add my usual bit by giving you some glimpses about the way we, or rather some of us, went through the New Year's transition here in Auroville.

For me, the main memory that will linger is the "One-Thousand-Lamp Mandala for World Peace" which found several hundreds of people sitting in early evening at the site of the Tibetan Pavilion—in deep deep silence and concentration, under a light high sky and amidst a thousand little, quietly burning oil lamps outlining the taut architectural lines of the foundation walls just emerging some half meter from the ground.

With the construction pillars rising up everywhere throughout the quite vast area, the general view made me think of ancient Greece, or of one of those scenes often depicted in M.C. Escher's drawings where an entire site or structure is flooded with space and starkly outlined against a surrounding universe. Many of us were holding a Tibetan incense stick and the atmosphere was strong, charged, and silent. No dogs barking, no people talking. Sometimes a child would whisper.

At midnight some 70 people listened to Sunil's New Year's music in Pitanga Hall. The high pressure under which Sunil must have been creating the music this year (mainly from the Ashram Nursing Home from where he was regularly brought to his studio in order to complete the work in time) must have added to the intensity and richness of the music, which was profoundly appreciated by all.

The new morning in the new year brought us, via a bonfire and Cuisine Solaire breakfast and lots of hugging, well into the new year. The day is sunny and lovely with fresh winds stimulating the mind, and I very much hope that the same is the case for you all.

Wishing all of us the same!

Mauna van der Vlugt is from the Netherlands. She stayed in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in the early seventies and permanently settled in Auroville in 1977. Originally an educationalist and editor, she is presently the international secretary of Auroville International, and its behind-the-screen networker.

Auroville land report: 1997 – 1998

By Guy Ryckaert

This report covers the progress made to acquire land for Auroville during the financial year ending on 31st March 1998. During this period the Auroville Land Service has been able to purchase 66.96 acres (27.32 hectares), of which 24.17 acres (9.86 hectares) are in the City area. Final orders are in the pipeline that will allow the temple trustees to sell the land to the Auroville Foundation, and we hope to be able to conclude this acquisition soon. This process was begun in 1992!

Further efforts were also made with the Tamil Nadu State Government to hand over or lease the peramboke (government) lands in the Auroville area to the Auroville Foundation. Most of these lands have been recently surveyed and a value is being fixed in accordance with the Revenue Departments norms.

As a considerable number of lands in the City area are under legal dispute between members of the families that own them, the Land Service has been compiling all the data on these lands. This will allow us to make a purchase offer through the courts where the cases are being tried.



The Land Service has been constantly evaluating its strategy for land purchase so as to be flexible in its approach to a rapidly changing scenario. We decided to pay higher prices for lands within the target areas of City and Green Belt where we feel speculative interest is keen. For some other lands that would help to secure Auroville's perimeter, we would like to make separate appeals for these specific plots, as there is a clear perception among certain donors that their valuable donations should be used for lands in the City or Green Belt area. We have no wish to depart from this line except when there are compelling, strategic reasons for doing so.

The Land Service office has been expanded a little and a much-needed computer was installed. As a result, we were able to process paper work much faster and work more effectively. Also, this year, an information and fundraising centre was set up at CSR Office to enhance communication with our donors and increase the inflow of donations for land purchase.

Whereas we had been seriously hampered by a lack of funds in the previous financial year, this year we received a tremendous response from our well-wishers. Foremost amongst these was the wonderful gift from "Stichting de Zaaier", a Dutch funding agency, of Rs. 1 crore (Rs. 10 millions) or US\$ 256,400. Apart from this biggest single donation ever received by Auroville, Rs. 91.41 lakhs or US\$ 234,400 was raised for land purchase during this financial year.

We would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank all of you who have so generously contributed for Auroville's Land. Please continue to support us. We still have a long way to go...

Auroville land fact sheet: May 1998

1. City area

The total city area of Auroville, a circle of 2.5 km diameter, represents approx. 1,200 acres or 490 hectares, of which:

Already owned by Auroville:	...725 acres	(295 hectares)
Govt. lands:65 acres	(27 hectares)
To be purchased by Auroville:	.275 acres	(112 hectares)

Total:1065 acres (434 hectares)

There is a village in the city area, Kottakarai and its satellite hamlet of Bharatipuram, which has grown together with Auroville. This together with the fringes of another village, Alankuppam,

account for the balance 135 acres or 56 hectares that make up the totals for the city area.

2. Green belt area

The Green belt, which consists of a circular band of a further 1.25 km width around the city area, represents a total area 3,800 acres or 1,550 hectares, of which:

Already owned by Auroville:	740 acres	(302 hectares)
To be purchased by Auroville:	2560 acres	(1044 hectares)

Total:3300 acres(1346 hectares)

There are five villages in this area. Taking into account their population and land holding pattern, we can target a maximum possible purchase of 2600 out of 3,800 acres.

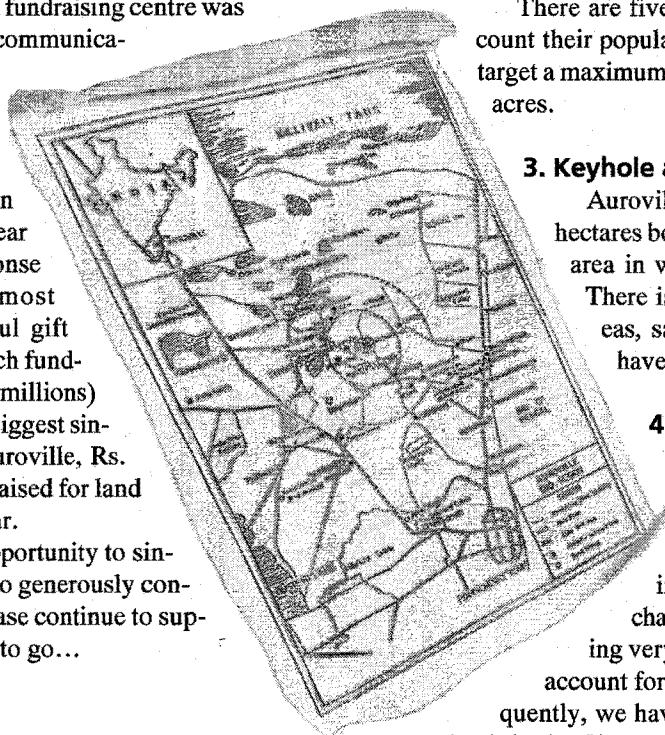
3. Keyhole areas

Auroville also owns some 1,300 acres or 530 hectares both east and west of the main Auroville area in what are known as the keyhole areas. There is no plan to acquire lands in these areas, save for consolidation purposes as we have many valuable projects running here.

4. Current prices and priorities

The current price ruling in the Auroville area varies from Rs 1.25 lakhs to Rs 1.5 lakhs (approx. \$3,205 to \$3,845) per acre (= 0.408 hectare), inclusive of all registration and other charges. Land prices are definitely increasing very rapidly, so that we are constrained to account for legitimate inflationary trends. Consequently, we have targeted as a priority to acquire the lands in the City Area in as short a time frame as possible. For these 275 acres or 112 hectares, plus some urgent and opportune purchases in the Green Belt Area, we anticipate a total expense of around 5 crores of rupees (approx. 1.3 million dollars).

Guy Ryckaert, from Belgium, has lived in Auroville for about a decade. He has served on major Auroville bodies such as Working Committee, Economy Group, and FAMC. He currently heads the Project Coordination Group and has been lately focusing on fundraising for land purchase.



Heartbreak and challenge

by Jocelyn

Mother said about Sri Aurobindo, "Without him I exist not; without me he is unmanifest." Without them I could neither exist nor manifest, so although I only arrived in Pondicherry in August 1969, I feel my connection with them — if I existed before that date — preceded the moment when I received the material assurance that they exist in time and space as well as in the dream of my Soul.

I have lived in Auroville almost continuously since 1969. I love Auroville. However, despite all the crises I have seen here in Auroville, all the heartbreak, adventures, etc., I don't feel we have ever encountered anything equal to the challenge of today right now — as Auroville approaches its 30th birthday.

In 1988 the Government of India passed the Auroville Foundation Act that describes Auroville as a department of the Government of India. Until Mother left her physical body in 1973, she was the government of Auroville. She created Auroville and was physically looking after and determining how it should develop, who should live there, etc. She had created the Sri Aurobindo Society to raise funds for Auroville, and to help her with the management of the experiment in spiritual anarchy.

She had created the Sri Aurobindo Society to sponsor the Auroville project; however, even while she was still in Pondicherry, there were already major disagreements between the residents of Auroville and the Sri Aurobindo Society office in Pondicherry.

The basic argument was whether Auroville was to be under the management of the Sri Aurobindo Society, or whether it would manage itself. The Sri Aurobindo Society was the legal body recognized as the management of Auroville, and even today Auroville's NGO status is held by the Sri Aurobindo Society, not the Auroville community.

By the time Mother left her physical body in November 1973, the community of residents of Auroville were ready to declare war on the Sri Aurobindo Society.

In 1976 some of the residents of Auroville went to the Government of India to resolve this conflict, and the result was finally the Auroville Foundation Act in 1988.

The Foundation Act recognizes the resident members of the Auroville Community as the Residents' Assembly, the basic management unit of the foundation that is supervised by a committee called the Governing Board, appointed by the Government of India, whose orders are carried out by the Secretary of the Auroville Foundation. There is also an International Advisory Council, also chosen by the Government of India, to maintain the idea that Auroville belongs to no nation or group of people but to humanity as a whole.

I, personally, for the most part, have disagreed with the process that created the current situation vis-a-vis management, as I felt we were settling for old forms to conform to the requirements of the Government of India, rather than trying to find new forms more in harmony with the Auroville Charter and the aspiration of Auroville.

However, whatever my stand was in the past, I live in Auroville, so I must contend with the situation as it stands today and hope it will evolve toward the dharma of this unique experiment.

The Auroville Charter begins:

Auroville belongs to nobody in particular, but in order to live in Auroville one must be a willing servitor of the Divine Consciousness.

Having read the Auroville Charter and *To Be a True Aurovilian* many, many times, I find in them a full program of things I have to work on in myself in order to progress toward the realization of Auroville. I don't know where anyone else stands in regards to these suggestions from Mother about how to change ourselves to move toward a gnostic realization and the realization of a gnostic community, but our process seems not to represent a community striving to realize these ideals.

Meanwhile the area that was physically an eroded wasteland, sparsely populated with twenty-three impoverished villages with neither electrification nor literacy, has become a garden with perhaps the highest standard of living in Tamil Nadu. This poses new and perhaps more complex problems.

It was obvious to everyone in 1970 that we had to plant trees because it was so hot and dry here from May to September it was sometimes even difficult to breathe.

Today in this lush garden we hear, "I did not come to live in a forest; Auroville is supposed to be a city."

In the early days we were a small group of people and until ten years ago we all knew one another. Today there are lots of people living in Auroville that I don't know. Perhaps this is simply part of the process of growing; however, I think the real reason is that our process of meeting has completely broken down.

We had crazy, wonderful, terrible meetings about everything and made some very stupid decisions, but we met and spoke with one another regularly about topics that concern us all, and we were still inspired to work together for Auroville.

In recent years several people have come and built houses in Auroville, and factories in Pondi—not relatable to Auroville. In the early days, even though we started Aurocreation in Pondi we were working for Auroville, not only for ourselves.

I remember building a hut for myself on the beach for Rs.150, which in those days was about 20 dollars. With another 20 dollars I put in a hand pump and it was enough: I was living there on the beach with my two-year-old daughter.

Today, to live in Auroville has become a very complicated and, possibly, expensive process. There are visa fees and Auroville entry fees. Another standard of living exists—and even a simple newcomer unit costs thousands of dollars. No longer is anyone allowed to put up a hut and bang a pipe into the ground and attach a hand pump.

Auroville and Pondicherry have become part of the global society. In 1972 I could not find a child's bicycle in the market in Pondicherry. Today there are a whole range of fashionable children's cycles, Addidas and Nike stores, IBM computers—everything is available in Pondicherry. In the olden days it used to be, "be Indian, buy Indian."

So Auroville today not only faces its individual karma and the crisis of its own dharma and destiny, but is a partner in the world's global crisis. We are not an island. We are an atom in the planetary destiny.

Do we have something to contribute?

Jocelyn has lived in Auroville for almost 30 years. She says she cannot be objective about Auroville. Her e-mail address is jocelyn@auroville.org.in.

