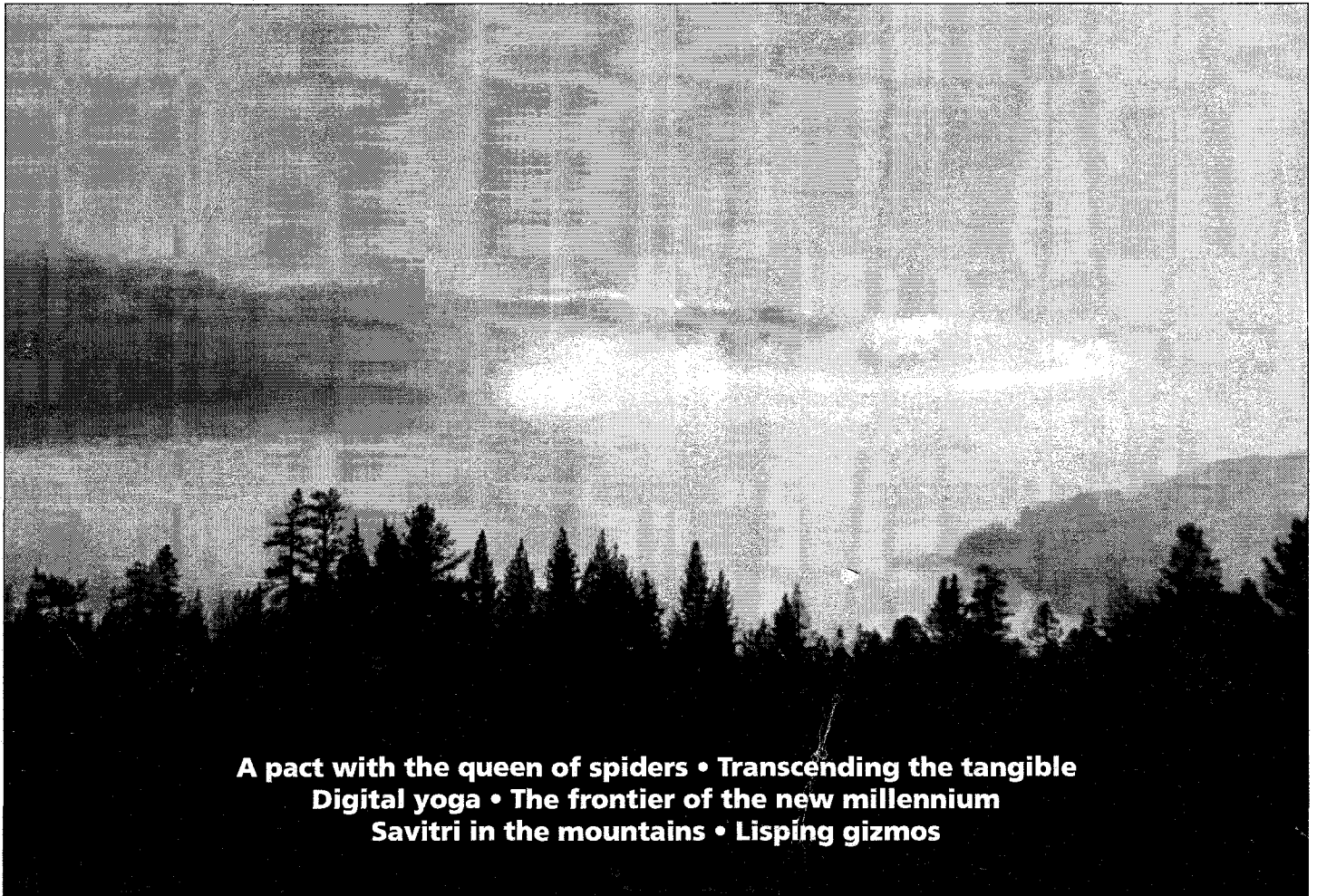


# Collaboration

Spring 1999

Journal of the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother

Vol. 25, No. 1



**A pact with the queen of spiders • Transcending the tangible  
Digital yoga • The frontier of the new millennium  
Savitri in the mountains • Lispng gizmos**

**T**here's this golden Force pressing down on matter.

It has no material substantiality, yet it feels terribly heavy. It presses down on matter to compel it to turn *inwardly* toward the Divine—not an external flight above, but an inner turning toward the Divine.

The apparent outcome seems to be inevitable catastrophes. But along with this sense of inevitable catastrophe, there come solutions to situations or events that are simply miraculous. As if both extremes were becoming more extreme: The good is getting better and the bad, worse.

Even in life circumstances, many things otherwise indifferent are becoming suddenly acute—acute situations, acute differences,

acute ill wills—and on the other hand singular miracles take place. People on the verge of death are saved; inextricable situations are suddenly unraveled.

The same applies to people. Those who know how to *sincerely* call upon the Divine, who feel it's the only salvation, the only way out, and who sincerely offer themselves, see their circumstances become a marvel within a few minutes, whether it concerns something small and unimportant or something big and important.

It gives a measure of the change brought about in the world by the supramental Manifestation.

—The Mother, *Notebook on Evolution*, pp. 314–315  
(see inside, p. 10)



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**About SAA:** The primary purpose of the Sri Aurobindo Association is to distribute information about Sri Aurobindo, the Mother, and Auroville, and to support various projects related to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Auroville, and work in America related to the Integral Yoga. Current officers: David Hutchinson, president; Vishnubhai Eschner, secretary; Marta Belén, treasurer; Lynda Lester, vice president, Collaboration; Chandresh Patel, vice president, Special Projects; Kalpana Patel, member at large.

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**About the artists in this issue:** Jim Hurley, a freelance graphic artist, teacher, and web designer, lives in Sunnyvale, California. Judith Wright lives in Sacramento, California. Margaret Phanes, a graphic artist, lives in Santa Cruz, California. Marta Belén and David Hutchinson live in Sacramento, California. Madhusudan Desai, a web designer, lives in Pondicherry, India. Vasumati Elerick is a lecturer in French and German at the University of Texas in El Paso, Texas. Janina Stroka, who passed away in 1964, lived in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry.

**About the cover:** Sunrise in eastern Arizona. (Photo: David Hutchinson.)



## BEGINNINGS

### The unexpected button

*This selection is from the Mother's Collected Works, Vol. 7, Questions and Answers 1955, pp. 381–384.*

**W**e have a certain habit of a particular logic of causes and effects, of the consequences of all things, the relation between all movements. It is for us a fact which we accept, even without thinking about it, because we have always lived inside it. But if we had not always lived inside it, we would perceive it in another way. And one can make this experiment: if one goes out of the determinism of the world as it is at present—this world which is a mixture of the physical, vital, mental and of something of a spiritual influence or infusion (quite veiled), everything that happens is the combination of all this—if we go out of all that (we can do it), if we rise above the physical, material world as it is, and enter another consciousness, we perceive things *totally* differently.

And then we see that behind these appearances which seem to us absolutely logical and extremely natural, and almost necessary, there is an action which, if perceived in one's ordinary consciousness, would seem *all the time* miraculous.

There is an intervention of forces, consciousnesses, movements, influences, which is invisible or imperceptible for ordinary consciousness and *constantly* changes the whole course of circumstances.

We don't need to go very far; it is enough to take just a step outside the ordinary consciousness in order to realize this. I have already said several times that one finds the psychic consciousness within oneself and identifies oneself with it, well, immediately one feels a complete reversal of circumstances and sees things almost totally differently from the way one ordinarily sees them. For one perceives the force which is acting instead of the result of this action.

At present you see only the result of the action of the forces, and this seems to you natural, logical. And it's only when something a little abnormal occurs—or it's a little abnormal for you—that you begin to feel surprised. But if you were in another state of consciousness, what seems abnormal to you now would no longer be so. You would see that is the effect of something else, of another action than the one you perceive.



But even from the purely material point of view, you are used to certain things, they have been explained to you: for example, electric light, or that it is enough to press a button to start a car. You can explain it, you have been told why, and so it seems absolutely natural to you. But I had instances of people who did not know, who were completely ignorant, who came from a place where these things had not yet penetrated, and who were suddenly shown a statue being lighted up by rays of light; they fell on their knees in adoration: it was a divine manifestation.

And I have seen someone else who was in the same state, it was a child who knew nothing. In front of him a button was pressed and the car started; it seemed a *tremendous* miracle to him. Well, is like that. You're used to certain things, they seem absolutely natural to you. If you're not used to them, you would see, you would think them miracles.

Well, turn over the problem. There is a heap of things you cannot explain to yourself, there is a host of interventions which change the course of circumstances and which you don't even notice. And so everything seems to you ordinary, monotonous and without any particular interest. But if you have the knowledge and could see that all these things which seem absolutely normal to you because you are used to them and not even asked yourself "How does this happen in this way?"—if you had the knowledge and saw how it happens, what it is that acts, why for example someone who acts so imprudently that he would have broken his head does not break it, why everything seems arranged for a frightful accident to take place and it does not occur, and thousands, millions of things like that which happen every day and everywhere—if you had enough knowledge to see why it is like that, then at the same time you could say, "Look, there is something like a force, a consciousness, a power which acts and which is not from the material domain. Materially, logically, this is what should happen, and it did not happen." You say, "Ah! it was his good luck," don't you? And then you are satisfied, it's all right for you.

It is the ignorant, limited, egoistic consciousness which demands miracles. As soon as one is enlightened, one knows that everywhere and always there is miracle.

And more faith one has in this miracle and this Grace, the more capable one becomes of seeing it or perceiving it constantly at every place where it is.





## NEW LETTERS ON YOGA

### Collab comments

The Fall 1998 *Collaboration* issue was wonderful and the photos always add such a special quality.

—Anie Nunnally, anie@earthlink.net

The *Collaboration* issue featuring the Special AUM 98 section was superb. I also enjoyed reading Georges Van Vrekhem on the transitional being.

A bit of trivia: the title of the film *What Dreams May Come* is taken from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. If you remember the soliloquy, probably the most famous in the play, "To be or not to be . . ." Some eight lines down Hamlet says "To sleep, perhaps to dream. Ay, there's the rub, For in that sleep of death what dreams may come."

—Surama Bloomquist, calcutta98@hotmail.com

My friend Lisa called me last night to say how much she enjoyed the two articles by Georges Van Vrekham and Ananda Reddy . . . and how they made her realize that she's reached a spiritual crossroads: she's been progressing individually, but this whole issue is making her think about how essential it is to be part of a larger collectivity!

—Lynda Lester, lester@ucar.edu

Just got my copy of *Collaboration*. Lovely photos and text! I am dismayed, however, to see AVI USA listed in Sacramento with the wrong contact information.

—Julian Lines, jhl@aol.com

*Our mistake. The correct AVI-USA address is: P.O. Box 877, Santa Cruz, CA 95061 USA; e-mail: aviusa@aol.com; phone: 831-425-5620.*

### On sharing experiences

*The following message was originally posted to Auroconf, an e-mail discussion group. To subscribe, send e-mail to auroconf-subscribe@compatible.com. Leave the subject line blank, and in the body of the message, type "subscribe auroconf."*

Until the experience is shared and available for public consumption, it is only subjective and therefore of no value to society

as a whole. Only by sharing our experiences can we provide ourselves with the necessary reality check. Without this who's to say we are not just hallucinating or being delusional?

However sharing requires sensitivity both in how and what and to whom disclosure occurs, and in receiving and commenting on the disclosure of others. Disclosing an "advanced" experience to the uninitiated can bring incredulity, ridicule, or awe, all misplaced. Disclosing a beginner's experience, often done with such joy and enthusiasm (they're always such "WOW!!—oh!!—POW!!" experiences, those steps forward those new insights, in my experience) might be met with put-downs or patronization by those somewhere only just up ahead but never by the master (sexists, read "mistress") or guru.

So I think it is essential that people disclose on what I trust to be the safe fora (plural of forum) of the Auroconf and Psych lists. For it is only by doing so here that any real progress, collective or otherwise, can be made in our understanding of all that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother point to. What is needed, and usually forthcoming on these lists, is a gentle tolerance for and equally gentle enquiry and discussion of said experiences, so that both the experiencer and others can benefit most fully and correctly from the disclosed experience.

To restrict ourselves to generalizations, to only quoting Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, and to discussing in the abstract, is a sure way to remain in the mental. So thank you to all who take risks in disclosing—this is the most valuable. But, hey, even those little flashes of negativity are fine too! After all we're still just human—those little stings help to keep us all on our toes. Which leads me to the final viewpoint that anything on these lists has to be just fine as it is—how can it possibly be anything else?

—Marian Cummins, mcummins@netspace.net.au

### A pact with the queen of spiders

*The following message was originally posted to Auroconf, an e-mail discussion group.*

**Y**ou speak of the possibility that insects can communicate with us and you point out it is perhaps science fiction. Listen to my story:

Back in July 1993, in the very hot summer of the south of France, the heat had become unbearable and I decided—I was at that time living alone—to drive to the family house, which my family owns on the countryside and where the temperature is always several degrees below the temperature at the seaside in Marseilles.

You must imagine a very old and very large country house with three floors, a cellar and a huge attic, which had been a *maison de maître* a century ago, totally alone in immense vineyards and fields.

This is the place where my grandparents were living and where I spent many months in my childhood and youth with them. Now





they are dead many years, and nobody in the family comes to this house. I alone have kept the keys and drive to it from time to time. In 1993 nobody had come for two or three years, except to enjoy the terrace for a few hours without entering the house.

Suddenly I had the idea to go to this house and wanted to spend a week there, sleeping and living in the old known rooms, even if I knew that there was no heating, no running water (but a well), and only outside toilets, exactly like in my childhood.

On entering the corridor, I remarked that the house has become the total possession of the mice, the scorpions, and the little and not-so-little spiders. I tidied up the three floors, and while sweeping away the spiders and the webs I was saying *loudly*: "I authorize one spider per room or corridor, but no more." They were most of them what the English call daddy longlegs or brown short spiders. Scorpions and mice were without mercy thrown out of the house. And after five hours of this work, the house was somehow clean (and effectively the spiders remained in their corners).

In the afternoon, I decided to see the part of the house where nobody could live: a corridor, a former stable (we had horses before), and a huge shed and I opened the door, prudently, since I knew from experience that there were many rats.

But no rats! Instead, hundreds of nests of big black spiders, hanging everywhere, in all corners and on the ceilings. And those who were not lurking out of their hanging nests were running on the floor! Such black spiders are terribly dangerous: one or two bites can lead someone (especially me) to the hospital or to the graveyard. They are the size of my hand, with a big rounded body and long hairy legs. And there was a tremendous quantity of them in the three rooms, especially in the shed (many hundreds).

A terrible fear seized me, coming from the very inner part of my body. I started to kill some spiders—but they were resistant and I had to beat five times on each one with a shovel to kill it, and the others were running around my feet, or hanging above my head, or wanting to climb on my shoes and legs.

I wanted to burn some nests with my lighter, but on seeing me, if the nest was burning, they were so quick that they went out of the nest and jumped in my direction before the fire burnt the nest. A real atmosphere of fear and anguish began, not only coming from me. A true nightmare!

After an hour of fight, I had killed some dozens, hundreds were remaining and I was shaking in all my body out of fear, disgust, hatred. I came back in the cleaned corridor, out of breath, with my heart beating 120 beats per second.

And I did not know what to do.

I went away in the sun, in the outer world where everything was calm and where nobody could have thought that a terrible battle had been fought inside.

After resting an hour, I plucked up courage and went a second time inside in the corridor, in order to fight again and if necessary to definitely leave the house if I could not win. (It would be impossible to sleep in a house with these animals under the floor of my bedroom, which is just above the stable!)

On the side of this corridor, just before the door to the three unused rooms, is a window, which in my childhood I had always seen closed. Between the window and the outer closed shutters is a space of twenty-five centimeters, the space of the wall. Because of the shutters, this window is obscure.

While passing before this window I suddenly felt something: an appeal and a menace all together. I had changed my mind since the battle, and I stopped and leaned over the wooden frame in order to look into the obscurity. And there, just on the other side of the glass, one centimeter from my face, there was a huge black spider, the size of my two fists (only the body—and it had legs under the body)! It was slightly swinging in my direction: I could very clearly see its eyes and its mouth.

What a shock! My heart stopped beating, I didn't know whether I could breathe . . .

In my brain suddenly came the sentence: "I am the queen of the black spiders."

Again suddenly I became totally calm: I had recognized a new occult experience. The huge spider was talking to me! Directly in the brain.

That was the beginning of a new phase: after five minutes face to face, I went out of the house again, saw the sun and the birds, breathed a good lot of the country air, and made a decision.

I returned to the window: it was no hallucination, the huge black spider was still here and seemed to be awaiting something. I took a standing position in front of her, began concentrating like in yoga, and then I spoke in my brain silently to her and said: "Madame queen of the black spiders, I beg your pardon for the spiders of yours I have killed. You must understand: I was totally afraid. You know that I may die only with one bite of such a spider. I will not do it again. I thank you because you have not allowed them to bite me. But you must understand too that your subjects cannot remain where they are, that I want to inhabit this house again. Please let us make a pact, because I can't give an order to you like to the daddy longlegs. I understand that your subjects also have to live but they are too numerous. I'd like that they leave the corridor and the stable and most of the shed, but they may remain in the higher part of the shed where they will not disturb me if they remain there. You have seen that I had thrown out the scorpions, your enemies, which are the hunters of spiders. I just want us to live together in peace. Do you accept?"

And I waited. After some minutes I could hear in my brain: "It seems I can accept, please, come back in an hour." It was no longer as clear as the first message, but this time, there was no longer any fear and menace in the voice. I went out of the house again, sat down in the sun and took a book which I had brought with me: it was Sri Aurobindo's *Rebirth and Karma*.

After two hours—it was the beginning of the evening, which occurs late in the summer—I went back in the corridor. The huge black spider was still here, but was motionless. I passed quickly and opened the door to the three rooms: there was not even one black spider and almost all the nests had been removed; the re-



maining ones were empty! In the shed, very high (it is seven meters high) I could see two dozen nests and some black spiders were peacefully lurking out of them. An atmosphere of tranquility was in the three rooms.

I apologized again loudly to the hanging spiders for their killed sisters and I went back in the part of the house where humans can live, and spent my week there.

As an addition: still in this year, 1999, not one black spider has been seen, and the three rooms have remained clean. Even the huge black spider suddenly disappeared in 1996, just after my father's death, which is an impossibility because she was so huge that she could not creep under the shutters. I have opened this window: no trace.

I continue throwing the scorpions out of the house, and the daddy longlegs continue to be one per room.

That was not the first time that I spoke with animals, even with insects (bees, for example). But it was the first time that I lived such a story, with a chief.

In a volume of the *Agenda* I read recently that Mother said that she had made a pact with the king of cats. You can understand that I was not surprised!

My apologies for this long letter. I just wanted to say: Please, speak also to the animals and hear what they have to say to you, and equally, deal with the animals like you could deal with humans. Finally, don't be afraid of them.

And of course: Read Sri Aurobindo and Mother.

—Bernard Sage, [bernard\\_sage@compuserve.com](mailto:bernard_sage@compuserve.com)

and after finishing his course in Vishwabharati in 1935, he came for a longer stay. In 1938 he settled permanently in the Ashram.

The Mother entrusted Jayantilal with work of different sorts and encouraged him to continue his drawing and painting. His flower drawings, nature studies, and town scenes show a keen sense of beauty and refined artistic technique. Jayantilal played a significant role in the development of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, and was the guiding force behind the publication of the *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library*. In 1973 he established the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Archives, which continues the work of preserving and publishing the writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. In 1995 he initiated the publication of the *Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo*.

Early in 1998 Jayantilal began to experience respiratory problems as a result of cancer of the thyroid. After suffering in silence for a number of months, he agreed to go to Germany in January 1999 for a surgical operation. He died there before the operation could be performed shortly before midnight (German time) on 25 January.

His ashes were buried in the ashram's Cazanove Garden on the morning of 7 February. He will be remembered by all who knew him as a self-effacing servant of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo who quietly produced lasting results.

*Peter Heehs is an archivist at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Archives and Research Library in Pondicherry, India. He can be reached at [peterh@auroville.org.in](mailto:peterh@auroville.org.in).*

## CURRENT AFFAIRS

### Jayantilal Parekh, 1913–1999: The passing of an artist

by Peter Heehs

Jayantilal Parekh was born on 21 June 1913 in a village near Surat, Gujarat. His father was a pioneer in the Indian banking industry, his mother a deeply religious woman who had a strong influence on her six sons and two daughters. Jayantilal attended a progressive high school in Bombay, where he excelled in his studies and developed his in-born artistic talent. After spending a year in the Bombay School of Architecture, he entered the Kala Bhavan (art school) of Vishwabharati, the college that grew out of Rabindranath Tagore's school Shantiniketan. Here he studied painting under the renowned artist Nandalal Bose.

While at Vishwabharati, Jayantilal had the opportunity of traveling in Tagore's entourage to places like Bombay and Ceylon. During trips to the south, he visited his friend Krishnalal Bhatt in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. A reading of some articles by Sri Aurobindo during one such visit touched a deep chord in Jayantilal,

#### This just in

**Prof. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar**, author of the definitive biographies of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, passed away at Madras on the evening of 15th April. May his soul rest in peace.