"Bon" fire: Auroville's 30th birthday

by Joan Tomb

Auroville turned 30 on February 28, 1998.

It's near 5:00 am. We gather in silence at the amphitheatre seating ourselves in a wide circle. Tamil villagers, Ashramites from Pondicherry, visitors, guests and a cluster of Aurovilians who have been chanting "OM" for hours already. Everyone settles. The fire is lit at precisely dawn... not a sound, no dogs barking, babies are quiet, the children enchanted with the first crackling sparklers. A bright vigorous blaze suddenly vaults open the dark. This fire is a gallant one; audacious gymnastic flames leap and curl freely against the blue/black sky, reaching higher and higher.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, AUROVILLE. I LOVE YOU.

Joan is from America. She lives in Auroville and the U.S.A.



CENTER TO CENTER

An ideal center: an aspiration to realize

by Ameeta Mehra

From time immemorial Man has been creating and experimenting with different organizational forms to serve the advancement of education, trade, politics, science, and material growth. This quest for an ideal form for collective advancement and governance has been the guiding principle of the Gnostic Centre in Delhi, India. Our group has consciously elected to follow spiritual principles and has based its structure and governance on the various hints given by the Mother. I would like to share some of the experiences of collective inner living attempted at the center and invite your responses, further light and feedback.

What is a center?

It is, one can say, a collectivity that comes together to do a special work; a work that is more than the sum of its individuals, and creates a multiplier effect.

What are the main features or functions that this collective group performs?

1. It shares a common aspiration and attempts to realize it.
2. It attempts a collective endeavor.
3. It takes collective decisions.
4. It is involved in conflict resolution.
5. It upholds and upkeepes the inner and outer well being of each of its members.

A true center is based on a certain truth and tries to embody it.

At the Gnostic Centre, our aspiration is to become a center of Truth based on the central principle of consecration and surrender to the Divine Mother Shakti. And therefore our whole endeavor is towards a perfect action and manifestation of such principles in our day-to-day life and activities.

How is the Gnostic Centre organized?

We have taken the following as our guiding light and have formed our administrative structure and functions accordingly.

For true and lasting progress and harmony in a collective work, the Mother says:

... two processes which, though opposite in appearance, must combine—must act upon each other:

1. Individual transformation, an inner development leading to the union with the Divine Presence.
2. Social transformation, the establishment of an environment favorable to the flowering and growth of the individual.

Since the environment reacts on the individual and, on the other hand, the value of the environment depends upon the value of the individual, the two works should proceed side by side. But this can be done only through division of labor, and that necessitates the formation of a group, hierarchised, if possible.

The action of the members of the group should be threefold:

1. To realize in oneself the ideal to be attained: to become a perfect earthly representative of the first manifestation of the Unthinkable in all its modes, attributes and qualities.
2. To preach this ideal by word, but, above all, by example, so as to find out all those who are ready to realize it in their turn and to become also announcers of liberation.
3. To found a typic society or reorganise those that already exist.

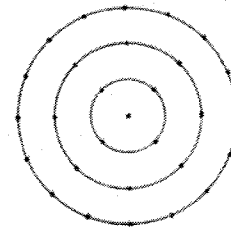
—*Collected Works of the Mother*, Vol. 16, p.329

Mother also says:

A hierararchised group means a group in which the activities and functions are organized according to the individual ability, with a leader at the center. A military organization, for example, is a hierarchy.

Here is a diagram of the ancient traditional hierarchies.

1—4—8—16



and so on.

—*Collected Works of the Mother*, Vol. 16 p.329

How does the center approach the inner and outer well being of its members?

In most organizations we see around us, there is always a tendency to sacrifice the individual for the collective unit. This takes many forms, but the underlying principle remains the same. The organization becomes self-centered, only looking at people as serving its economic or functional need, and paying only that much attention to the needs of the individual as is minimally required. This is a danger that all of us can fall into in subtle ways.

However, the opposite perhaps is even more fatal, when the individuals sacrifice the collective good and growth to satisfy their own ambitions and greeds, whether for power or for money.



Even a cursory glance at the present political situation in India provides a sufficient example of this. The politicians have thrown the country into confusion and disarray for personal profit.

In all organizations different shades of these problems do come up, and in that sense, the Gnostic Centre is no exception. For one, none of us are ready-made transformed beings, but are a group of youthful aspirants after all, and all the frailties that dog human nature are doubly present here. The Mother once remarked on being asked why there were such unregenerate people at the Ashram (where one normally expects to meet saints, not people with difficult outer natures), that the Ashram represented a special concentration of the difficulties that beset ordinary humanity—for to collect saints was not their goal, but to change human nature, and to collect saints and great men would not serve this purpose.

So how is this balance achieved between individual growth and freedom and the realization of a collective ideal and goal? This is achieved when the individuals base their growth and freedom not on their egos, but on their souls, and when the organization or center becomes an instrument for the expression of the free largeness and flowering of the soul in Man.

At the Gnostic Centre the focus is on the inner growth of consciousness; the measure of this is the progressive change in our outer day-to-day work, attitudes, and existence. Each individual is first a soul that has taken birth for a special purpose, to express a unique potential, and the center's activities and policies are governed by this truth first. This does not mean that one becomes a goody-goody and turns a blind eye to insincerity, lack of discipline, and bad will, but the attempt is to deal with these firmly, yet not lose the vision.

The following are some models and principles we are trying to practice.

How are decisions taken?

One way that we follow when we are taking important decisions is to consult the voice of each member. I have found that when the time is right and a particular action or activity should be started, normally a large number of people voice the same idea or suggestion. Sometimes a visitor too voices a similar sentiment. This of course holds true much more in a conscious collectivity, and often we have found the wisdom of this method. The Mother used to say, follow Life, she will show you the way, and indeed that is our attempt.

How are conflicts resolved?

In any group situation where diverse personalities and temperaments are working together, conflicts are bound to arise, and the centre is no different. Problems of harmony among two people, and work related conflicts do arise.

1. The first thing we do is to offer the problem to The Mother, ask for her intervention and guidance.

2. Then on the material level, a small meeting is called. We always begin with meditation and a prayer, and then the people involved are asked to state simply what the problem is. Of course this is done, trying to keep oneself in the highest state of consciousness, for which the mediator bears the responsibility.

3. There is normally a dialogue with a mediator and other core group members. The group gives feedback to the persons concerned as to what they perceive as the cause of the problem, and this part is not always pleasant to hear, as it contains a few home truths. The mediator then sums up the difficulty and points to where the solution lies, which has up to now always been accepted and respected. The important point here is that all this is done in an atmosphere of impersonal love and as far as possible calm. This atmosphere can only be maintained if there is a conscious invocation of the Divine Presence. And it is that Presence that brings it down with a sense of quiet serenity and clarity of mind and emotion.



Ascent to the Truth. Painting by the Mother.



Essentially the Gnostic Centre is a space, an environment, a collective aspiration, and a collaboration to facilitate the integral growth of its individuals in harmony with the overall collective progress of the organization, the nation, and the world.

—Ameeta Mehra; The Gnostic Centre, Delhi, India

Ameeta Mehra is chairperson of the Gnostic Centre in Delhi. She has worked extensively in the field of human resource development, integral psychology, and Indian Philosophy and has authored two books: The Journey and Where We Don't Go.

About The Gnostic Centre

The Gnostic Centre is a research center for the growth of consciousness, registered as a nonprofit trust, in 1996, at Delhi, India. It represents a pioneering effort towards the university of tomorrow and attempts to respond to the growing need to create a bridge between matter and spirit.

What is our endeavor?

- To offer study programs, courses, workshops, and research facilities in various subjects and disciplines.
- To create a space for those who are looking for a deeper consciousness, for a new spirit, and for forms of knowledge to express it.
- To offer consultancy in education, business management, law, etc.
- To facilitate the understanding and practice of the Integral Yoga.
- To create a bridge between matter and spirit.

The awakening ray

The awakening ray is a twofold movement that descends into the material consciousness and awakens it to its divine self, and that rises up from the Matter in response to this awakening. The awakening ray symbolizes both the human aspiration and the divine response... the divine inspiration and the human response.

Our endeavor is to provide a means of deepening, widening and heightening these two movements.

To this effect, the center publishes the *Awakening Ray* which comes out 6 times a year. A subscription costs Rs. 250 (about \$7.80) per year. To subscribe, please contact the Gnostic Centre at 123456 D-7/6, Vasant Vihar, New Delhi - 110057, India, or send e-mail to ameeta@giadl01.vsnl.net.in. Also, if you would like to be included in our mailing list kindly contact us.

For more information, see <http://members.tripod.com/~ameeta/index.htm>.

The art of living: An exercise in a collective yoga

by David Fiedler

"The Art Of Living" is the name of a weekly group practice based on Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's teachings. It has been ongoing in Cincinnati, Ohio, since March 1996.

As told from the point of view of a fictional member . . .

I walk into a room. On the floor is a black disc with an image of the sun painted in the middle. I find a seat in the circle around the disc. Several others are already present, a few continue to wander in. The lighting is soft, not too dim. Some informal conversation is taking place, questions being asked about the format of tonight's practice session. An exercise in a collective yoga—what can this mean? We are about to find out. . .

The facilitator leads the group in a technique he calls *Breath-Soundwork*—some way of making sounds while breathing in and out, watching the breath first rise up above the head, then filter down and gather in the middle of the chest. AH . . . MM . . . AH . . . MM, rising, concentrating, rising, concentrating. We are all breathing and chanting in sync. The sounds are quiet, but audible.

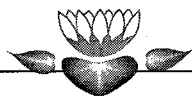
We are like a giant octopus, breathing up and in, up and in through each of its tentacles (the third from the left is me). After a while the tentacles are left to breath on their own. The lights begin to go down, the sounds of the chanting become quieter.

I am still following the breath, but now I am hearing the sounds just in my head. I am now less aware of the group, and able to follow my own breath at my own pace. It is very quiet, subtle, and I can feel the breath rising up above my head, and there is light up there. And after a moment I become aware of a special place in the middle of my chest. There is a vibration there, very subtle, like MMMMMM . . . concentrated in that one spot. And these two movements alternate, like a seesaw, up into the light, then in, up, in. I seem to be moving, somehow, into . . . myself.

Difficult to explain, yet I can feel a space in the middle of my chest I enter into, and there in that space there seems to be . . . something, warm, alive, can't explain it, must hold onto it . . .

And now there is only silence, and a flame inside me, and darkness all around, and on the floor the sun in the middle of the disc is glowing just like I feel the sun in me glowing. And I feel the flame and feel the space around the flame. And I hear the sounds of the breath, and the rise and fall, AH . . . MM . . . AH . . . MM, all happening automatically.

Can I really live this way? How long will it be before some thought or other takes me away from *myself*? The lights are coming up. Can I hold on to this experience, cherish this flame, even while I now see everyone else in the room? Yet, this is what we



Dimensions. Computer art by Margaret Phanes

are here to do. They are doing it; I will try to do it also. But it is different, new, an entirely new way of being . . . with others. We will practice it together, support each other, be on each other's sides. I don't know, I'm not sure, can it work? Perhaps, perhaps it is possible, perhaps. I wish it be so. It is so very fragile.

Living from within, remembering from within, acting from within. I think that I begin to understand. We are asked to sit quietly, and only become conscious of what wants to be said . . . from within. And we are asked to trust that others too are doing the same. We are not in a hurry, patient with ourselves and everyone else. We know that this is difficult, delicate. But, what else is there that's worth doing?

The man sitting across from me begins to speak. He is recounting an experience he had during the week that was beautiful and meaningful to him. We are appreciating that he can share

this story with us. There is an intimacy in this sharing. I only wish to open myself to the words being spoken, let my mind remain silent, let my heart hear, let my own heart or the heart of another be moved into commenting, sharing. This is all I wish for—that our silence only be punctuated by words of the heart, the one Heart that is mirrored by so many thousands, millions, billions, a few of which are in this room with me tonight.

And we are told: life can be like this. This is why we are here tonight. Not just to talk about it, to *be* it. This is life, right now, it is like this; if this moment can be this way, why not *any moment, every moment*, being like this? It is in my power, I can do this.

It is all within me, the whole thing, all the time, is only within me. What a simple, magical secret.