### AUM 1999: Savitri in the mountains

The Sri Aurobindo Learning Center (SALC) will be the sponsor of this year's All USA Meeting (AUM), to be held in Crestone, Colorado, from 7–11 August. The location is a pristine mountain setting, famous as a retreat site and the home of such spiritual centers as the Haidakhandi Universal Ashram, the Crestone Mountain Zen Center, the Nada Carmelite Monastery, and the Tashi Gomang (Tibetan Buddhist) Stupa and Study Center. It is also an ideal spot for high-altitude hiking and climbing, natural hot spring baths, and panoramic sunset views. The area has long been known by Native Americans as "the bloodless valley" and a traditional place of vision quests.



The theme of this year's conference will be "Savitri: A Legend and a Symbol," and the physical location seems to be as close as is earthly possible to the setting in which the drama of transformation takes place. Speakers and performers will be featured who can provide dynamic and illuminating insights into this epic of the yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. And participants will be able to take advantage of the vastness and silence of the mountains to contemplate the meaning of Savitri in themselves. For several years week-long Savitri immersion workshops have been held here, and it has proven to be an especially ideal environment for such pursuits.

Paulo Baeta Pereira from Auroville will perform an interpretation of Savitri, using the music of Sunil from the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. Paulo has been leading transformational dance workshops in Auroville for many years. Also, a classical dance-drama troupe from Toronto will offer an interpretation of Savitri in the Bharatanatyam style.

One large hotel and conference center with communal dining facilities and several additional guest facilities and meeting places will be available for our use in this small community of 700. We will provide a shuttle service, for those who do not have transportation of their own, to move from place to place within the community. We will also provide transportation to hiking trails and hot springs in the area, and a shuttle from the Colorado Springs Airport (only), which is the nearest to Crestone, as part of the conference package.

Crestone is a three-hour drive west from Colorado Springs on Highway 24, then south on Highway 285 to Highway 17, which breaks off from 285 about fifteen miles north of Crestone. For travelers from either Denver to the North or Santa Fe to the South, Highway 285 is the most direct route to Highway 17. The turnoff to Crestone on Highway 17 occurs at the south end of the little village of Moffat.

After a sincere effort to hold this event during the week of 15 August, and also to avoid possible scheduling conflicts (locally and for other centers), we eventually decided that the prior week would work the best. The dates of the conference, therefore, will be 7–11 August. (Those who wish to do so may stay for the 15th and will need to contact us for arrangements).

Formal arrivals and registrations will be facilitated on Saturday the 7th, the main program will take place on the 8th, 9th, 10th, and closing and departures will be facilitated on the 11th. Most rooms will be equipped with two full- or queen-sized beds and a bathroom (semiprivate) and will accommodate two persons. Families and friends are encouraged to share a room, as space is limited. The basic conference rate will be \$300 per person (five days, four nights). The rate for a single day is \$75. A small number of dormitory beds will also be available for a reduced rate of \$200. The rate for children under 18 will be \$125. Vegetarian meals will be planned, prepared, and served by a rotating team of volunteers, so please do not hesitate to pitch in and help to satisfy the palates of your fellow adventurers. The mountains are known to stimulate appetites as well as visions! Bon voyage!

For more information, please contact Rod Hemsell (address: P.O. Box 773, SALC, Crestone, CO, 81131; phone: 719-256-4822; e-mail: [rodhemsell@yahoo.com](mailto:rodhemsell@yahoo.com)) or Suzanne McGregor (address: P.O. Box 88, Crestone, CO, 81131).

## Digital yoga

## Integral links

Links to new web sites about the Integral Yoga are maintained on the Integral Yoga web site at <http://www.miraura.org/link.html>. The site also includes links to centers around the world, online books, and related topics. If you discover new Integral Yoga sites, please contact the Sri Aurobindo Association (e-mail: [saa@collaboration.org](mailto:saa@collaboration.org)).

## New syntax for subscribing to e-mail lists

Most of the e-mail lists related to the Integral Yoga have been moved to a new server, and the method of subscribing has changed. To subscribe to the Auroconf list, for example, send e-mail to [auroconf-subscribe@compatible.com](mailto:auroconf-subscribe@compatible.com). In the body of the message (not the subject heading), type *Subscribe auroconf*. For complete information on all the lists, please see <http://www.miraura.org/grp/net.html>. See also the article in this issue on moderating the lists, "Transcending the tangible: The yoga online."

## Chatting with distant sadhaks

There is a program called "ICQ" which can be used for "chatting" with others in real time. When you chat with another person over the Internet, you see the words at the same instant that she types them. A list of sadhaks who have an address via the ICQ program is available at <http://www.miraura.org/grp/net/icqlist.html>, and the program to enable you to chat is available for free download from <http://www.icq.com>.

## Darshan messages available

From now on, Darshan messages from the Sri Aurobindo Ashram will be available on the web, where you can view the message card (with the photo) and even download files for printing the card yourself. The Darshan messages web site can be found at [http://members.xoom.com/saa\\_messages](http://members.xoom.com/saa_messages). For more information, please send e-mail to [saa\\_messages@fnmail.com](mailto:saa_messages@fnmail.com).



## Pondicherry web site: See sunrise from Feb 21<sup>st</sup>

Former students of the Ashram have set up a web site, <http://pondy-central.com>, which is "your online portal to the beautiful city of Pondicherry." The site includes message boards where you can discuss education in Pondicherry, community events, local travel, and an open forum. They also maintain an e-mail list for weekly news and updates. And, with their digital camera, they have started a photo album, which includes a photo of the sunrise over the ocean on Mother's birthday, 21 February 1999. For more information, please contact Madhusudan Desai (e-mail: [feedback@pondy-central.com](mailto:feedback@pondy-central.com)).

## Retreat shared over the web

The Sri Aurobindo Sadhana Peetham in Lodi, California, successfully posted almost 100 images of its March retreat, in a first attempt to share such an event with other sadhaks as it was happening. Participants used a digital camera, which saves images directly to a floppy drive, and a shareware program which creates instant thumbnail images (small versions of the larger image) and instant web pages. To see the retreat photos, go to <http://www.collaboration.org/centers/sasp/mar99.html>. For more information about the ashram or its activities, please contact Vishnu Eschner or Dakshina (e-mail: [sasp@lodinet.com](mailto:sasp@lodinet.com)).

## Sri Aurobindo Society enters cyberspace

The Sri Aurobindo Society has put up a web site, <http://www.sriarobindosociety.org.in>, where you can find extensive information about Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, as well as about the society, the ashram, events, and Pondicherry. The section on Pondicherry has a listing of all guest houses and accommodations as well as other information for visiting. For more information, please contact the Sri Aurobindo Society (e-mail: [info@sriarobindosociety.org.in](mailto:info@sriarobindosociety.org.in)).

## Sri Aurobindo Institute of Culture opens web site

The Sri Aurobindo Institute of Culture in Calcutta has set up a web site at <http://sriarobindoinstitute.org>. It is a very pictorial site, showing the various activities (educational, artistic, medical, cottage industries) of the Institute.

## Whither science?

A site for the study of gnostic science has opened at <http://www.webcom.com/masi/gs.htm>. This includes many quotes from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on consciousness and transformation, and discussions of various topics related to science.



## The Mother on transformation—on the web!

The selection quoted on the cover of this issue is from the cover of this issue is from the *Notebook on Evolution*, a new compilation of the Mother's comments which deal directly with transformation. The *Notebook* is available on the web at <http://nextspecies.8m.com>. This 331-page text covers the period

1951–1973. It can be read online, or downloaded in Portable Document Format (PDF) for reading and printing. (A free program for reading PDF documents is available on the web at <http://www.adobe.com>).

For more information on the *Notebook*, please send e-mail to [info@nextspecies.8m.com](mailto:info@nextspecies.8m.com).

## Savitri on the Net

The entire *Savitri* epic has been put online by some very hardworking Russian sadhaks. It is available at <http://www.ivvs.ru/IntegralYoga/Contents.html>. The book can also be downloaded in either Word or HTML format. They have translated selected portions into Russian as well.

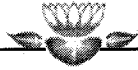
## Sprechen Sie Deutsch?

A German translation of parts of the *Agenda* can be found at <http://agenda.freesevers.com>.

## Habla español?

Spanish translations of several works of Sri Aurobindo are available at [http://pw2.netcom.com/~jorge\\_d/homepage.html](http://pw2.netcom.com/~jorge_d/homepage.html).





## Online journals

The Sri Aurobindo Center of Los Angeles recently inaugurated an online journal titled *Jyoti*, in honor of the founder of the center, Dr. Jyotipriya. And the Integral Knowledge Study Center of Pensacola, Florida, has selections of its journal, *Peacock Letter*, available online. For links to online journals, please see <http://www.miraura.org/lit/online.html>.

## News

### Healing at Quiet

"Peace and stillness are the great remedy for disease. When we can bring peace in our cells we are cured."—The Mother

**Q**uiet Healing Centre in Auroville is offering a series of retreats for letting go of stress, tension, and fatigue in body, heart, and mind. Three retreats are scheduled for Fall 1999 and two for early 2000.

Different healing modalities will be offered in group and individual sessions. Group work will consist of awakening the healing energy in the body through the chakra system, cellular awareness, polarity wellness education, prana aerobics, the "transformation game," and meditation. Individual sessions will be available according to individual needs, which will be monitored throughout the retreat.

The fee is US \$400 per person for nine days including lodging (double room with attached bathroom), meals, laundry, individual therapies, and group work. A nonrefundable deposit of \$75 is required to reserve a place, since sessions are limited to sixteen participants. Reservations can be made in advance at Quiet or at any Auroville guest house. Participants should arrive at least one day before the retreat starts.

Retreats are scheduled as follows:

- |              |                       |
|--------------|-----------------------|
| <b>1999:</b> | 6–15 September        |
|              | 27 October–6 November |
|              | 6–15 December         |
| <b>2000:</b> | 24 January–2 February |
|              | 6–15 March            |

For more information, contact Quiet Healing Centre (address: Auroville 605 001, Tamil Nadu, India; phone: 91-413-622329 and 91-413-622646, Monday–Saturday, 8 a.m.–5 p.m.; e-mail: [quiet@auroville.org.in](mailto:quiet@auroville.org.in); web site: <http://www.Auroville-products.com/Quiet>).

## Need land, will travel

This summer, the Sri Aurobindo Association will sponsor a visit by Guy Ryckaert from Auroville. The purpose of his visit is to give presentations at AUM and elsewhere on the urgency of the land situation in Auroville. He will also be contacting different groups and individuals in the U.S. who are interested in Auroville or in fundraising for Auroville.

Guy joined Auroville in 1988 and has been a member of multiple groups there, including the Economy Group, Auroville Council, Working Committee, and Development Group. For the past ten years he has been the coordinator of the Auroville Project Coordination Group, and for the last two years, the coordinator of the Auroville Land Fund.

His itinerary is still open. For more information, please contact the Sri Aurobindo Association (address: Box 163237, Sacramento, CA 95816; phone: 209-339-3710, ext. 6; e-mail: [saa@collaboration.org](mailto:saa@collaboration.org)).