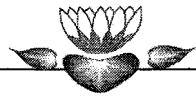
The heart listens, all hearts listen, we are a collective organism, an enlightened octopus! I am not only me, I am all, I am the octopus, all at once, and all are my tentacles. And it doesn't matter, from which of my selves, which of my hearts, words, actions flow forth. This is the secret: there is only one mind, one being, and it isn't this brain, this body. That is the illusion. The divine, perfect intelligence co-ordinates all action, all movement, perfectly, all needs are met in perfect harmony, no disruption—It meets It's own needs, naturally, how else could it be for the perfect being? And what I perceive as “myself,” when I realize that “I” am only a finger of That, who is All, who originates and fulfills all needs, when I truly understand and surrender, then what am I but a part of the perfection, and what can I possibly have to worry about? And what else am I to do but remain just as that, perfect balance, mind forever sunk within the heart.

AH . . . MM . . . AH . . . MM . . . the breath and sound are helpful, they calm the mind and help keep me balanced. Ongoing, even rhythm, there in the background, something to hold on to in rough seas.

The meeting is coming to an end. Hearts had joined as one, now returning to their own receptacles.

We turn inwardly now as individuals, we acknowledge the sacred substance poured from the kaddish cup, and cherish it, and vow to keep this drop safe within us, to sustain us, until we meet again.

David Fiedler, initiator of The Art Of Living practice, was introduced to the Integral Yoga in New Delhi in 1993. At the encouragement of Dr. Shiv Das, an elder sadhak affiliated with the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Delhi Branch, David began to introduce aspects of the Integral Yoga to Americans, and has started a center named “Gnosis: Knowledge in Action.”



CHRONICLES & REFLECTIONS

Old Long Since

by K. Amrita

These are excerpts from the book Reminiscences by Nolini Kanta Gupta and K. Amrita, Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, 1969; pp. 179–183.

In the year 1914 I had the darshan of the Mother. I could not perceive then that the Mother's was not an ordinary human birth. In 1914 the Mother came for the first time to the land of India, the decreed repository of spiritual riches.

As directed by Sri Aurobindo in 1910, the Mother reached Pondy on March 29, 1914. A few days after her arrival, Bejoykanta introduced me to her. How did he do it? He introduced me as one of the students of the Calve College and as one keen on practising Yoga.

The Mother lived in the house No. 3 facing the North, in Dupleix Street. She had so much work to attend to that she met people only at an appointed time. Steps were taken even then to start the monthly review *Arya* both in English and in French.

Students from our school, in small groups, would come at their leisure hours to see the Mother. We did not know then who the Mother was.

At that time the book *Yogic Sadhan* could be seen in the hands of many of those persons who frequented Sri Aurobindo's house. This book Bejoykanta taught me. I did not consider him a teacher. The terms Guru, Acharya, teacher, instructor, preceptor were not current amongst us those days. All that we had been taught was social etiquette and hospitality, no one had given us any idea of modesty or humility or devotion.

Amidst all these superficialities I approached the Mother with the help of Bejoykanta. My dumb heart at once came to feel the magic power of the Mother. Over my poor heart lay loads of dirt. If one load dropped down, another would roll in to occupy the empty space.

In my first approaches to the Mother I thought her to be one like others. My mind's way led me in one direction, my heart's voiceless feeling led in another. I had not learnt at that time either to listen attentively to the still voice of the heart, or forgetting all outer hankerings, to feel the inner urge. The *tapasya* perhaps that I had failed to do in my previous births I began doing now in this short span of life.

Had someone seen the Mother and myself seated on chairs, facing each other, almost as equals, with the book *Yogic Sadhan* in hand, he would have been in a fix to know who was teaching whom. In truth, however, I approached the Mother in the spirit of a seeker of knowledge.

The school remained closed two days per week—Sundays and Thursdays. On these two days, at 10 a.m., I would go to the Mother, study with her for half an hour one or two pages of the *Yogic Sadhan*, proceed to Sri Aurobindo's house for his darshan and return home.

An image of immeasurable power—that was how I felt the Mother to be whenever I approached her. She, however, held that power in herself without allowing the least display of it. On some occasions the great power would shine forth irresistibly. Our inner sense would perceive this radiation if it was awake.

Not only myself but some of my friends of those days had felt certain necessary changes taking place, whether we had wanted them or not and without our being conscious of them, changes not only in our basic consciousness but in some of our external parts too. We would approach the Mother with our contradictory ideas and doubts and after a talk with her each one of us would be filled with an unaccountable purity and joy, and self-oblivious we would come back home talking merrily like people living in a happy world.

On August 15, 1914, Sri Aurobindo's birthday was celebrated more openly. In the spacious hall upstairs two or three big tables, taken on hire, were placed side by side; and above these sheets was heaped, mountain-like, milk-white rice. Finally, rose-petals were strewn over the rice.

At about 11:30 a.m. Sri Aurobindo came and stood in the long verandah, south of the hall, at the western end and, looking at us eastwards, spoke something in English for two or three minutes.

Ten or fifteen persons only out of those who had assembled that day stayed behind for sometime and I was one of these few. I do not remember now where the Mother was, where she sat and took her food.

In October 1914, I suppose, Abdul Karim, a chief C.I.D. inspector of the Madras Presidency sought Sri Aurobindo's permission for an interview. I do not remember the date. He was asked to come on a particular day at 10 a.m. for the interview. Abdul Karim came on that day in time and met Sri Aurobindo. The talk must have lasted for more than half an hour in private. While going to Sri Aurobindo Abdul Karim had carried a big rose-garland and two or three plates full of fruits, etc. Not being an inmate of Sri Aurobindo's house, I had no means of knowing what transpired between them. Even if I had been an inmate, Sri Aurobindo would have said only what could be disclosed. It was rumoured in Pondicherry that the talk must have been mainly about the World War and Abdul-Karim sought to know Sri Aurobindo's views about it.

Before the publication of the *Arya*, it was widely talked about—and most amongst the Tamil poet Bharati and his friends—that a review of the kind was soon going to be published. The idea also spread, along with the talk, that a new age was about to dawn, this new age was for the whole human race



Amrita. Drawing by the Mother.

and Sri Aurobindo was the Rishi of this new age. Poet Bharati was chiefly instrumental in spreading the idea.

I was fortunate enough to hear many say several times that the *Arya* would elucidate the secrets of the Veda and, as a corollary, unravel many a knot, till now unloosened, in the Upanishads, Itihasas, Puranas, etc. I heard many also declare that Sri Aurobindo had found a new method of Yoga for the sake of mankind and would divulge in the *Arya* the characteristic process of sadhana for following this method.

Hardly a month had passed since the declaration of the great War when I heard elderly people, rich in knowledge, affirm that the World War was but the unhealed sore in the human consciousness and the appearance of the *Arya* was destined to heal the sore. I could not grasp all that clearly then.

One day at the beginning of September I took up a copy of the first issue of the *Arya* from the table on the long verandah upstairs in Sri Aurobindo's house and started reading the first article of the series, "The Life Divine," written by Sri Aurobindo, just loudly enough for myself to hear. I read it over and over again. Great thoughts clothed in great words—I could not at all

comprehend! However, it was sweet to read and re-read it. It was as if someone else in me was comprehending all that was read!

As I was reading, Sri Aurobindo came, stood in front of the table and kept listening to my reading. When I put down the copy of the *Arya* and lifted my head I saw Sri Aurobindo standing there. I told him that the reading was delightful but nothing could be grasped.

Sri Aurobindo heard all that I said and replied, "It is not necessary to understand it all at once. Go on reading. If you find a joy in reading, you need not stop it."

Anyone may perceive in Sri Aurobindo's writings a wealth of experiences, a mantric power and an extraordinary superhuman attraction. That first sublime article in the *Arya* begins with one or two riks from the Rig Veda.

Hear:

She follows to the goal of those that are passing on beyond, she is the first in the eternal succession of the dawns that are coming,—Usha widens bringing out that which lives, awakening someone who was dead . . . What is her scope when she harmonises with the dawns that shone out before and those that now must shine? She desires the ancient mornings and fulfils their Light; projecting forward her illumination, she enters into communion with the rest that are to come.

—Kutsa Angirasa, *Rig Veda* I.113.8.10

Without being conscious of my relation with the Mother before and after my birth on this earth I felt a child's love for her at the very outset.

The Mother left for France in February 1915. I too went to Madras for the matriculation examination that very year.

K. Amrita was a local student who joined Sri Aurobindo in 1919. He became manager of the Ashram and remained a close assistant of the Mother till his passing away in 1969.





THE POETRY ROOM

The Golden Ship

From still heaven to silent quay
A luminous ship of mystery!
Ether its substance, ethereal its form—
No splash of oar, no breath of storm
Breaks the trance of its trackless sweep,
Where serene silence conversed with musing sleep
And argent shadows with shapes of secrecy sway.
Dimensions are absent in its play,
Yet its realities outrun time's rush
And last beyond our earth's abodes.
O golden ship, home of the calm gods,
Harbour in my soul's profound hush.

—Shyam Kumari

Sophie's poem

Walking with her mother in the woods,
she found a bowl,
a shallow wooden one, weathered, slightly cracked.
Her father put it on the altar,
a symbol of the empty bowl of the seeker after wisdom
about which he'd recently written a book.
Standing on its edge,
it formed a circular, ancient-seeming backdrop for Kwan Yin.

But she wanted to take it down off the altar
and put it back in the woods
filled with food or water
for the animals.

—Cassia Berman

Inscription on a fallen leaf

She passed this way,
The moonbeam giver
The moonglow thief—
Leaving at my feet
The fallen parchment leaves
She so long had gathered—
All of passion's fading hieroglyphs
Inscribed by life's lovers everywhere.

Her coming, her going
Was an event,
Foretold and settled,
Between spans.

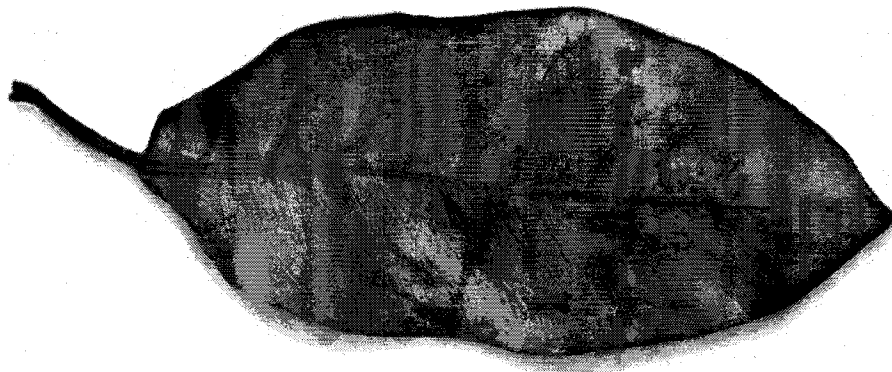
I am left now less spanless
With no urge to make foretellings
For no old dreams are left to take me out of time
... And, of men and events—
No concepts need precognition
(Form comes as a magnificent mystery discovered;
Without illusion)

I see as seeing is—
And all my aspirations
Shall be attained
Moment to moment.

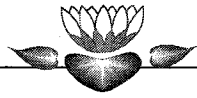
My only desire is hungerless.
The Grace, the Peace—
Alive, active and conscious,
Growing free.

No moon is sightless ivory—
No beam is darkly silver-marked.

—Gene Maslow



Leaf scan by Vishnubhai.



FICTION

The story of Ebenezer: The bird who wanted to walk

by Michael Miovic

Once upon a time there was a little greenish-black bird named Ebenezer who lived in San Francisco. Eb was a quiet fellow with yellowish eyes. He wasn't very strong and he wasn't very pretty, but there was one thing special about Ebenezer: he liked to walk. He climbed up trees and crawled through bushes. He scooted across intersections and ran between people's feet. Sometimes he even went jogging by the sea—and it was a long walk to get there!

Now naturally all the other little black birds made fun of Ebenezer. They thought he was stupid for trying to walk. "Ha, ha, ha," one bird would say, "look at silly Ebenezer running around like an idiot. He should be using his wings instead of his feet."

"No he shouldn't," another bird would answer back, "he should be using his head! Ha-ha-ha." And then all the birds would laugh and fall out of the tree because it was so funny.

But Ebenezer didn't pay any attention to the birds who made fun of him. He just concentrated on walking. Every weekend he went to the park, or downtown, to watch all the people walk. And what wonderful walks they had! Eb saw sad walks and happy bounces; worried stiff shuffles and purposeful strides; aimless kicks, and hilarious trips, and a whole lot more. Not to mention, of course, the ladies who teeter-tottered on high heels and the men who competed for the coolest swagger!

Eb admired all these people. Here's what he said to himself: "Human beings are the most beautiful creatures in the world. There's something special about the way they walk. They seem so comfortable and connected to the Earth. They're graceful. I like to watch them lounge on benches—or saunter down the street—or shift back and forth in front of a shopping window. I wish I could walk like a human being."

Eb liked people so much that he always went walking with them. At rush hour he would go out to the bus stops or subway stations to race along with all the thousands of feet. Together they would climb stairs, and jump over puddles, and stampede down sidewalks. It was thrillingly exciting. Eb even learned how to use the red and green lights to cross streets. He was very proud of how well he could walk.

Unfortunately, though, no one else appreciated what a good walker Eb was. None of the people he walked with seemed to notice him, and all the other little black birds just made fun of him. What Ebenezer longed for was a little respect—you know, some recognition, maybe even a compliment or two.

So one day Eb came up with a plan: he was going train real hard and then he would challenge all the birds in his flock to a race—him running, them flying. Then he would show them a thing or two!

Eb started workouts in the beginning of spring. Every day he was up at the crack of dawn, training like a demon. He did stretches, push-ups, short sprints, agility exercises, and aerobics. Then he had a quick lunch, rested a bit, and in the afternoon he went long-distance running until after dark. Even though his muscles ached so much sometimes that he wanted to cry, he made himself keep on going.

Pretty soon the birds in his flock noticed a change in Ebenezer. He seemed possessed. There was an intent, furious look in his eyes, and his mind seemed to be in another world. Summer passed, and autumn, too, and Eb was still acting like a maniac. The November rains came, and the cold winds, but nothing kept Eb from his training.

Then one chilly morning in the beginning of winter, the mean birds decided they'd had just about enough of crazy Ebenezer. They had a meeting and hatched a plot. It went like this: they were going to tell Ebenezer that the whole flock was flying south for the winter. Ebenezer wouldn't believe them, because little greenish-black birds don't fly south for the winter—but then they would surprise him and really do it. They would all fly south to San Jose and leave Ebenezer to live or die on his own.

That very afternoon, while Ebenezer was eating lunch, the big, mean leader of the flock swooped down from the sky and knocked Ebenezer off his feet. "Hey Heby-Eby," he said in a taunting voice, "hope you're in good shape by now, 'cause we're all flying south to San Jose for the winter. Bye!" Then the leader called to the flock and they lifted into the sky.

But Eb was ready for a fight. "Well why don't you just do that?" he yelled after the nasty birds, "and you better fly fast, 'cause I'm gonna beat you there!"

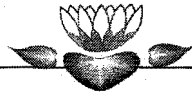
After that Ebenezer didn't waste a moment. He took off through the city at break-neck speed. It was amazing. People screamed and jumped off the sidewalk as he sped by; he was running so fast that he ripped up their shoes with his sharp little talons as he zoomed over their feet.

From downtown San Francisco Eb turned onto the entrance ramp for freeway 101, heading south toward San Jose. He'd already practiced this hundreds of times before, so he knew what to do. He accelerated up to 55 miles per hour, and merged into the freeway. The wind whipped at his face and body so hard that it made him squint his yellowish eyes.

As Eb sped along on Freeway 101, soon the birds in his flock spotted him from above. "What the-?" they all squawked at once, "it's that twerp Ebenezer! We're not stopping in San Jose, we're going to keep on going until he drops dead!"

Now the race was really on. Of course most of the birds didn't last long, because they weren't in very good shape. Soon after San Jose they started to wheeze and flutter and drop dead from the sky.

But not Ebenezer. He kept going strong. By evening it was just him against the biggest and meanest birds in the flock. They



raced on through the darkness, heading south toward San Diego.

Meanwhile down on the highway, you can imagine the sensation Ebenezer was causing. At first he was running over by the shoulder of the road. But as he saw the flock one by one fall from the sky, he started to gain confidence. Every mile he ran made him feel stronger. Presently he pulled out into the middle of the road and started to run right in front of the cars! Drivers spotted Eb in their headlights and cried out in amazement.

"Holy moly," said Samuel Johnson to his wife, "do you see what I see?" Virginia answered back sweetly, "why yes I do dear, and isn't it lovely?"

Sam shook his head and wiped his brow. "I've been drivin' for 54 years," he said, "and I ain't never seen nothin' like this. You know, I've gotta say: it's things like this that make our country great."

"Why yes it is," said beautiful Virginia, "I'm so proud of our birds."

Too bad Ebenezer didn't have time to stop for compliments now! As he passed by Los Angeles, in the glowing sky of that city he saw that only the leader of the flock was still in the race. Eb yelled out a challenge to his enemy: "Last one to San Diego is a rotten egg!" Then he stepped on the gas, so to say.

Just a few miles outside of San Diego, the big, mean leader disappeared from the sky. No one knows whether he lived or died. But one thing is certain—he sure lost that race.

Although Eb could have stopped running at this point, he didn't. He wanted to feel the cool air rushing through his feathers and see the road speeding by under his feet. It was sheer joy. All his troubles were gone now. Everything felt easy. The world was a floating dream; it was like flying—only better, much, much better!

So Ebenezer zoomed straight past San Diego and kept on going. Faster and faster he went, and faster still. Then he was going so fast that he actually broke the speed limit. He felt inspired. This was the greatest moment of his whole life!

Alas, little Eb's moment of glory was not so great as far as the police were concerned. When Sergeant Smasher clocked Eb at 75 miles per hour on his radar machine, he decided it was time to give Eb a ticket. "We don't mind you using our roads, little birdy," the Sergeant said to himself, "but if you want to speed like a person then you'll have to pay like a person, too!" With that the Sergeant switched on his siren and started to chase Ebenezer.

When Eb saw the police lights flashing behind him and heard the wailing of the sirens, he gulped. "No, this isn't supposed to happen now!" he cried out loud, "Not to me!"

But in the next moment Eb had a splendid idea. "Why, I'll just outrun him," he thought, "that's what I'll do. If I can only get to Mexico, I'll be home free." So then Eb hurled forward with all his might.

And let me tell you that Eb was glorious, he was indeed. He dusted that nasty old Sergeant Smasher, left him behind eating smoke. To this day people from down by the border tell the story of the fireball they saw blazing across the desert late one night. It was a small, greenish-black flame with yellowish eyes, they say,

and fast as hell. Some people think it was a UFO, though we all know it was Ebenezer.

Pretty soon Eb spotted the border. There it was up ahead. He could see the lights of the checkpoint and the hills of Tijuana in the background. He figured he'd run right under the gate and never come back. Now there was just one last bend between himself and Mexico. He dug in and ran for his dear little life.

And that's when IT happened. As Eb zoomed into that last, long curve of road before the beginning of all of Latin America, suddenly a flood of blinding lights lit up the sky. I don't know how it came to be, but a Thing, a Monster, a veritable metal dinosaur on wheels came hurtling across the freeway and ran right over Ebenezer. It was a Mack Truck. Eighteen wheels and 32 tons of steel and cargo came pounding down on little Eb's back. You can imagine what became of Ebenezer:

He was smashed. Flattened. Crushed. Destroyed. Shredded. Creamed. Plastered. Pureed. Rubbed out. Ground to dust. Vaporized. Knocked back into the Stone Age. Smacked into oblivion. Blown to smithereens. Turned into a pancake, obliterated, decimated, liquefied, totally annihilated! Eb was pummeled into a black and red road-pizza topped with two yellowish eyes! It was terrible, a tragedy.

Of course it took Ebenezer a while to figure out what had happened. He was moving so fast when he was hit that his soul was knocked out of his body and kept on going. It wasn't until many moments later, when he looked down and saw that his body was gone, that Eb finally realized he had been run over. He stopped and went back to the site of the accident. There wasn't much left of his body. His remnants were thinner than a sheet of paper.

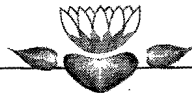
Eb hovered around his ex-body all night long, wondering what to do. He hoped that his body would magically spring back to life, like in the cartoons on TV. But it never did.

Slowly the sky grew grey and dawn came. Then it turned into a beautiful morning. The sun was shining and the birds were all singing. All of a sudden, Eb was filled with a tremendous feeling of peace, a peace so deep and soft that he thought he was falling into a white down pillow that kept getting deeper and softer as it sagged, but never reached bottom. Here at last he could let go of all his worries and sink into silent repose.

"After all," he said to himself, "I've had a good life. I've come a long way and I've learned a lot. I defeated the big, mean birds, and I proved that I can walk with people. I have done everything that I wanted to do. And who knows, maybe one day people will even remember me as the little bird who walked like a man. I deserve a good rest."

So with that our little friend Ebenezer caught a ray of sunshine and walked up it into the brilliant white light of eternity. It felt like coming home to a very loving and gentle mother, where everything is safe and taken care of. He rested in this perfect peace for awhile, and in his next life was reborn as Samantha, the cat who wanted to swim. But that is another story altogether.

Michael Miovic is an M.D. living in Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts.



NOTES FROM THE FIELD

Babaji's talk: An interview with Sri Ramkrishnadas

by Vishnubhai Eschner

Sri Ramkrishnadas, (known as Babaji) is a revered elder sadhak who has lived in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry for over 50 years. This conversation took place on October 14 and 15, 1994. The answers have been translated from the original Oriya.

A small, nondescript wooden door opens and takes me from the sunlit, noisy, Pondicherry street into a dim hallway. Passing through the hallway, I step outside again, but into another world. The harsh sunlight is now filtered by trees and cooled in the towering shade of whitewashed walls speckled with tiny windows which give glimpses into myriad mysterious rooms. Somewhere, water is running. Somewhere above me I catch low snatches of conversation. Somewhere, a woman sings melodiously and quietly.

I sit on a bench briefly, then a screen door is opened and a woman gestures to me—"come." I had asked for this interview, and so I am expected.

Babaji's room is small—no, tiny—yet I easily find a place to sit on the carpet amidst four or five meditating people who shift slightly to accommodate me. Nothing else stirs for a few moments and I am aware of the omnipresent sounds of auto horns drifting into the single window along with the sunlight.

On the walls surrounding me are pictures tacked upon pictures—of the Mother, of Sri Aurobindo, Hanuman, Sri Ram. Every calendar ever printed by the Ashram must be up there somewhere.

Babaji sits in a corner, on a small stool. As I watch him, I am again impressed by the absence of dark motives showing in the lines of his face. It is as though his expressions are only various shades of delight, and his face reflects the happy peace of a child. He nods and a young woman tells me I should ask my questions.

I know from a previous visit that his answers will challenge my narrowness—my sophisticated, educated western mind rejects apparently simple interpretations of the Integral Yoga.

Can I remember that his answers come not from books, but from more than 50 years of inward focus on Sri Aurobindo and Mother, and that, out of humility, he only reluctantly agreed to answer my questions—on the off chance that someone in America might be helped? Can I look past the intellectual preconditions I have imposed upon the teachings of Sri Aurobindo, and find those teachings wide enough to encompass the full spectrum of human experience without contradiction?

Collaboration: *These days among American devotees of Sri Aurobindo, I see a lot of interest in the supramental transformation. What should we understand about the transformation?*

Sri Ramkrishnadas: There are three aspects of God: The Being, the Nonbeing, and above these, the Purushottama, which is known as Satchidananda, the Supreme Divine. By the old traditional yogas, the first two aspects, the Being and Nonbeing, the personal and impersonal, have been realized. But not the satchidananda Purushottama, which can only be realized in the supramental consciousness. All three aspects of the Divine—the Personal, the Impersonal, and the transcendent Satchidananda—can be simultaneously realized by following the path of Sri Aurobindo's yoga to the supermind.

In the beginning there was nothing but God, and God was only One; then He decided to manifest the creation. All that we see now—trees, plants, rivers, animals—all these things were not there in the beginning. When the Divine decided to create the world, He divided Himself into the creation, into the upper and lower hemispheres.

In the upper hemisphere all is divinity. There is no death, no illness or old age, no suffering—only the Divine realms exist there. While here in the lower hemisphere of the creation there is just the opposite; here we have old age, suffering, disease and death, depression and sorrow, ignorance and unconsciousness. But also, here is the place of evolution. In the upper divine hemisphere there is no evolution; but this lower hemisphere of the creation exists for this possibility of evolution, so that it can rise and be transformed into its divine counterpart.

In the beginning of the creation there was only darkness. Gradually sand and stone—matter—evolved. Next, life evolved as the vital *prana* in plants, and when the vital was completely manifested in the animals, only then did the development of the mind become established on earth in the form of human beings.