## SARF and SAA join hands

The Sri Aurobindo Association (SAA), in conjunction with the Sri Aurobindo Research Foundation (SARF) from Baroda, India, has created a subcommittee to further the work of SARF in the United States. SARF studies social, political, and economic issues in the light of Sri Aurobindo's yoga. This subcommittee will pursue associations with various institutions in the U.S., raise funds, and coordinate its work with the main organization in India.

For more information, contact Kosha Shah (address: B-103, Amrakunj Apartments, Racecourse Circle, Baroda 309 007, India; e-mail: [sarf@ad1.vsnl.net.in](mailto:sarf@ad1.vsnl.net.in)).

## Sri Aurobindo Saranam wired for takeoff

The Sri Aurobindo Saranam, a new center in North Bend, Washington, has recently acquired a computer with the generous help of donations from our community. Aurela Sequoia, director of the center, will be initiating two projects aimed at helping individuals and groups in the Integral Yoga connect with one another for the purpose of achieving specific goals.

The first goal will be to develop a project- and work-oriented web site on which people can post work requests, offer assistance and give project updates.

The second goal, will be to establish a "collective harmony" working group (restricted to sadhaks of the Integral Yoga for whom Mother and Sri Aurobindo are their sole gurus.) The purpose of this group will be to take up (via email) various topics relating to creating community and the variety of experiments that have been tried at Integral Yoga centers, circles, and study groups. The hope



is to move beyond discussions and into creative and harmonious experiments among ourselves. The focus will include a question of the month, and somewhere down the road the discussions will be edited and compiled into a book about creating community.

For more information, contact Aurela Sequoia (address: Box 2396, North Bend, Washington, 98045; USA; e-mail: asequoia@earthlink.net).

## Dancing your dreams

Rabiya Majid Lila Forest and Paulo Baeta Pereira will offer a workshop the weekend of July 24–25 at the Berkeley Fellowship of Unitarian Universalists in the San Francisco Bay Area, entitled “Dancing the Dream Awake.” They will create an experience of dance/movement and dreamwork, using the body to make deeper contact with the energies and wisdom that come to us in our dreams. The workshop is appropriate for people at all levels of experience from novice to professional, in both dance and dreamwork.

Paulo Pereira, a longtime resident of the international township of Auroville in South India, has been involved in dance as a teacher, performer, and choreographer for twenty-five years. His focus is the expression of

spiritual aspiration and connection through dance and movement. He is presently completing practice leading to certification as a Jungian therapist at the Jungian Institute in Zurich, Switzerland.

The Rev. Lila Forest (Rabiya Majid) is a Unitarian Universalist minister with twenty-five years experience in dreamwork. She has taught and facilitated dreamwork in Auroville and in the U.S., with congregations, with women’s groups and dream groups, and at Sufi camps and other gatherings. She has been on the Sufi path for many years.

Paulo will present a dance performance at the Fellowship on July 24 at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$10 in advance, \$12 at the door, \$5 for workshop participants. The Berkeley Fellowship is at 1924 Cedar (at Bonita) in north Berkeley; times are 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. on Saturday and 2 p.m. – 6 p.m. on Sunday. The cost of the workshop is \$100 for registration before July 1, \$120 July 1 or later. To register, please send a \$25 non-refundable deposit or the full registration amount to Lila Forest, 1260 17th Ave #3, San Francisco, CA, 94122. Tickets for the dance performance can be ordered by sending \$10 (or \$5 if also registering for the workshop). For information please contact Lila (phone: 415-665-5838; e-mail: forest@wenet.net).

## Update on flat for Shyam

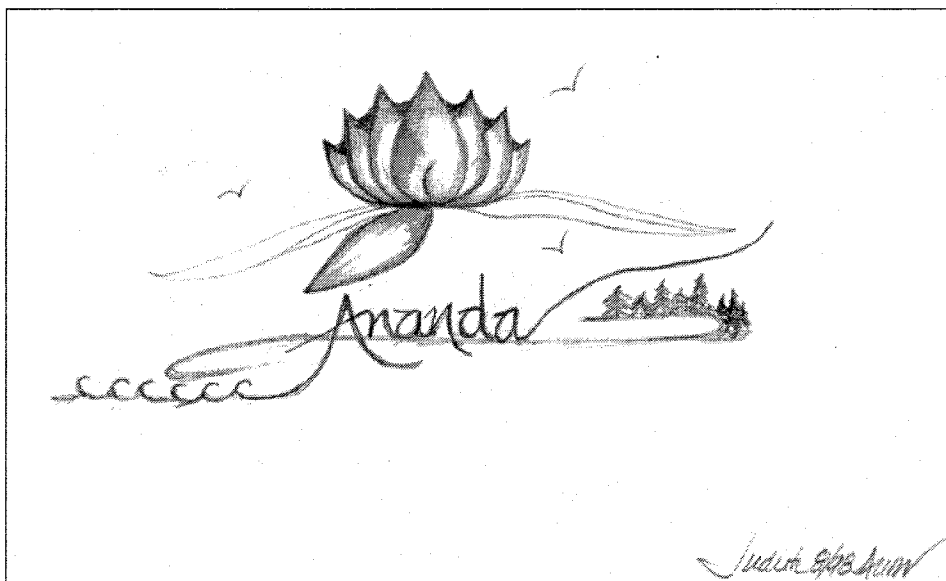
## Kumari

In our last issue *Collaboration* printed an appeal for funds for office and storage space for Shyam Kumari. She wrote recently to tell us that in July 1998 the Vraja Trust was formed; however it received permanent legal status only a few months ago. She also says “Last month about a thousand children’s books written by me were donated to several schools who are making them text books. It is most encouraging and seems like the seal of the Mother’s approval on my work.” Shyam has identified a flat about half a kilometer from the ashram. Our previous note was mistaken; in addition to manuscripts there are several thousand of her books to store, and room is needed to train teachers who will use the books. For more information, contact Shyam Kumari (e-mail: shyamkumari@fnmail.com).

## Integral psychology conference at Matagiri

The Sri Aurobindo Center of Boston is pleased to announce a conference dedicated to the topic of Psychology in the Light of Sri Aurobindo’s Vision. The conference is scheduled for Friday evening 15 October through Sunday 17 October. Our aspiration is to gather together people mainly from the U.S. and Canada who have both a special interest in some aspect of modern psychology/psychiatry, and a working knowledge of the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. People from India and other parts of the world are welcome, too, though we understand that the travel involved may be prohibitive.

We will be sponsoring two visitors from the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. Matthijs Cornelissen is a resident of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram working in the Archives and Research Department. [See his essay on page 31 in this issue of *Collaboration*.] Soumitra Basu, M.D., is a practicing psychiatrist in Calcutta with extensive experience in alternative modalities, yoga psychology, and sociocultural analysis. He is currently one of the chief editors of *NAMAH*



Impression of talk given by Ananda Reddy at AUM 98. (Pencil drawing by Judith Wright)



(New Alternatives in Medicine and Health), the ashram's groundbreaking journal on complimentary medicine. As you know, people from a variety of backgrounds have been participating in the internet group called the Psych forum which is dedicated to the same topic. Our goal is to bring together these contributors, as well as others of similar interests, in order to further support the emerging dialog. But we also want to stimulate creative interchange amongst the group and work towards developing an agenda for further research in the area.

Modern psychology has become quite diverse, and there is plenty of work to be done in translating the unique vocabularies of each school or sub-specialty, as well as seeing how their insights fit into the larger vision of Sri Aurobindo's model of consciousness. There is also a wealth of new beginnings to be gathered in terms of documenting how different people have used their sadhana to inform their clinical practice. Both of these goals will take more than a single conference to achieve; however, this conference can be the first step towards an ongoing process. At this early stage of our collective dialog, we hope to focus the discussion on those who have some knowledge of the Integral Yoga, since the initial goal is to work towards a consensus view of this emerging psychology.

It will be a two-day conference. Estimated cost of \$60/day. Lunches will be provided; however, room and board are not included. We can help with reservations at local lodges or motels.

To give you an idea of who we are, the psychology group at the Boston center includes Susan Curtis, a transpersonal psychologist with over 20 years of clinical experience and a special interest in trauma therapies; Will Moss, a student of Psychosynthesis, a former Board Member and President of the Sri Aurobindo Association, and a practitioner of Bach flower remedies; John Schlorholtz, who co-developed the Yoga Program for Harvard's Center for Wellness and Health Communication and is an expert in using hatha yoga as a therapy for people with special physical and emotional conditions; and

Michael Miovic M.D., a resident in psychiatry at Harvard who has a special interest in developing flower remedies based on Mother's messages.

For more information, contact Michael Miovic (Address: Michael Miovic, M.D., 56 Forbes St. #1, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130 USA; Phone: 617-522-1446; e-mail: mmiovic@pol.net).

## AUROVILLE ALMANAC

### News update from Auroville Farms

#### Cyberfarming, veggie volunteers, and the visitor from Green

by Isha O'Connell

Though the Auroville Farms main office has relied on computerization for quite some time, there has been a surge in the number of farmers in Auroville who have begun to develop their skills in cyberspace. Of course, most of this takes the form of learning accounting programs and ways to record the flow of produce to various outlets. Still, in a land where telephone connections were a rarity until very recently, it is remarkable how quickly these down-to-earth types have adapted to the information age.

With the completion of a volunteers' house at Siddhartha Farm, willing workers began to arrive! So far this season we have a farming couple from Kassel College, Germany, who specialize in animal husbandry and are doing their six-month practical studies on organic farms around India. Also contributing to our veggie gardening has been Friederike Weitz (who lives in Holste, Germany) taking a break from her home on a six-acre organic vegetable farm to help us with the Solitude garden and the compost project there. (The aim of the students' hostel is to take long-term volunteers, so if you know someone looking for such an experience have them get in touch with us by e-mail or letter.)

Another visitor of note, who came during the biannual Auroville Governing Board meeting in January, was Dr. Norman Myers, an environmental consultant, from Green College at Oxford University. Dr. Myers was appointed a member of the Auroville International Advisory Council and showed great interest in our efforts to define aims for food security for the growing community. Brooks Anderson of Annapurna Farm will be working next year on a research project to identify the relative costs (both economic and environmental) of growing rice and millets by various methods in our area, and Dr. Myers has offered to provide information and moral support.

From the Farms center, a label has been created for the packaging and display of our goods in the multiple food shops within Auroville. Besides the service of distributing complete rice in bulk to Aurovilians daily and coordinating supplies to the Solar Kitchen we are proud to promote the green Auroville symbol on our packaged goods, as a mark of quality and community cooperation.