The human being has a body, vital and mind. But, here in the lower hemisphere, these elements of his nature have the qualities of ego, jealousy, sex urge, depression, laziness, anger, bad thoughts and so on. When the human being becomes very strong in his vital, it often happens he is influenced and guided more and more by these ignorant powers, and eventually can himself become an *asura* [incarnated power of falsehood—ed.] Even when this happens and the asuric powers rise and dominate, evolution must still go on. So, in order to rid the earth of asuras and hasten the evolutionary process, the Divine takes birth on this earth.

Today, the development of the mind, vital, and body of the human being in the evolution is complete. The sign of this completion is the general loss of morality in humans. The morality that was guiding the people is a mental principle, constructed by the mind. It has failed because a higher light than that of the mind is now needed. Therefore Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have taken birth—they have brought down the supramental consciousness upon the earth so that, by the action of that Force, the



When we are born in another family in the next life, we cannot even set foot in our old house. It never belonged to us, but to the Mother.

mental, vital and physical nature of the human being will be transformed into divine mind, divine vital, and divine body.

As animals are still here on the earth in the course of the mental evolution, so will human beings still be here when the superhuman race is realized. When that time comes, the divine world of the upper hemisphere will be established here on earth and there will be no death, no suffering, no illness or old age. All human beings now on earth want to be free of these things—whether they are sadhaks or not, they are searching. As long as its time had not yet come, nobody was conscious of this new aim, but now that the mind's evolution is complete and Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have brought down the supramental consciousness on the earth, people are becoming conscious of it, and the evolution can proceed beyond Mind. As human beings begin to understand the purpose of life and accept to hasten the evolutionary process through the practice of yoga, then gradually their whole human nature will be transformed.

In life at this stage in the world, no one is completely or constantly happy; all humanity is subject to suffering which is the consequence of those qualities inherent in our mind, vital, and body—ego, lust, anger, jealousy, laziness and so on. These qualities can fully be transformed by the supramental consciousness and nothing else. It is by the yoga of transformation and by surrendering to the supramental consciousness that one's nature will be transformed here in the body on the earth.

The moment one sincerely accepts the yoga and the personal effort of aspiration, rejection and surrender, then he remains in a true and lasting happiness—because surrender means that all that we are, all that we have, now belongs to the Mother. Always we are in her presence and she is doing everything for us. If, along with the surrender, the sadhak invokes the divine Mother by the practice of namajapa [repetition of the divine Name] *Ma Ma Ma* with strong determination, then the transformation will go ahead more swiftly and surely.

C: What about the many other paths of yoga and the people following these other paths?

SR: Those who are doing sadhana of the traditional paths are leaving behind the body, vital and mind. Individually they are progressing and doing sadhana, but everything in the world remains the same, unchanged. Sri Aurobindo's yoga is not like that of the old yogas. It is a collective yoga—while the old yogas are individual yogas, aiming at the liberation of the individual. By the practice of Sri Aurobindo's collective yoga, eventually the entire earth consciousness will be transformed. As the number of people doing this transformation increases, the world atmosphere will also change; and when this change is complete, the earth will be transformed into the divine world of the upper hemisphere. It will be the fulfillment of the Supreme's decision in the beginning to create this world in order to establish the divine life on earth.

By accepting this yoga with sincerity and surrender, the sadhak realizes a true and lasting happiness, just like a child in the sheltering arms of its mother. All the child's problems are solved by the mother. When one accepts this yoga, one surrenders oneself to the Mother and at each step she takes all the responsibility of one's life and sadhana.

(Smiling.)

Now you can ask any question to clear all your doubts.

C: Some people in the West are interested in the transformation of the body. They want a program or exercises, something to do for that aim.

SR: Those who are interested in this body transformation should do continuous namajapa to invoke the Mother's Force—the simple and direct way is to repeat Mother's name: *Ma Ma Ma*, either out loud or silently with the lips or the tongue. They also have to accept that the aim of their life is to realize the Divine in the transformed mind, vital, and body.

By accepting this aim of life and continuously repeating the Mother's name, one surrenders and opens one's whole nature to the transforming action of her force. Only then will the body's transformation happen. As the number of individuals that accept this collective yoga increases, the faster the work of transformation will go on. The complete transformation will definitely happen, there is no doubt about it, but it will take time.

There is a saying from the *Tulsidas Ramayan*—just as butter cannot be pressed out of earth, as oil cannot be pressed out of sand, happiness cannot come out of life without surrendering to the Divine.

C: Many times I have prayed and surrendered, and also contacted a quiet mind inside, but it does not remain with me. What is the best way to quiet the mind?

SR: The way to keep the mind in silence is to become conscious of the aim of life and go on repeating continuously *Ma Ma Ma*. While meditating, you repeat Mother's name and think and feel that, "Mother is with me, always Mother is with me, helping



me, protecting me." When you have made it a habit during meditation, then gradually silence of the mind will come and concentration will also come. It will take some time, but you have to make it a regular habit. At first you will have only a few minutes of silence, five or ten minutes perhaps, but gradually it will increase and the mind will automatically become silent.

C: *What does it mean, "to become conscious of the aim of life"?*

SR: It means to remember that the aim of life is to realize the Divine in a transformed mind, vital, and body. One must also remember that the method of sadhana is through aspiration, rejection and surrender.

To have silence in the mind, one should speak only what is absolutely essential. Many times we speak unnecessarily and that disturbs the silence.

C: *That is difficult for me.*

SR: You must make a strong determination, a strong promise. Then you will speak less.

C: *Many people who are studying Sri Aurobindo's writings and practicing the yoga are householders. Do you have any suggestions for householders who want to practice the yoga?*

SR: Those who live as householders should realize that all that is theirs belongs, in truth, to the Mother. Whatever they have, including the family members, including their own selves, belongs to the Mother. The proof of this is that when one leaves the body, he takes another birth in another family that is different from the last one, and has no claim on the old family.

For example, we keep our money in the bank. Now when we die and are born into another family, we cannot claim a single *paisa* of this former money of ours. In truth it is never ours, we are only the trustee of this money during our lifetime. Similarly, if we construct a house in one lifetime, when we are born in another family in the next life, we cannot even set foot in our old house. All these things in truth never belonged to us, but to the Mother.

That is why householders should remember and realize that all the household possessions, all the family members—including they themselves, belong to the Mother, and that they have to work in the family, in the household, as a service to the Divine. Child care, cooking, looking after a sick family member, the elderly, earning money to support the family, all this is to be done in service to the Divine.

C: *Can Americans do yoga in this way? Will this further the work in America?*

SR: Whether one is from America, from East or West, it doesn't matter. The truth is the same for everyone to follow. Only by surrendering to the divine Mother will they discover true and lasting happiness.

C: *If people are unwilling, or unable, to completely surrender, can they still make progress?*

SR: It is not the outer surrendering, it is the inner attitude that must change. It is a true fact that everything belongs to the Divine . . . it is not a dream or imagination. If we understand this and live accordingly, then we can remain in happiness and the household will turn into the household of the Divine.

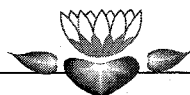
C: *In his writings, Sri Aurobindo has placed much emphasis on renouncing the family outwardly—no sexual life, no marriage, and so on. How can householders practice the yoga?*

SR: This yoga of Sri Aurobindo is for all who are called, whatever their walk of life. Those in whom the soul has decided to leave family life, will spontaneously do so. Then they cannot indulge in those things which will not help their sadhana. Otherwise, those whose souls have decided to remain in the family will find that they cannot leave the family. They will stay and do the sadhana there.

Vishnubhai Eschner lives and works in Lodi, California. He has been to Pondicherry twice: in 1992 and 1994.



The Mother



The C.C.E. Conference Planning Group: (top row) Wayne Bloomquist, Lynne Santore, Kailas, David Fiedler, (seated) Richard, Mikael, Ariel Browne, Bhaga.

Center holds conference on cellular evolution

by Ariel Brown, Phd.

An eight page description of the Cellular Evolution Conference organized by Wayne Bloomquist and Ariel Brown, including a reprint of the full schedule, is available from The Center for Cellular Evolution, (CCE). Contact: Dr. Wayne Bloomquist at CCE, 1780 Highland Place, Berkeley, CA 94709. Telephone: 510-848-1838.

The second international Cellular Evolution Conference, entitled *Divine Life In The Process Of Evolution*, was held this year at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry, India, January 31–February 7, 1998. It was sponsored by the Center for Cellular Evolution of Berkeley, California, co-founded by Wayne Bloomquist, Ph.D. and Ariel Browne, Ph.D. in 1995, to present the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother to a wider audience, with emphasis on the aspect of physical transformation and the fundamental unit of the body, the cell.

The Center for Cellular Evolution supports the view that the writings and teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother are inseparable. The Mother's experiences of cellular transformation were

an attempt at fulfillment of the Integral Yoga. It is our belief the Mother pioneered this process in Her own body so that others could follow and build upon Her work.

Conferences and programs sponsored by CCE hold that fundamental and prior to the attempt of transformation one must proceed with purification of the mental-vital being for equanimity along with an opening in the heart center (psychic being).

The conference sponsored by CCE in India was a singularly international event. Presenters, registrants and attendees came from every part of the world. Many visitors to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and Pondicherry attended as well as Aurovilians and Ashramites.

About thirty-five registrants came from the United States and Canada. Several attendees came from Europe, Africa, Australia, China and India. It is likely that far more countries were represented than were noted—our sign-in system at the huge Ashram Theatre left something to be desired. Many people walked in and attended parts of presentations without registering. Manoj Das Gupta, one of the Ashram trustees, suggested we post the conference schedule and announcement on the bulletin board in the main Ashram building. Thanks to this, many visitors to the Ashram knew about the conference.

By all reports, the conference was a resoundingly successful event. It climaxed a difficult year-long planning process carried out by telephone, e-mail and conventional mail between the Center



for Cellular Evolution (Wayne Bloomquist) in Berkeley, Aur-ien-tation Integral Healing Center (Ariel Browne) in Atlanta and the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and Auroville in India. With the months' long help of several dedicated servers in Auroville and the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, the event kept building, albeit on a sometimes bumpy route. Without those helpers in India—primary among whom was Shyam Kumari, long-time devotee and author—the conference would not have occurred.

The conference proper went from January 31 through February 5, with a tour of the Ashram the first day. Conference presentations were held at the Ashram Theatre on Rue Suffren in Pondicherry in the morning and afternoon. Evenings were left free

so conference attendees could rest and integrate themselves with the Ashram.

The last two days of the conference were elective, post-conference experiences, in Auroville. Although some conference registrants were suffering exhaustion by that time, those who attended found Auroville wonderful. Our Auroville hosts were marvels of information and enlightenment regarding the many facets of Auroville's life, history, and transformational/evolutionary effect on India and the world. Joss and Anita at Pitchandikulam Forest gave a wonderful tour on "re-vitalization of natural healing using native plants" to half our group and provided a marvelous lunch in their forest kitchen while Bhaga took the rest of conferees on a tour of the Laboratory of Evolution

Presenters and Presentations for the Cellular Evolution Conference

from Auroville

Bhaga

Continuity of Cellular Transformation between Sri Aurobindo and The Mother

Mother's Comments on Similar Experiences in Others

Mikael Spector

Transformational Dance in the Body's Shift to Integral Consciousness

from the Sri Aurobindo Ashram

Richard and Kailas

Cellular Transformation in Terms of Mother and Sri Aurobindo's Yoga Through Flowers

Kailas

Experiences of Sri Aurobindo & The Mother's Help in Transformation of The Being

Shyam Kumari

Cellular Transformation According to the Mother

from South Africa

Dr. Felicity Edwards

Participating in Reality: Transformation in the Present Time

from the United States

Elizabeth Hin

Spiritual and Occult Aspects of Cellular Transformation with Regard to Sri Aurobindo and The Mother's Works and Prototypes

Dr. Charlotte Smith

An Invitation to the Source to Descend

Transformational Imagery: Healing Processes for Bodily Discomforts and Diseases

David Prakash Fiedler

Breath and Word in Transformation of Body and Life

Dr. Ariel Browne

WELL CELL-Cellular Communication for Self-Healing: cell-conscious breathing, cellular meditation, soul realization, bio-cellular guidance C-touch

Dr. Wayne Bloomquist

Evolution of Sadhana in Integral Yoga

One of the conference attendees, Dr. Venketaswamy, founder of Aravind Eye Hospital in Madurai, India has suggested that the Conference presentations be published by the Center for Cellular Evolution as monographs. CCE is working toward that end. Those who are interested should contact CCE in Berkeley, CA at 510-848-1838 or e-mail Ariel Browne at: arielb@mindspring.com or Wayne Bloomquist at: calcutta98@hotmail.com



ESSAYS

and Bharat Nivas; Bill Sullivan, author of *The Dawning of Auroville*, toured us at Center for Scientific Research and provided lunch at Auroville's new Solar Kitchen; Bhavana received us at Kottakarai, giving us her inimitable history of the Village Action project and Jacques, Auroville's dentist, toured us through his innovative and impressive dental facility at New Creation. The Aurovillian presenters, all long-time residents, illuminated us regarding Auroville's aspiration.