*Isha O'Connell was born in the United States and has been an Aurovilian since the age of six. She has been very effective in linking up various working groups dealing with farms, forestation, green planning, environment, bioregion, and development. For more information on AV Farms, contact Isha (e-mail: isha@auroville.org.in; web: "Ecological Agriculture" page, <http://www.auroville-india.org.in>).*



## CHRONICLES & REFLECTIONS

### Traveling to Auroland: A reverie and some strategy

by Gordon Korstange

*This essay was written by Gordon after his trip to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and Auroville in 1998.*

The journey begins not with the first step but with the thought, the impulse, urge, longing—to go back . . . to go home . . . to go. It is winter in the northeast of the United States. The outside world is washed in shades of gray, from the dirty vanilla of last week's snowstorm to the hues of stark tree bark in the early onset of night. "It was evening all afternoon. It was snowing and it was going to snow . . ." as Wallace Stevens wrote. My mind drifts through the darkness, desperately seeking sunshine, warmth, light . . .

And gradually the city appears with its grid of broad streets, the white-washed colonial buildings, the sea, and Pondicherry becomes a mandala. Like a Tibetan monk I envision the concentric lines and begin the inner journey that proceeds toward the center, taking my time, savoring the sights that appear, preparing myself: I begin at the crossroads of Pondy: Mahatma Gandhi Road and Nehru Street, where a vehicular cacophony competes with masses of pedestrians, all overseen by a policeman with a microphone, trying to direct traffic, but barely heard over the hubbub.

It is midmorning in my reverie, and I can already feel the intense summer heat. I travel up Nehru Street, past the Aristo Hotel roof garden, the venerable, ever dingy Indian Coffee House, the beckoning air-conditioned shops, and the police station. Then I cross the canal with its all-too-human stench, urging me quickly toward something

more sanctified, and take a detour to the green relief of Government Park facing the Governor of Pondicherry's residence. Across the park is the General Hospital, a village of its own, with its semipermanent population of relatives camped outside, catered to by vendors of savories and cool drinks.

I cannot resist walking two blocks up to Goubert Avenue and the broad expanse of empty sea. I change the time to 6 o'clock in the evening so that the wind from the ocean soothes me and the throng of others seeking relief, as they stroll by the enormous statue of Gandhiji and the ancient pillars. Here I could linger, or wander through the old colonial streets of Pondicherry that lie between the canal and the ocean: Rue Victor Simone; Rue Suffren; Rue Romain Rolland, Rue Bazar Saint Laurent . . . but the mandala is full of such reasons to loiter as this. I move on, along the beach, until I reach Rue Law De Lauriston, the most uniquely named Rue in Pondy, and proceed slowly down it.

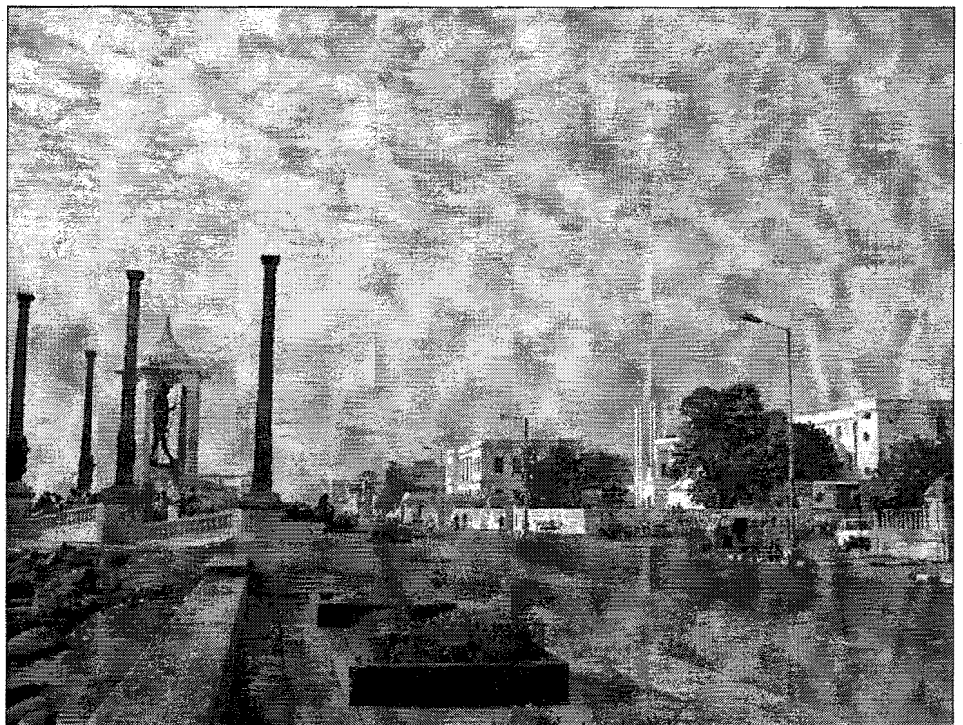
On the left at the first street is the ashram library, quiet and cool, where reading space is as conducive to

contemplation as fact-finding. Two more blocks brings me to the ashram playground, the scene of so many of Mother's talks. The pull is stronger here.

Another two blocks brings me to Manakulavinayagar Koil Street. I look to the left, to the congested temple of Vinayagar, a seeming anomaly, where Pondicherry and ashram coexist. All morning and evening, on foot, bicycle, motorbike, and car, the masses stream through the *pandal* that covers the street and stop to do puja to the elephant-headed one (for everyone in India seems to do homage of some sort to him who seems to be above sect). Ashramites and visitors too walk past on their way to the dining room or the samadhi and peer into the interior where flames flicker, drums beat, and the air is dense with the smoke of ritual. How many mutter, as I would, an *OM namo namah mahaganapatiyai* as they pass?

A minibazaar with prayer beads, images, and all the paraphernalia of Hinduism sprawls outside the temple and beggars line the end of the block that abuts Nehru Street.

I turn right toward a different shrine and pass through the gauntlet of lotus sellers,



Statue of Gandhi on Goubert Avenue, Pondicherry, India. (Photo: Madhusudan Desai. From the photo album on the web site <http://pondy-central.com>, used with permission.)



Front gate of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry. (Photo: Jim Hurley)

rickshaw drivers, and tourist vans, until I reach the corner of Rue de la Marine. The Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education lines the entire block to the right and a vast throng of bicycles wait for their riders along its curb. I dwell for a moment on the thought of the tree-shaded courtyards and classrooms inside. To my left is the Sri Aurobindo Book Distribution Agency (SABDA), full of the latest books and editions on and by Sri Aurobindo and Mother. I will save that for later, for now that I am finally here I can no longer linger but pass through the gate with Mother's sign overhead into the center of this mandala.

From long practice I know the direct way now. Turn quickly to the right and walk on. Do not seem tentative or curious; do not saunter—the samadhi is around the corner. Leave *chappels* [sandals] in the rectangle on the sidewalk where so many are. Walk forward until I am in the magic circle beneath the service tree whose branches seem to extend into every nook and corner of the courtyard.

It will be as it always is. In the outer circle of this inmost realm of the mandala are the ashramites who work and live here, sitting in the rooms that surround the courtyard reading or carrying on quiet conversa-

tions; and those walking through the courtyard on their way somewhere else; and those sitting on the ground at a distance removed from the samadhi, meditating or simply looking. In this outer circle there is a low hum and continual movement, for the samadhi is the nerve center of the ashram and many people pass through it everyday.

In the inner circle is the goal of all Auro-pilgrims, redolent with a pattern of flowers laced with fastidious care by white-saried women; surrounded by devotees, each sunk in a moment of inner aspiration and calling; and covered by a cloud of incense smoke. I know that I will not be alone here, for going to the samadhi is a most public activity and will test my powers of concentration. Here, at last, in the heart of Auroland, one must be one-pointed, and I have too often failed.

Unable to concentrate right away, I find a place to sit and look around. Endless sweeping goes on by the aforementioned elderly ladies in white saris. Chipmunks scamper gaily, at breakneck speed, up, down, around, and over the massive tree that covers most of the courtyard. A man kneels at the end of the samadhi, his head bowed and touching the marble, when suddenly his cellphone goes off in his pocket, and he turns

it off with a certain amount of embarrassment. Another man, a pink hibiscus cupped in his hands, stands stock-still gazing raptly up toward the room where Mother spent her last years. A middle-aged Bengali, impatient to deposit a flower, dismissively nudges aside a Tamil devotee with a gesture indicating that he should move on.

In the outer inner circle, the dour guardians of this courtyard herd those who hesitate or look uncertain of what or where they're supposed to do or go, yet the steady stream of aspirants and the curious flows through continuously—ashramites in white or blue shorts; ashramites in white saris; Tamilian ladies in exuberant saris; Tamilian men in dark pants and white shirts; and all the others, like me, who have found their way here through the heat, dust and noise of the city.

Finally I am able to reel my senses in, able to focus my concentration on the marble crypt that contains the physical remains of they whose force created the circle of energy that is the Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

**Aurovilians are still trying to figure out what to do with this giant concrete sphere.**

**L**ike the samadhi courtyard, the center of Auroville also has its sacred tree, a towering banyan with roots plunging down through the verdant grass beneath it. But unlike the simplicity of the samadhi, the Matrimandir towers over the red clay of the Auroville plateau set above the Bay of Bengal. And if the essence of the samadhi is devotion, that of the Matrimandir is a white silence, disturbed only by the muted hum of air conditioners.

Whereas ashramites flow continuously in and out of the samadhi all day, Aurovilians mostly buzz around the Matrimandir on their motorbikes, for it is only open after working hours, from 4 o'clock onwards, and





then the visitors usually outnumber the residents.

If you're a visitor staying in Auroville, you can go to the Matrimandir Information Center after 4 p.m. and get a pass to go up into the inner chamber and meditate. If you're a visitor staying in Pondicherry, it helps to have connections, for Aurovilians are still trying to figure out what to do with this giant concrete sphere.

The township of Auroville is a mandala too, but only on the idealized map superimposed on the actual plateau. Thus, getting to the Matrimandir—getting anywhere in fact—is not a simple stroll. The ideal way is by bicycle—if you're not in a hurry and the weather is cool (November, January, and February). From Pondy, it is about five miles to Aspiration, one of the main communities, along the beach road. You then have to ride another three miles to reach the Matrimandir. Riding bicycles at night is not recommended unless you have a very good cycle light (to help you see the potholes), a good sense of direction, and are relatively fearless.