Dr. Felicity Edwards of South Africa presents at the Cellular Evolution Conference in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Theater.

The Center for Cellular Evolution is immensely grateful to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, with special thanks to Manoj Das Gupta, for the help and facilitation it provided the Conference. It was a life-changing, transformational experience for those who attended. We are also grateful to each and every presenter who gave so much to the conference by bringing his/her insights, help and unique presentation. The presentations were excellent and, together made an evocative "whole" which further represents and explores the yoga of the cells and the Mother and Sri Aurobindo's continued efforts to bring about the new being and a new consciousness. It is clear, when we reflect on these experiences that, as one Ashramite put it, "Mother and Sri Aurobindo are alive, doing their work and we are part of it." Our conference was, in a sense, a provocation of the splendour and numinous mystery of the psychic being coming forward into our conscious experience in being. We opened and stepped into the high risk space of faith in her, and That, searching for her presence in the apparently small and humble cells which were, in the conscious actuality, immensely and continually responsive and communicative in the body of the conference; she was and is embodied, although our measure of it is awkward and inadequate. Yet are we called, and compelled, to attempt. The benefits are immeasurably rich and we are still, and will be, discovering them in our beings for years to come.

CCE is planning a brief mini-workshop in Atlanta on October, 9-10, 1998. For more information, contact CCE at 510-848-1838.

The Integral Yoga: Practice and Experience, Part 1

by Manoj Das

This is a transcript of the talk given by Manoj Das to the All USA Meeting (AUM) held at The Pathworks Center, Phoenicia, New York, July 25 1997.

Greetings to you from Sri Aurobindo Ashram. I believe this is an audience with which I can be very frank. I thank Tom O'Brien and Julian for having invited me, and I hope that they will understand me when I very frankly say that when they gave me the theme of the conference, "The Integral Yoga: Practice and Experience," I was a little uncertain.

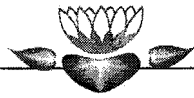
The tradition of yoga goes back thousands of years, but so far as the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo is concerned, it is not even a century old. And practically we all are half-generation sadhakas of Integral Yoga. Is it time, have we done sufficiently what we understand as the yoga to exchange even our experiences or experience our ideas about the practice of this yoga? Is it not a fact that these yogic experiences, like all mystic experiences, have to be closely guarded secrets of the individual?

When I was wondering about this issue, a very senior friend of mine told me, "Look here Manoj, these people, who have decided on the subject, are as sincere devotees of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother as you and I are. If they believe that this is an issue on which some exchange of experiences should take place, you should do your best, that's all. You cannot undo what has been done, and certainly perhaps this discussion has a role to play in the life of the individual seeker." I immediately accepted, and I gave the subject, in the light of the theme decided for the conference, Integral Yoga in practice: *Opportunities and Obstacles*, or *Possibilities and Obstacles*.

I am delighted to spend it with you today because I personally believe that nothing is an accident in this world. I do not remember who was the philosopher who said, "chance is the pseudonym of God which he uses when he does not want to put down his signature." So many of us might have come to Sri Aurobindo through many different chance occurrences in life happenings, but all these chances are God's pseudonyms, he does not very easily want to reveal his signature.

I also feel delighted that when I remembered this morning those famous lines of Savitri which I am sure all of you remember,

Few shall seek what none yet understand
God shall grow up while wise men talk and sleep
For belief shall be not till the work is done



And I am happy that few is a relative term, but you are among the world's few who have tried to know what many yet do not understand.

Is it not a fact that these yogic experiences, like all mystic experiences, have to be closely guarded secrets of the individual?

The integral yoga

Coming to Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga, why is it integral? Let us be very clear about it. It is integral primarily because it has an integral approach to the human being. Practically all the major schools of yoga in ancient India or elsewhere, they have concentrated on the inner relationship between one's inner spirit—call it soul or call it anything, dimension of our being—and the Divine. Sri Aurobindo viewed man as a total being and no aspect of the human being can be outside the influence or the *vibhuti*, the power of yoga.

Hence, because he viewed man as a total being consisting of his body, his emotional or vital being, his mind, and last but not least his soul, that is the first reason why his yoga is Integral. Because it believes that for the ultimate triumph of spirituality, the whole human being has to be a godward creature, the whole human being has to come, including the most crude aspects of his body and emotional being, under the influence of the divine, and be transformed. And that is the first reason why this yoga is integral.

It is also integral because it removes the dichotomy, the iron wall that had been constructed by mystics of the centuries, that wall between the so-called mundane life and spiritual life. Consciously or unconsciously most people believe, even when they turn to Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga, that there is something, a certain time of life that must be devoted to yoga, and the rest for "un-yogic" activities.

Sri Aurobindo believes there is nothing in this life which we can experience... nothing in this world which we can experience... which cannot be turned into an opportunity for our yogic progress, for our inner life's opportunity to come out and tackle the situation, whether in the individual life, family life, political life, social life, or in the exclusive meditative life which one might lead. Integral because the whole life is yoga according to Sri Aurobindo.

In the glorious tradition of yoga in the world, there have been several major schools of development and each school of yoga has emphasized certain goals to be achieved. Take jnana yoga, the yoga of knowledge, it believes that our ultimate salvation lies in knowing the supreme reality at the exclusion of everything else that distracts us from our knowledge of the supreme reality. Hence we should concentrate on gathering, accumulating, more and more

knowledge, and that knowledge is not the knowledge of the external world, but the knowledge of the inner self, knowledge of the consciousness, my own consciousness to begin with, and from there to proceed to the consciousness in its entirety, which embraces the creation, which embraces everything that has manifested, and what remains beyond manifestation. So consciousness as myself the individual, consciousness as the manifestation, consciousness that transcends it. The knowledge of this was the essential trait of jnana yoga.

People believe in bhakti, the yoga of devotion, the yoga of love, because it is only love which makes it possible to be identified with the object of love. The *prema* yogis and the bhakta yogis will always say, despite all the jnana I can acquire of the object of my seeking, call it God or reality, I still remain separate from him—it is only when I love Him, it is only when I adore Him, I come closer to Him, and the process of identification becomes possible, and really becomes a reality, only through this stream of yoga.

And then there are karma yogis, they would ask a very interesting question: "What is this world, what are we? We are all results of God in action. God is at work, had he not worked, this manifested universe would not have come into existence, I would not be there and he would not be there. Since God himself is a worker and continuing to work, the best way of realizing him, of becoming one with him, is to participate in action as his instrument, under his inspiration, karma yoga."

Now all these three yogas have been sometimes at war with one another. Never in the history of spirituality has a more compassionate consciousness than Sri Aurobindo come down to see, to place all these great streams of yoga in their proper perspective, and to render them objectively and to show that none of them contradicts another. Each yoga has a truth of its own, and this great consciousness which presented an elaborate synthesis of all these essential characteristics and goals of all these little schools of yoga. And he formulated certain principles which might sound very simple, and when we have put these principles into practice we will see that the essential goal of all the little schools of yoga are spontaneously realized to be these things. And you all know that. They are the principles of aspiration, rejection, and surrender. All those who practice Integral Yoga, following these three principles, in no time they realize that they are simultaneously doing jnana yoga, karma yoga, and bhakti yoga.

Aspiration

Let us still more clearly see what is this aspiration, how it is different from our natural urge for doing something, from our ambition. Well, ambition is nothing but an expression of aspiration through our ignorance. When I want to project myself as someone as big before you, as someone who is worldly before you, someone who is more famous, I am working out my ambition. When this ambition, by the touch of grace, is turned into an urge to prove myself worthy before the eyes of the divine, not before any human eye, not before the eye of society, it is aspiration.



There is of course a story from the life of Gautama Buddha, but the story really illustrates what is aspiration, and why we cannot develop it in someone by our preaching. Two thousand and five hundred years ago, or maybe more, during the last phase of his missionary life—because Gautama Buddha in Indian tradition was practically the first one to preach his doctrine with missionary zeal, the second great one to do that was Shankaracharya—Buddha, when he was preaching his doctrine, sometimes people did not grant him even a little sympathetic hearing, not even some shelter from the terrible north Indian summer.

One such day, when in a certain village, every house had refused him shelter, he went outside the village, and sat down under a Banyan tree. There were three or four of his ardent disciples with him. Suddenly, as Buddha was sweating, and someone was fanning him, Buddha observed a young disciple in tears. He asked him, what happened to you. The boy said, “My lord, these villages may be an ignorant lot, but I know, I know two aspects of your life, you are a prince, and now you are the enlightened one. Had you continued to be a prince, at this hour of the day you would be relaxing in one of the pavilions built by your father next to a lake, being fanned by beautiful damsels. But as the enlightened one, my question is, why don’t you grant enlightenment directly, straight away, to all these ignorant people, and why do you knock on doors day after day, month after month, year after year, trying to work them up?”

Buddha did not say anything, he just smiled his compassionate smile, soothing the disturbed emotions of this disciple. A month later, this situation was repeated. Once again Buddha was refused shelter, and was relaxing underneath a Banyan tree, and called the boy near and said, “My boy, I will be here until sundown. Visit this nearest village, and try to ascertain from all the householders, the leaders of each household, what would make them die with a sense of satisfaction. When the last moment comes, what achievement in their life would give them the assurance that they can die peacefully without any worry. I will wait for you.”

The young man went, and returned by sundown. And he said, “My master, I interviewed a hundred households. Fifty of them said that they would die happily if they knew that they gathered enough wealth for their children to live happily. Twenty of them said that they would die happily if certain litigations that were hanging in the king’s court were resolved in their favor. Ten of them said that they would die happily if they could see their boys or girls married happily. The rest said that they were suffering from some incurable diseases. If they were cured of their diseases, they would die happily.” Buddha asked, “How many of them said that they would be happy if they were enlightened, at the moment of death, that they could die with the satisfaction that they were enlightened?” And the disciple said, “None, my lord, none.” Buddha said, “That explains the level of God.”

This is something which you cannot impart to anybody, this is something which has to bloom of its own in the course of time, and life after life, individualized consciousnesses suffer. There are only two ways to grow, according to mystic philosophy. One

is the natural way, through whips of disenchantment and disillusionment in life which we gather through our experiences. Some experiences we just let go, we don’t learn anything from them, from some we learn, and these experiences are collected in our psychic being. (Buddha of course did not believe in the psychic being. I’m not going into Buddha’s ultimate philosophy, but his general practice of waiting for aspiration to grow and develop in individual souls.) Now, that happens either by lifetimes of accumulated experience, which obliges us to believe in a different set of values, rejecting the old set of values through which prakriti or the universal nature tries to keep us always under *avidya*, ignorance.

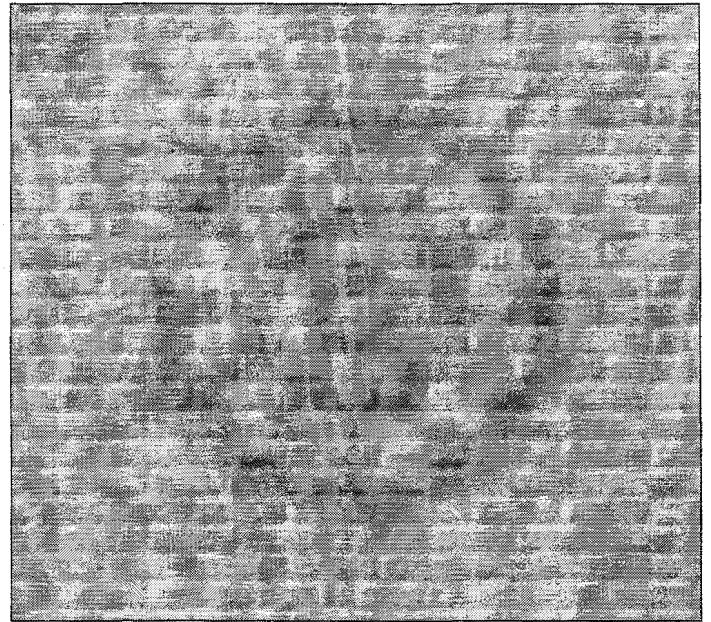
(quotes a Sanskrit verse)

We are born again and again, we die again and again, again we come back to the mother’s womb, again we are born. Mother nature in its lowest plane is quite happy with it. She wants that much, not the higher nature, not the higher prakriti. Prakriti has many planes.

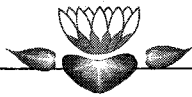
Now, aspiration is something which has to bloom either through these accumulated experiences of disenchantment and disillusionment, or, lucky are those who certainly believe, know there must be some other meaning in life. There must be some different value system in life.

[Part 2 of this article will appear in the next Collaboration.]

Manoj Das is a writer, a story-teller; he has even been a student radical, and maybe even gotten into a little trouble, which makes him even more endearing. His new book, The Hour of God, contains selections from Sri Aurobindo’s writings.



The Writing on the Wall. Computer art by Vishnubhai



A Girl with a Bow. Drawing by the Mother.

REVIEWS

Raising and educating children in the 21st century

by Jean Korstange

The Common Vision; Parenting and Educating for Wholeness, by David Marshak, Studies in the Postmodern Theory of Education, Vol. 48, Peter Lang, NY.

David Marshak is an assistant professor at Seattle University and author of The Common Vision: Parenting and Educating for Wholeness, in which he looks at the commonalities among Sri Aurobindo, Rudolf Steiner, and Hazrat Inayat Khan in terms of the nature of children and education. He has been an editor, has

I was astounded. Here in a matter of 72 pages I found all of my own knowledge of Sri Aurobindo and Mother's thinking on education.

developed curricula for the Unitarian Universalist Association of North America, and is cofounder of an alternative school. He will give a presentation at this year's All USA Meeting, AUM 98.

Few professional educators look to modern spiritual practices to find out what guidance is offered to parents and teachers for raising and educating children. David Marshak, a professor of education at Seattle University, examined the teachings and current educational practice of Steiner, Aurobindo and Inayat Khan with the goal of articulating a common vision of human growth, wholeness, and evolutionary change in order to offer suggestions for applying these ideas to current educational practice. Marshak believes that :

The way we raise and educate our young is the most powerful means we have to choose consciously to evolve through and beyond our current crisis. We can learn to nurture and educate our children in a way that differs profoundly from the norms of "modern" culture. And as we help our children to unfold into a more complete wholeness, we will also encourage our own mental, emotional, and spiritual growth as adults.

Marshak begins by pointing out the similarities and differences of the three disciplines as described by Steiner, Sri Aurobindo, and Inayat Khan. He points out how they concur on a common vision of human development that can inform our educational practice. He draws this shared vision through the description of the developmental stages of the human being from birth to age 21 as defined by each of these twentieth century spiritual leaders.

At first I thought this was superimposing the Piaget/Erickson human development paradigm onto these thinkers. By the end of the book I realized that he has taken what is for educators a common tool -- the developmental stages of the human being -- and used it to organize the concurring ideas of the three spiritual traditions. This is very useful for an audience of teachers and parents who may know of the human development framework, but might not have read any one of these philosophers. It allows all of us to consider how these ideas establish a common direction for nurturing and educating children.



After introducing each spiritual leader through a brief biographical sketch, Marshak explores in depth the guru's thinking on education through his writings and also his taking a visit to a site where disciples are engaged in implementing his unique vision. When I finished reading the fifth chapter, which is on the vision of Sri Aurobindo and the educational practices Marshak observed in the Ashram school in Pondicherry, I was astounded. Here in a matter of 72 pages I found all of my own knowledge of Sri Aurobindo and Mother's thinking on education, as well as a summary of the the central ideas needed to understand Sri Aurobindo's evolutionary vision of humanity. Marshak's observations of children at the Ashram Kindergarten and interviews of teachers and students at Knowledge (the higher course) revealed an educator who seeks to understand the philosophy, and practice of what was occurring. He has the ability to look through the disciples' eyes rather than the critical eyes of an outsider seeking to point to the failings of the disciples.

To my surprise and delight Marshak captured my experience and struggle with applying Sri Aurobindo's ideas to raising and educating children; how to allow children enough freedom for the inner voice to direct the child's activity? Does the child really need discipline or structure to direct their emotional, intellectual, and impulsive behavior? Marshak shows how Sri Aurobindo's concept of the psychic being is the goal of nurturing and educating the child for a future life that is qualitatively different from the way in which we currently live. Through his observations in the Ashram kindergarten and his interviews with students and teachers at Knowledge, he portrays how difficult this goal of developing the psychic in us really is.

The soul-searching of teachers and students in this portion of the book informs the reader that this may be the most challenging life one can take up. It demands that parent and teacher live that goal so as to inform their practice of nurture and education of the psychic being in self and child.

Marshak is sensitive, perceptive, and brief in his handling of three very complex modern spiritual paths. He shows tremendous respect for the value of the educational work being done by dedicated practitioners in each tradition. Typically I run across articles that seek to point out how practitioners of Sri Aurobindo, whether they live in the Ashram or Auroville, fail to realize his ideals. Here is a writer who portrays for his audience the struggle of the spiritual path and encourages them to join in because the current evolutionary crisis demands it.

I never expected to find a book by someone who hadn't lived in the Ashram or Auroville to capture the confounding ideas of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on education, but here it is. It leads me to think that if he has done this for Sri Aurobindo he has probably done it for Steiner and the Sufis as well. This book will help those of us involved in Aurobindonian methods of education to see that we are not unique. Others too struggle to nurture and educate for the spiritual evolution of the human being, not just for the world as we know it. Those of us who have worked with Sri Aurobindo's teaching to educate ourselves for the future evolution of the human species can use this book both to inform our own practice through

comparison to others and our methods for sharing our experience. The research and summarization of what has been achieved through these three spiritual paths to date is an excellent starting point for conversations among parents and teachers who want to further this process of nurturing the psychic being.

Jean Korstange lives and teaches in Vermont.

Inner peace, outer action

by Soleil

Kundun, the Martin Scorsese film of the Dalai Lama's life up to his exile to India after the genocidal occupation of Tibet by the Chinese.

Kundun was extraordinarily beautiful and powerful, touching the deepest yearning of my psychic heart, moving me to tears. The after-effect of this film followed me into my meditations and dreams. I felt such tenderness for the soul of the Dalai Lama and the great love that the Tibetan people placed in him as the "keeper" of their cultural and spiritual Sangha. I felt his purity, compassion, peace, and beauty even in the face of a ruthless invading power. And yet I could feel his pain and sorrow at what was happening despite his efforts to peacefully resolve the conflict.

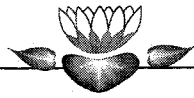
In the end, Tibet was swallowed up by the Chinese, and the Dalai Lama was forced to flee to India to save his own life and keep alive the inner flame of the Tibetan nation-soul.

After living with the experience that the film set off inside me, feeling inwardly all the best and noblest that the Dalai Lama represents, I turned again to our yoga and to the Mother and found myself saying: "How we wish that Tibet and the path of the Tibetan people could be free to manifest the true beauty of their culture." And yet I could not help but recognize the limitations of Peace alone, which Sri Aurobindo has clearly pointed out. For all the Dalai Lama's inner peace and poise, he could not prevent the takeover of his beloved Tibet. And today we find him turning to the West with its big guns and political muscle to "compensate" in the struggle to free Tibet. How necessary peace is—and yet it is not enough.

In my own sadhana, I come back again and again to the necessity of establishing inner peace as the basis for everything else. But it must be a real peace, an integral peace that denies nothing including the necessity to act -- even forcefully when such action is required. Otherwise the witness self can become the victim self.

For those who have the opportunity to see the film *Kundun*, I highly recommend it. I found it cathartic and transforming. It also made me very happy that there is a Tibetan Pavilion happening in Auroville.

Soleil lives in Ashland, Oregon, with her husband and child.



The great meaning

by Devan Nair

Beyond Man: The Life and Work of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother by Georges van Vrekhem.

I opened *Beyond Man* with a degree of skepticism. Two days of intensive reading found me offering inner salutations to its author Georges van Vrekhem. For this was truly groundbreaking work.

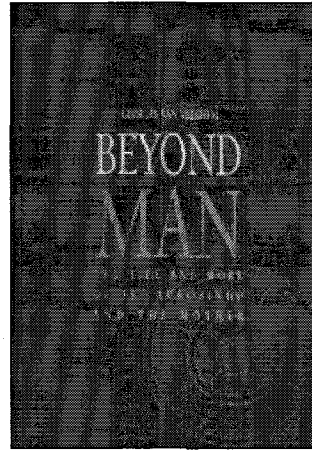
First, I might state that the edition of the book I review here is the Indian one. It is the author's own English version of the Dutch original first published in the Netherlands in 1995. Harper Collins Publishers, India, published this version in August 1997 for the Indian subcontinent. An American edition has just been published by Paragon House under an altered title, *Beyond The Human Species: the Life and Work of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother*.

I trust Paragon House will take pains to correct the far too numerous proofreading errors marring the Indian edition. Devoutly wished too is that their edition will include the convenience of an index. It is heartening to know that the Russian translation of the book is finished and its publication in Russia planned for this year. Meanwhile the book is being translated into French, German and Portuguese. A safe guess would be that eventually it will become available in several more languages.

Georges Van Vrekhem is a Flemish-speaking Belgian who has been living for 27 years in India, the first eight in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, the following in Auroville. In Belgium he was known as a journalist, poet, playwright, and artistic manager of a professional theater company. In India he translated books by Sri Aurobindo, the Mother, Peter Heehs, and Satprem into Dutch.

I said a groundbreaking work, because the author is able to access hitherto unpublished material; harmonize within the covers of a single 544-page book the different limbs of the body of the Integral Yoga, now scattered over the collected works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother; include for consideration the equally important 13 volumes of the Mother's Agenda; decisively clarify and put to rest (quoting chapter and verse from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother) what the former had described in a letter to Nirodbaran in October 1936 as "the usual Ashram legends"; and finally to reveal all of the above as one single, unending evolutionary process of the Integral Yoga that is our bequest from what Vrekhem so aptly refers to as "the double-poled Avatar"—i.e., Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

All this was not attempted before, for a number of reasons, including the gap between the Ashram and Satprem which came about after the passing of the Mother, "with regrettable consequences," as the author puts it. That did present itself to some as a schismatic rupture. But schisms are a characteristic of ossified



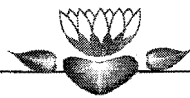
religions and cannot, by definition, fit into an inexorable evolutionary process that is at every moment moving on, through whatever "felicitous havoc" (as Satprem once put it) may await our species, to a radical evolutionary leap into an altogether new and higher status of consciousness—in short, the supramental transformation, which Sri Aurobindo and the Mother foresaw and were working toward.

Mercifully for us, evolution did not get stuck with jellyfish or ape. Even more mercifully for the future of life on earth, it will not get stuck with us either. Sri Aurobindo said in 1935: "I may say that it is far from my purpose to propagate any religion, new or old, for humanity in the future. A way to be opened that is still blocked, not a religion to be founded, is my conception of the matter."

Indeed, evolution may well have already unstuck itself from our species. In a powerful last chapter preceding the epilog, Van Vrekhem reveals what this reviewer did not know before. Referring to commentators in the Ashram (including Nolini in the first place) who had concluded that Mother's passing on November 17, 1973, meant that the physical transformation had been "postponed," Van Vrekhem writes as follows: "Neither do they ever mention that Nolini Kanta Gupta must have revised his opinion about the postponement, as can be deduced from the fact that he testifies to the presence of the superman (the intermediate being between man and the supramental being) among us. It is worthwhile here to repeat the words of the great yogi Nolini, "Although we may not know it, the New Man, the divine race of humanity, is already among us. . . It waits for an occasion to throw off the veil and place itself in the forefront. If this is so, then nothing has been postponed and the supramental change-over is in full swing." Regrettably, the author does not provide the source of this crucial quote. One hopes that this omission will be repaired in the American edition.

Van Vrekhem calmly points out what ought to have been obvious from the very start, that both parties to the "schism" were equally children of the Mother. Each and every disciple performed his or her own unique role in her incredible ministry. This is all that matters. Guidebooks of the Integral Yoga will show future seekers only the locations of halting stations along the way, not the litter left behind by travelers. At last somebody has finally produced the first such inspired guidebook.