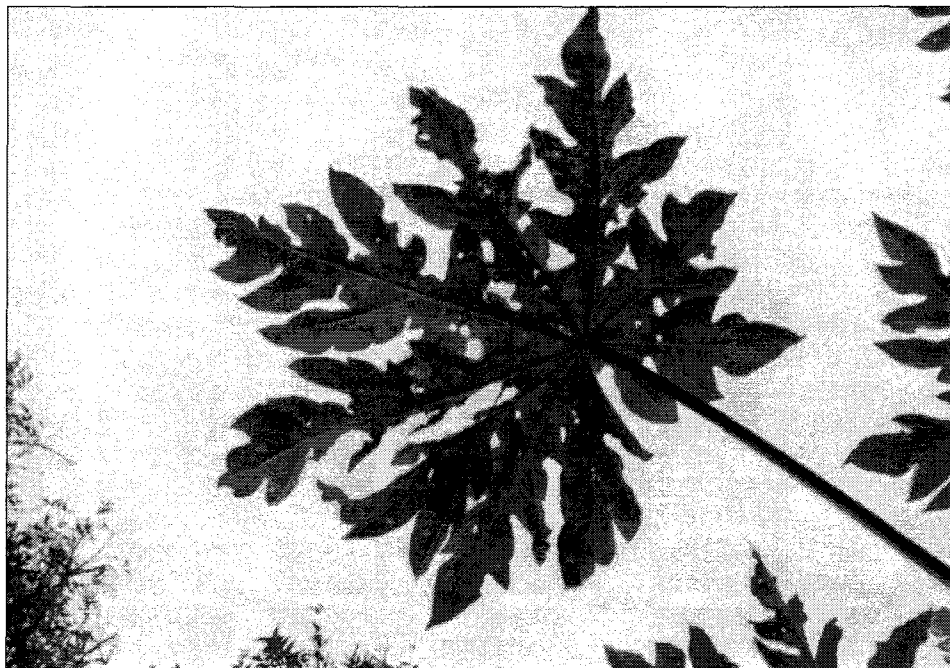
Should you stay in Pondicherry, you might contemplate renting a moped, if you're up for the chaos of Indian roads, or a taxi, if you're not. Moped rentals are available in both Pondy and Auroville. They will break down . . . well, OK, they might break down.

**For practical information on  
visiting Pondicherry, contact:**

Bureau Central  
Sri Aurobindo Ashram  
3 Rangapillai Street  
Cottage Complex  
Pondicherry 605001  
India

Email:  
bureaucentral@auroville.org.in  
and/or parleggh@auroville.org.in.

But my travel reveries of Auroville are about bicycling—pushing the pedals of a heavy Atlas along through sand (actually preferable to the chunky jarring stuff that



*Coconut leaf against the sky, Pondicherry Ashram farm, India. (Photo: David Hutchinson)*

passes for pavement), while Aurovilians and villagers on motorbikes whiz past. There may be trees overhead, some of the hundreds of thousands that have been planted, and fields on either side full of cashew nut trees or an occasional crop. Even a slight incline feels, after awhile, like going up a Vermont hill on a bike stuck in some middle gear that is too high, for all Indian bicycles seem to be geared too high.

But then, with their weight, they coast so well down slopes into tiny communities like Aurodam or Verité or Dana that appear totally empty at first descent. One needs connections, again, as one would in any residential community. The telephone is ubiquitous; you can contact almost anyone before you go, unless you just want to go. If you stay in one of the many guest houses located in the communities that make up the township (see the Auroville web site for a list), you should receive help in making connections.

The main road between Aspiration, Certitude, and the Centre is a steady stream of traffic, mostly motorbikes, though it does not approach the congestion of Pondy. Off the main road, away from the carefully tended greenery around houses, into the dirt byways that lead to the greenbelt commu-

nities, Auroville is still an emptiness, a harsh landscape lifting up new trees and an occasional homestead. The roads are unmarked, as if to say, choose one and see where it leads, trust your intuition, listen to it.

**T**he road into Auroland is unmarked also, though its outer precincts are more comfortably attained than days gone by. Direct flights to Madras, taxi service, air conditioning, motorbikes, excellent water filters, all of these can smooth a visit.

Some people might take the direct route. The late Sashi Kant Disai told me that he would fly directly to Madras, take a taxi to the home of a friend in Pondy and spend anywhere from four to ten days at the samadhi day and night, only leaving it to eat and sleep.

For others, like me, the entrance into the real Auroland is through the mandala of contradictions, mental barriers, old memories, cultural stereotypes, and a host of guardians of my own designing. They spring up in the streets of Pondy and on the roads of Auroville. It is good to regard them, salute them, and then move on towards the



goal. Like waiting for a balcony darshan. The moment comes when all the clamor stops and a rapt silence ascends up from the streets of Pondicherry, spreads out little by little to the red-dust roads of Auroville, and I'm home.

The entrance into the real Auroland is through the mandala of contradictions, mental barriers, old memories ...

#### Travel tips

#### Staying in Pondicherry

The following list is taken from *A Guide to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram*. The most common places for western tourists to stay are the Park Guest House, Cottage Guest House, and International Guest House; however, other smaller guest houses may provide a more intimate look into the lives of ashramites. (A 'B' next to the guest house shows that they do their own bookings. Write well in advance to the guest house, addressed as follows: (Guest House name), Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry 605002, India.

##### Ashram guest houses

Cottage Guest House (B)  
New Sweet Home (B)  
Oriya Nilayam  
Park Guest House (B) on the ocean, the premier place to stay

##### Ashram-related guest houses

Atithi Bhavan  
Aurobharati (B)  
Garden Guest House  
International Guest House (B)  
Karnataka Nilayam (B)

Navajyoti Press House  
Orissa Gouse  
Ramakrishna Bhavan (B)

Samarpan Yatri Bhavan (B)  
Seaside Guest House (B)  
Shelter  
Society House

#### Staying in Auroville

Auroville has begun to cater to tourists in recent years, though the official web site (<http://www.auroville.org>) offers this disclaimer:

Visitors to Auroville are often disappointed to find no ashram, tourist attractions or a holiday atmosphere. Auroville is not a tourist place as it is sometimes referred to in travel and tourist literature. All casual/day visitors are encouraged to go to the Visitors' Centre. It is open daily from 9:30 to 17:30, and offers information, exhibition, video, a restaurant and shopping facilities. Those who come with a deeper interest and actually want to visit one of Auroville's projects, should make an appointment with the concerned place before hand. Passes to these places are issued at the Visitors' Centre.

The web site will give you all the information you need to get started in Auroville, from taxi services that pick you up at the Madras airport to a complete list of guest houses to a map of the township. The Centre Guest House is one of the oldest and most convenient of places to stay, but it fills up quickly during the season (December–February).

#### Good-bye

So good-bye to the crazy chorus of birdsong that greets the light each day; goodbye to the thin coating of glazed sweat on the body; to the all-night firecracker temple celebrations; to waiters in Pondy's Rendezvous restaurant in their impeccable white shirts, black pants, and black bow ties; to the tight white socks one puts on in order to enter the Matrimandir chamber; to the buses and trucks which consume the whole road in their bulk, blasting black exhaust over the landscape; to the dazzling smiles of Tamilians; to the ever-present, ever-revolving wheel of summer life—the overhead fan; to the myriad trees of Auroville and the myriad flowers on the samadhi; to the buzz of motorbikes and rumble of motorcycles; to the supremacy of the spiritual impulse as *raison d'être*; to long evenings sitting with



Banyan tree at the Matrimandir, Auroville, India. (Photo: David Hutchinson)



friends to talk and be silent; to crickets; to dust; to all the things in India that don't work and are maybe not needed, for talk and silence are everything, the only thing, the presence of others, the presence of the invisible.

### Health

You will get all kinds of opinions on this issue, but if you've never been out of the country it is good to get those injections against malaria, typhoid, tetanus, etc. The key issue in India is drinking water. Bottled water is now available everywhere in south India and seems to be safe. Water filters in Pondicherry and Auroville can usually be trusted. Silver portable water filters, available in camping catalogs, do an excellent job. But the only absolutely safe way is to drink water that's been boiled for at least five minutes. Because of this, tea and coffee can usually be trusted.

In a tropical country, one should keep a watchful eye on any openings in the skin caused by cuts or abrasions. They should be disinfected immediately and covered as completely as possible.

### Air travel

The cheapest ways are the most roundabout—flying through the Mideast, Ceylon, Delhi, Bombay. Be prepared for thirty-plus hours of travel time. British Air and Lufthansa have daily direct flights to Madras, but they are more expensive, unless you find a deal. Start early to plan your flight, because the number of Indians in the USA who travel home increases greatly every year, especially in the winter. There are many Indian travel agents who arrange these flights (some of them operate out of a kitchen).

### Historic Pondicherry

A guidebook to South India offers this summary of Pondicherry history:

In 1672 the French secured land for a trading post beside the Bay of Bengal from Ali Shah II, the ruler of Bijapur. The settlement (established by Francois Martin and laid out over two years) served as the headquarters for the expansion of French influence in southern India. Pondicherry was occupied by the Dutch from 1693–97, and changed hands between the British and French no less than nine times in the course of the eighteenth century. Under Joseph Francois Dupleix, governor from 1741–54, Pondicherry regained its former importance. However, in 1761, the British captured the city and demolished many of its finest buildings. Pondicherry was finally restored to the French in 1817. In 1940 it declared for the Free French. (*The Blue Guide to Southern India*)

### Around Pondicherry and Auroville

For those who want to visit the teeming world of India that lies outside of Auroland, there are some interesting day trips made convenient by taxi but also approachable by local bus, if you have the time and stamina.

The first is the pilgrimage town of Tiruvannamalai, 103 kilometers (about 65 miles) west of Pondy. There you find the huge Shiva temple of Arunachaleshvara, lying at the base of the rocky hill that gives the temple its name. In November and December, during the festival of Siva Ratri (the night of Shiva), an enormous fire is lit on the summit of Arunachala.

Near the temple is the pleasant ashram of a well-known saint, Ramana Maharishi, who, like Sri Aurobindo, left his body in 1950. If you climb the hill, you can visit some of the caves and dwellings that Ramana Maharishi stayed in during his years in Tiruvannamalai.

From here, thirty kilometers (twenty-four miles) east, is the fortified site of Gingee, a spectacular collection of mountain citadels and ramparts constructed in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries to guard the northern reaches of the Tamil country. Gingee can also be the first stop on a trip from Pondy that passes through the town of Tindivanam and then proceeds to Tiruvannamalai.

Another day trip (actually half a day via taxi) is the town of Chidambaram, sixty-seven kilometers (about forty-two miles), with its great Nataraja Temple in which Shiva is worshipped in his form as lord of the dance. It is one of the few temples in India in which shrines to Shiva and also Vishnu coexist at the center. The temple reputedly marks the spot where Shiva won a dance contest to impress his consort, Parvati. The temple is managed by an interesting sect, Dikshita brahmins, and the puja ceremonies use drums and fire to great effect.

Both temples are best visited in the early evening (5–7 p.m.) when they are full of devotees and events.

South of Chidambaram is the delta of the Cauvery River where the great Chola kings of the Tamils built their most spectacular temples (Kumbakonam, Tanjavur, Madurai) and the refined culture of Tamil Nadu arose. To see these sites, a three- to four-day tour is highly recommended.

For nature lovers, a day trip to the Vedantangal bird sanctuary (about a two hour drive north from Pondicherry) during November–February reveals great numbers of waterfowl: cormorants, night herons, grey pelicans, sandpipers, grey wagtails, storks, ibis, egrets, and purple moorhens. There is an observation tower on the edge of the water. If you stay the night, early morning provides the best viewing.



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## THE POETRY ROOM



*Glass Buddha in Bamboo. (Photo: Marta Belén)*

### A poem

The heart kindles—  
Beneath the breast,  
an upward thrust is felt.  
Immense is the pressure,  
Powerful is the force.  
The light travels—  
Beyond the limit,  
A straight path is built.  
Intense is the call,  
Reckless is the nature.  
The fear drowns—  
In the well of darkness,  
The devil hand is melt.  
Immortal is the will.  
Truth is the strength.  
And . . . at last the God wakes.

—Sarbani

### The stone

A God-Child passed a heap of stones  
And kicked one up for fun again and again.  
Sometimes the stone soared in high air,  
At others it crashed back on the harsh road.  
Thus were rounded some of its jagged lines.  
The child was fascinated with his new toy.  
He would not let it rest when it fell  
Into some natural drain or roadside rut.  
Repeatedly he picked and tossed it up.  
Sometimes as it passed the mountainous heap  
Of which the stone had been a part,  
Its comrades cried, "What bad luck!  
Our brother's life is a series of kicks and thuds."  
Their mocking commiseration made the stone  
Bemoan its fate, though secretly it was glad.  
Breathtaking were those ascending curves,  
Engrossing the enigmatic falls;  
It mattered not how much these galled.  
So the child's pleasure grew ever greater.  
The stone started glowing with an inner urge  
And soared high with an upward flame  
Till one day the child stopped to pick it up,  
This humble companion of his aeonic game,  
To find a diamond effulgent with golden rays.  
Lovingly he placed it in his golden crown  
And walked content on his eternal way.

—Shyam Kumari

### For my teacher

With the invisible stealth  
of a Snow Leopard  
tintinnabulated the music  
of Clear Light  
down through the darkened centuries.

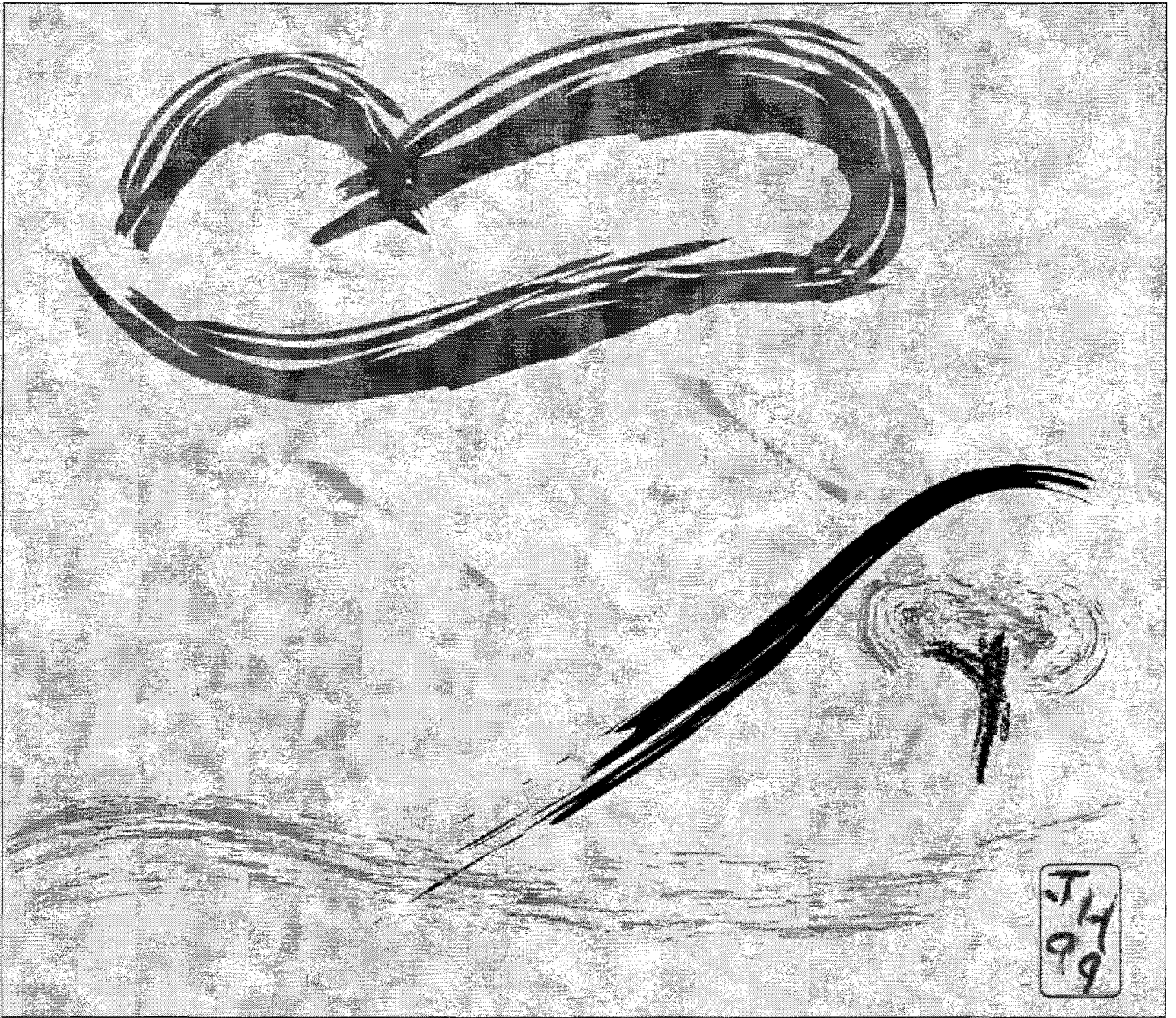
A lingering muted chord  
touched a stillpoint of my heart  
with the tenderness  
of a melting snowflake.

And I remembered you  
I remembered you.

All those lives . . .  
All those lives.

—Diedre Maguire





*"Storm on the Coast." Digital image by Jim Hurley in the Sumi-e style which uses the power of suggestion rather than realism. This drawing required fourteen strokes. Traditional Sumi-e, practiced by Zen monks, uses an ink-saturated brush with one stroke for each part of the image, making it closer to calligraphy than drawing.*

After the rain;  
Seeing forever—  
Problems, forgotten . . .

—Jim Hurley





## Prayer for traveling

Around the couch of felicity,  
in my greater dream,  
there is in your Reality  
a constant embracing stream.

Its rhythm trills the Atman lute,  
its light a widening peace,  
but in the silver song of night  
is where it need increase.

Each vision is an imprint—  
the experience is true.  
But there in the vaguer bleakness  
may I be touched by you!

The sum of notes creates a tune  
But the melody is not the dance  
until the fire of your embrace  
has, in it, Presence—voice of chance!

The summit peak—a glory  
blessed by your lotus feet—  
but may I have and see you first  
on the God-forsaken street!

In all I hear you calling  
and in all I lost my heart.  
Guide me, but bless me—above all, this:  
We'll never be apart.

—Gene Maslow

## The finding of the soul

An awful dimness wrapped the great rock-doors  
Carved in the massive stone of Matter's trance.  
Two golden serpents round the lintel curled,  
Enveloping it with their pure and dreadful strength,  
Looked out with wisdom's deep and luminous eyes.  
An eagle covered it with wide conquering wings:  
Flames of self-lost immobile reverie,  
Doves crowded the grey musing cornices  
Like sculptured postures of white-bosomed peace.

Across the threshold's sleep she entered in  
And found herself amid great figures of gods  
Conscious in stone and living without breath,  
Watching with fixed regard the soul of man,  
Executive figures of the cosmic self,  
World-symbols of immutable potency.

On the walls covered with significant shapes  
Looked at her the life-scene of man and beast  
And the high meaning of the life of gods,  
The power and necessity of these numberless worlds,  
And faces of beings and stretches of world-space  
Spoke the succinct and inexhaustible  
Hieratic message of the climbing planes.

In their immensitude signing infinity  
They were the extension of the self of God  
And housed, impassively receiving all,  
His figures and his small and mighty acts  
And his passion and his birth and life and death  
And his return to immortality.

To the abiding and eternal is their climb,  
To the pure existence everywhere the same,  
To the sheer consciousness and the absolute force  
And the unimaginable and formless bliss,  
To the mirth in Time and the timeless mystery  
Of the triune being who is all and one  
And yet is no one but himself apart.

There was no step of breathing men, no sound,  
Only the living nearness of the soul.

—Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri*,  
"The finding of the soul," pp. 524- 525

### About the poets

*Sarbani* is an associate of the Gnostic Centre, New Delhi, India. Her poem was reprinted with permission from their February 1999 newsletter, *The Awakening Ray*. For more information about the Gnostic Centre, contact Ameeta Mehra (e-mail: ameeta@gnasdl01.vsnl.net.in).

*Shyam Kumari* is a resident of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, where she has lived for thirty years. She has written hundreds of poems, plays, essays, and stories, including a four-volume series titled *How They Came to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother*. She can be contacted at shyamkumari@fnmail.com.

*Diedre Maguire* has been a resident of the Rudolf Steiner community since last June. Her creative life has focused mainly on painting and sculpture. She can be contacted at 241 Hungry Hollow Road, Chestnut Ridge, NY 10977, U.S.A.

*Gene Maslow* was an artist of many talents, including painting and poetry, and a resident of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, as well as one of the first residents of Auroville. He died in 1996 in the ashram nursing home.

*Jim Hurley* is a founder of the Integral Yoga web site. See his entire gallery at <http://www.arachnaut.org/gallery/> (e-mail: hurleyj@arachnaut.org).



# Earth Spirit Rising

Mike Wyatt

Moderately

Earth spi - rit ri - sing, sun spi - rit fall - ing.  
Soul in mat - ter wa - king, long - est night is break - ing.  
Earth spi - rit ri - sing, sun spi - rit fall - ing.  
Earth spi - rit ri - sing, sun spi - rit fall - ing.

earth spi - rit ri - sing, sun spi - rit call - ing, Spi - rit, bo - dy mer - ging.  
Hearts of fire dwell - ing, light in mat - ter swell - ing, Nur - tur - ing the Truth here.  
earth spi - rit ri - sing, sun spi - rit call - ing, Help - ing us to feel clear,  
earth spi - rit ri - sing, sun spi - rit call - ing, Sounds of peo - ple cry - ing  
earth spi - rit ri - sing, sun spi - rit call - ing, Pulse of spi - rit reach - ing.

the two worlds be - com - ing One. Hearts of fire sur - ging, fu - sing to cre - ate the dawn.  
time - less time and Life Di - vine, God - dess of the fu - ture, ev' - ry - thing I am is Thine.  
help - ing us trans - form our fear, Spread - ing like a wild - fire that to which all hears as - pire.  
and the time is grow - ing late, Death and false - hood dy - ing, Hea - ven here we will cre - ate  
He - rald of what is to come, Spi - rit is be - seech - ing, Lis - ten to the mys - tic drum.