In the process, Van Vrekhem dips liberally into the precious reliquaries of disciples such as Nolini Kanta Gupta, K.D. Sethna (Amal Kiran), Nirodbaran, Satprem, Peter Heehs, and several others, too numerous to mention here.



Written in simple, unpretentious style, without resort to contentious rhetoric, the author buttresses his presentation with admirable insight, logic, conviction, and faith, leaving us with the curious impression at the end of a quiet, sustained eloquence. One doesn't know how else to phrase it. It is impossible to summarize 544 pages in a brief review. What a reviewer might do would be to arouse the interest of readers in what he considers a most significant watershed in the evolving exegesis of the single "double-poled Avatar" (The Two-in-One) represented by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

Beginning with a prolog which plunges us, among other things, into a vivid account of Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's occult interventions in World Wars I and II, the first few chapters take the reader through the basics of the life and works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Only from a splendid Chapter Eight, "Homo Sum..." do we begin to feel Van Vrekhem's unique grip, which tightens its hold as we proceed through a series of fascinating chapters to a marvelous denouement in the last chapter ("The Caterpillar and The Butterfly") of the unprecedented Yoga undertaken by the Two-in-One—a yoga that, unknown to us, continues.

As we know (but often forget), the conscious evolutionary journey begins with the discovery by each seeker of the truth of his or her own being—the psychic being that grows from life to life until it is able to emerge in a divine supramental body and begin the life divine. The author quotes to great effect a wonderful rendering by Jalal ud-Din-ar-Rumi of what Sri Aurobindo described as "the light in the hidden crypt of the heart's innermost sanctuary."

Cross and Christians, end to end, I examined. He was not on the cross. I went to the Hindu temple, to the ancient pagoda. In none of them was there any sign. To the uplands of Herat I went, and to Kandahar. I looked. He was not on the heights or in the lowlands. Resolutely, I went to the summit of the mountain of Kaf. There only was the dwelling of the Anqa bird. I went to the Kaaba of Mecca. He was not there. I asked about him from Avicenna the philosopher. He was beyond the range of Avicenna. . . I looked into my own heart. In that place, I saw him. He was in no other place.

Rightly, Vrekhem lays great stress on emphasising the oneness of the double-poled Avatar. This is not sufficiently appreciated despite Sri Aurobindo's constant assertions to the contrary. There are those who refer to the Mother as "Sri Aurobindo's disciple and collaborator." Shades of our male-dominated civilizations and cultures! Both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother had both exceeded gender dichotomies. In *The Agenda* we read that Mother had seen her new body. It was sexless.

Don't we also forget that even if Sri Aurobindo had said that he realized the absoluteness of surrender only when Mother first prostrated herself at his feet, his own yoga was one of absolute surrender to the Supreme Mahashakti. It was his own tremendous experience of her that he cast in imperishable lines (*Savitri*, Cantos XIV, p. 295):

Above them all she stands supporting all,
The sole omnipotent Goddess ever-veiled
Of whom the world is the inscrutable mask;
...

He cast from the rent stillness of his soul
A cry of adoration and desire
And the surrender of his boundless mind
And the self-giving of his silent heart.
He fell down at her feet unconscious, prone.

Van Vrekhem forcefully reminds us that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother had taken into themselves all the world's present and past in order to exhaust them. In the unspeakable agonies she endured in her yoga of the body, Mother once let out a terribly poignant statement: "I had become all the pain in the world." It was then that She realized what Sri Aurobindo had suffered, uncomplainingly. He hadn't told anybody, not even Her. And her eyes filled with tears.

Reading Van Vrekhem enables us to appreciate with a new intensity Sri Aurobindo's short poem, "A God's Labour." Only a few significant verses can be given here. They tellingly tell a true tale, so simply

I have delved through the dumb Earth's dreadful heart
And heard her black mass' bell.
I have seen the source whence her agonies part
And the inner reason of hell.

Above me the dragon murmurs moan
And the goblin voices flit;
I have pierced the Void where Thought was born,
I have walked in the bottomless pit.

On a desperate stair my feet have trod
Armoured with boundless peace,
Bringing the fires of the splendour of God
Into the human abyss.

I shall leave my dreams in their argent air,
For in a raiment of gold and blue
There shall move on the earth embodied and fair
The living truth of you.

—Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, Vol. 26, p. 125

Readers may legitimately differ with the author on matters of opinion. But then, as Mother pointed out in *The Agenda*, "Opinions are worthless."

Georges Van Vrekhem has rendered a signal service to seekers.

Devan Nair lives and writes in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada.



SOURCE MATERIAL

Mother's Agenda: November 27, 1965

Did you feel anything special on the darshan day [November 24]?

No?

Sri Aurobindo was there from morning to evening.

THERE, you know.

For, oh, for more than an hour, he made me live the concrete and living vision, as it were, of the condition of humanity and the various layers of humanity in relation to the new or supramental creation. And it was marvelously clear and concrete and living.

There was the whole humanity that isn't quite animal anymore, that has benefited from mental development and created a certain harmony in its life — a vital, artistic, literary harmony — the vast majority of which live satisfied with life. They have caught a sort of harmony and live in it a life as it exists in civilized milieu, that is to day, somewhat cultured, with refinement and taste, refinement in habits. And this whole life has a sort of harmony in which they find themselves at ease, and unless something catastrophic happens to them, they live happy and content, satisfied with life. Those may be attracted (because they have taste, they are intellectually developed), they may be attracted to the new forces, the new things, the future life; for instance, they may mentally, intellectually become disciples of Sri Aurobindo. But they don't at all feel the need to change materially, and if they were to be forced to, it would be first of all premature and unjust, and it would quite simply create a great disorder and would upset their lives quite unnecessarily.

It was very clear.

Then there are the few—the rare individuals—who are ready to make the necessary effort to prepare themselves for the transformation and to attract the new forces, try to adapt Matter, seek the means of expression and so forth. Those are ready for Sri Aurobindo's yoga. They are very few. There are even those who have the sense of sacrifice and are ready to have a hard and difficult life, as long as it leads them or helps them towards this future transformation. But they should not, they should in no way try to influence others and make them share their own effort: that would be quite unjust — not only unjust, but extremely clumsy because it would alter the universal — or at least terrestrial — rhythm and movement, and instead helping, it would cause conflicts and result in chaos.

But it was so living, so real, that my whole attitude (how can I explain? . . . A passive attitude, which isn't the result of an active will), the whole position taken in the work has changed. And this has brought a peace — an absolute and decisive peace and tranquillity and trust. A decisive change. And even, all that in the previous position seemed to be obstinacy, clumsiness, unconsciousness, all sorts of deplorable things, all that has

disappeared. It was like a vision of a great universal Rhythm in which each thing takes its own place and . . . everything is just fine. And the effort of transformation limited to a small number becomes something FAR MORE precious and FAR MORE powerful for the realization. It's as if a choice had been made of those who will be the pioneers of the new creation. And all those ideas of "spreading" [the ideal] or "preparing" or churning Matter — childishness. It's human agitation.

The vision had such a majestic and calm and smiling beauty, oh! . . . It was full, really full of divine Love. And not a divine Love that "forgives" — that's not at all the point, not at all! — each thing in its own place, realizing its inner rhythm as perfectly as it can. That's all.

That was a very beautiful gift.

Of course, all those things are known somewhere, intellectually, vaguely, in their principle — all that is known, but it's quite useless. In everyday practice, you live according to something else, a truer understanding. And there, you seemed to be touching things — you saw them, touched them — in their higher ordinance.

It came after a vision of plants and the spontaneous beauty of plants (which is something so wonderful!), then of the animal with such a harmonious life (when men don't interfere), and all that was quite in its own place. Then true humanity seen as such, that is to say, the summit of what a balanced mind can produce in beauty, in harmony, in charm, in elegance in life, in taste for life — taste to live in beauty — while eliminating, naturally, all that is ugly and low and vulgar. That was a lovely humanity. Humanity at its highest, but lovely. And perfectly satisfied as such, because it lives harmoniously. And it may also be like a promise of what almost the totality of humanity will become under the influence of the new creation: as I saw it, it was what the supramental consciousness can do with humanity. There was even a comparison with what humanity has done with animal kind (something extremely mixed, of course, but there have been improvements, betterments, more complete utilizations). Animality under the mental influence has become something else, which naturally has been mixed because the mind is incomplete; similarly there are examples of harmonious humanity among the well-balanced people, and it appeared to be what humanity could become under the supramental influence.

Only, it's very far ahead; we shouldn't expect it to come about immediately — it's very far ahead.

There is clearly, even now, a transitional period, which may last a rather long time and is rather painful. But the sometimes painful effort (often painful) is made up for by a clear vision of the goal to be reached, of the goal that WILL be reached — an assurance, you know, a certitude. But it [the supramental influence] would be something that had the power to eliminate all the errors, all the distortions and ugliness of mental life, and then a very happy humanity, quite satisfied with being human, feeling no need whatsoever to be anything but human, but with a human beauty, a human harmony.



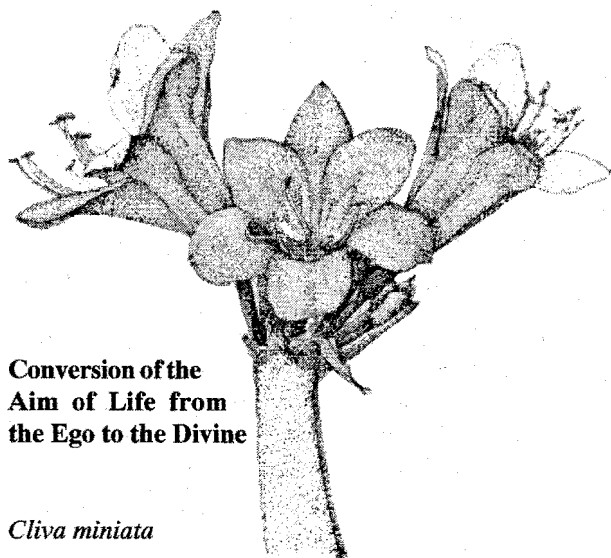
It was very charming, it was as though I were living in it. Contradictions had disappeared. As though I lived in that perfection. And it was almost like the ideal conceived by the supramental consciousness of a humanity that had become as perfect as it can be. It was very good.

And it brings a great sense of rest. Tension, friction, all that disappears — impatience, too. All that had completely disappeared.

In other words, you're concentrating the work instead of diffusing everywhere?

No, it may be materially diffused because the individuals aren't necessarily gathered together. But there aren't many of them.

The idea of an urgent need to "prepare" humanity for the new creation, that impatience has disappeared.



**Conversion of the
Aim of Life from
the Ego to the Divine**

Clivia miniata

Kaffir Lily

bright orange trumpet-shaped flowers with yellow to apricot throats borne in clusters on a short scape

Instead of seeking one's own satisfaction, to have the service of the Divine as the aim of life.

...to give everything one is or has to the Divine and regard nothing as one's own, to obey only the Divine will and no other, to live for the Divine and not for the ego.

—Sri Aurobindo

APROPOS

The opposite of a shallow truth is false. But the opposite of a deep truth is also true.

—Neils Bohr

People's minds are changed through observation and not through argument.

—Will Rogers

That which distinguishes from others the upright man, is that he never pollutes the genius within him which dwells in his heart.

—Marcus Aurelius

When you breathe, you inspire. When you do not breathe, you expire.

—answer on an 11 year old's science exam

The will to succeed is important, but what is more important is the will to prepare.

—Bobby Knight

Proof that your heart and head can reach perfect harmony. The intellect quickly reminds you what a great value the all new Corolla is, giving you more car for less. Ah, but the heart leaps to tell you that with Corolla's added power, safety features and good looks, you'll be traveling like a dignitary.

—Toyota advertisement

Josh put a new twist on an old philosophy. To be one *with* everything, he says, you've gotta have one *of* everything. That's why he also has the new Ford Ranger.

—Ford advertisement

For those of you who sold your soul in the sixties: here's your chance to buy it back.

—Volkswagon Beetle advertisement

God employs a limited degree of Divine Intervention to preserve the balanced level of felt presence and blind faith.

Which would you prefer (circle one)?

- a. More Divine Intervention
- b. Less Divine Intervention
- c. Current level of Divine Intervention is just right
- d. Don't know...what's Divine Intervention?

—from an email questionnaire

We are always surrounded by the things of which we think.

—the Mother

Collaboration is available on the world wide web at <http://www.collaboration.org>