*Mike Wyatt is a musician and writer from Madison, Wisconsin who has published articles on consciousness, deep ecology, and politics. He can be reached at [wyatt@danenet.wictp.org](mailto:wyatt@danenet.wictp.org).*



## NOTES FROM THE FIELD

### The frontier of the new millennium

by William M. Sullivan

A revised version of this article was published in the February 1999 issue of *Auroville Today*. William has been a long-time resident of Auroville, and is the author of *The Dawning of Auroville*.

“... in the offing is the conversion of America ...”

We are always in a hurry, because life on earth is short, but when you see what is in the offing ... (*vast circular gesture*). Really beautiful, much better! It takes more time, but it's much better. One of the things in the offing is the conversion of America, the United States, but it will take time. (The Mother, *Agenda*, vol. 12, p. 335)

I used to be in a hurry and I accomplished very little as far as my soul was concerned. I knew it too, and still I lived in Auroville for twenty-four years before I could come to a point of conversion, change. And I had to come to America to do it. Now also, here we are about thirty years from when Mother gave the knowledge about the conversion of America. How did I suppose this conversion was going to happen? How would it happen today? Would it start with say, Bill Clinton, or does it have to start with me? Definitely his sexual addiction has been exposed. Mine too, I had to expose my own and move on through recovery to freedom. This is part of my adventure during this last year. To write about it gives a way to express something of my gratitude to Auroville and to the Mother and to those who have shared with me their inner discoveries. I have received more than I can express. Don't allow my approach to put you off in any way—sometimes it may be too personal and at other times too abstract. However it comes to you, let it be like a letter from a friend.

When I decided to set sail from Auroville in the middle of 1998, in what now seems like a past life, there was an immediate reaction—a revolt of the cells in my body. “You’re going to do what? Are you crazy? What torture are you going to put us through now? You have everything you need and want, don’t be stupid! You know better. You’ve got Auroville, nut boy!” Through some meditation at Matrimandir, and insight, I could convince the body to travel with me. People asked me where I was going but I wasn’t sure where I would end up, and I needed not to be disturbed, so I gave no clues. They asked me when I would be back. I didn’t know. I said it would take at least a month. It has been many months.

You may have seen Mother’s painting “Ascent to Truth.” She drew a mountain path ascending in an oriental-style landscape. Always I am reminded of that image, as I walk a similar path that



“Ascent to Truth.” (Brush and ink drawing by the Mother)

switches back and forth on a steep slope near where I am staying to do this research and retreat. I have stopped on this path and wept more than once. I have also laughed. My inner journey turned out beyond anything I could have ever imagined.

My starting point is best summed up by the only condition Mother lays down in the Auroville Charter: “But to live in Auroville one must be a willing servitor of the Divine Consciousness.” I knew that, I believed it and accepted it, of course—sounds perfect doesn’t it, but I didn’t do it. I served my own consciousness. Then I asked the Mother for help to change. She step-by-step opened every door I needed for the work to be done. It turned out to be much more than I bargained for. It has led me on a journey out of India so I could meet her in America, back to where and what I had left behind, to do what I would never have done in Auroville: cut it all back to zero and start over—this time with the Divine.



To really do this, I dropped contact with Auroville and friends and family. It has been a death because the only way was to let go of everything and everybody. My life was secluded. I got up very early to exercise and meditate, and followed a strict schedule of study and work. That was not so easy at times. I could do it because I was receiving a great deal of help both inner and outer from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother as well as from other spiritual masters and teachers, some of whom I met physically and others on the inner planes. That all worked hand in hand with the resource of Mother's *Agenda* and Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*. I keep digging in these "gold mines." The gold keeps being rediscovered.

Now it becomes clear to me that this discovery is a destiny for which I took birth. The Mother has made it clear to me how she completed her work and the incompleteness is me. I have to do the part that only I can do. She has opened the path, but I have to walk on it myself, yes really. This brings the completion, the victory, which she has always assured me, is certain.

Mother was in a squeezed situation, especially in the last years of her life, surrounded by people who did not understand what she was doing, nor what they had to do to participate and support her work. I knew this most clearly from the *Agenda* where she talks about it. I projected judgment and blame on those people in the Ashram. Pranab stands out because you can not only read what he said, but you can also hear him on the *Agenda* tape arguing with the Mother. Only recently, listening again to that tape, did I understand that while he voiced his resistance, I only judged and didn't admit my own.

*Pranab*: . . . I don't want to listen also, Mother. I understand fully. And let me go on with my own light—own conviction, own faith, own strength, own will. And I don't want to listen, Mother, anything from anybody.

*Mother*: But you don't want to know?

*Pranab*: No, Mother, I don't want."

(*Agenda*, vol. 13, p. 394)

I held this position: "I will listen and then knowing, will do nothing about it." Pranab spoke what I hid from myself. The Mother felt this directly in her body. I am a resistance to the transformation. "No, Mother, I don't want." My work in the light of this, has begun. Anu, a writer from Auroville, opens her poem "Let the Light Begin" with these lines:

The adventure that you are,  
The mystery which you contain  
Is the story of *Mother's Agenda*  
It is about your mind,  
The certainty of your body—  
It is about galaxies

You contain in each cell.  
The adventure begins when we meet  
The Great Walls of Resistance

(*Auroville Review*, Spring 1986, p. 13)

I see this clearly in me now. I always thought the resistance was mostly in everybody else! Oh, I would admit a little now and then, but never surrender enough to make any difference in my life. Now, in going through *Savitri* again—in the light of far more self-knowledge, I understand how I never accepted, nor healed, nor even admitted the *no* in myself. I covered it up. I had good reasons to live my life my way. Even Mother's clear guidance on the basics of body care, food, sleep, sex, money, power, possessions, I found interesting reading but ultimately I said: "Okay, but not for now, maybe someday."

Only the everlasting No has neared  
And stared into thy eyes and killed thy heart:  
But where is the Lover's everlasting Yes?  
He felt the stark resistance huge and dumb  
Of our inconscient and unseeing base,  
The stubborn mute rejection in Life's depths,  
The ignorant No in the origin of things.

(Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri*, pp. 310, 317)

It took me so many years in Auroville before I started to really wake up to something I didn't want to do: live for the Divine—because, well, you know, what about me? While, of course admiring Mother and Sri Aurobindo and appreciating their work, I actually told myself that I was following the ideals they set for me because I agreed with them and I wanted to live them but, well, it takes time and I couldn't reach those colossal heights overnight. Oh yes, and just look at how advanced I already am compared to all the people I see around me. Look at all I have sacrificed to be in Auroville. Look at all the wonderful things I have done, and on and on. I and I. Who is this pretentious I?

The answer from the soul was: not me. I could avoid that message by keeping distracted, by being busy, tense, or tired. Did I create for myself the reality of "unending education" and "constant progress" and "youth that never ages"—no, and I was getting older every year! I found plenty of people to blame for the state of Auroville and the world, but for my own state? Then too, with a little light on how my state affects Auroville and the world and my responsibility for that as well, okay, I was getting rather uncomfortable with my story of self-deception.

My soul knew, as it always does, but I didn't want to listen about moving into territory where the old comfort zone would collapse. I could easily imagine myself on my deathbed with the comfort zone gone forever, and could definitely feel the regret of "too late" having to step into the spirit world without completion, detachment, and freedom. Should I wait for a disaster, or perhaps a cancer, or a heart attack, or some life-threatening message from the body? Thank you, I'd rather not.





So I stepped into that world of spirit before the collapse of my body would force me to. I stepped inside myself to see, to heal the *no*, to see the light. I moved along that path of Mother's "Ascent to Truth." Sri Aurobindo describes how it was for *Savitri*, as I know it was for him and the Mother and for me:

On the bare peak where Self is alone with Nought  
And life has no sense and love no place to stand,  
She must plead her case upon extinction's verge,  
In the world's death-cave uphold life's helpless claim  
And vindicate her right to be and love.

(*Savitri*, p. 12)

I sat there with my mind in the  
void, my emotions in shambles,  
my body numb.

**T**hat is the story concentrated. I had to begin there with death, my death, because my death is the *no*, the resistance, the rejection, that I meet in myself. And in *Savitri*, Sri Aurobindo continues for thousands of verses to spell out what that means from his own experience. *Savitri* goes all the way through to the light that eats up Death and returns with life. She tells me at the end of her story what is the key for the change: "To feel love and oneness is to live." (*Savitri*, p. 724)

The word I needed to start with was *feel*. Why didn't I feel that love and oneness all the time and live from it? Most of my feelings were buried so I wouldn't have to feel them, and I found a few fears keeping it that way: I wouldn't be free anymore to do what I liked and the Truth would ask impossible things of me and I would fail. I didn't want to truly feel love and oneness because that is God, the Divine, or whatever name I use to evoke the supreme reality. Truth would mean no falsehood in my life, no darkness, no suffering, only light. The purity of a transparent crystal. But I have a few old habits like sexual fantasies, preferences like warm weather, cake and ice cream, attachments like travel and independence and all that stuff. Whoa, where to go? There is no escape anymore. Oh, was I tempted to run! But where? The Divine just is, everywhere. Get away, let me out of here! Sri Aurobindo put the facts more eloquently:

Mortality bears ill the eternal's touch:  
It fears the pure divine intolerance  
Of that assault of ether and fire;  
It murmurs at its sorrowless happiness,  
Almost with hate repels the light it brings;  
It trembles at its naked power of Truth  
And the might and sweetness of its  
absolute Voice.

(*Savitri*, p. 7)

I fell down on the path of the ascent to truth, my little path up the slope. I sat there with my mind in the void, my emotions in shambles, my body numb. It sounds a bit dramatic and it was for me. The me who was freaked. But that me is not who I am. Sure took me a while to get that one straight!

This is a very tricky part where my pattern used to be, to blame and judge myself, and feel bad for what I judged as bad. I had to drop, give up, surrender the bad, the sad, the mad me. Those were real attachments. They were my tricks, my deceptions not to change and stay in a self-created prison of that feeling. Now I feel fully every time such a feeling rises again in full swing. I accept it without blame on anybody, especially myself, or the weather, the government or my flat tire. Then I drop it again and again without giving it any ground until it naturally atrophies. I found this secret works; acceptance with awareness heals. I accepted my anger that I had projected on the world, on all the bastards who make life so damned difficult. It was me buying into the difficulty.

Yes, and was I mad at myself for my insane sexual playout! First half of my life as an outward celibate, and an inward, full-blown addict to psychic sexual satisfaction to fill the void I felt. After that, the pattern was an indulgence/abstinence one. Abstinence always brought me to feeling the lack, indulgence also brought me to the feeling of the lack, the emptiness, and during both phases my psychic gifts were all aligned to support this addiction. By addiction, I mean my misplaced concentration on something that became a substitute fulfillment for my real need. I needed the Divine, but sex was as close as I could get because I said no to the Divine and trained my body to feel something in sex like fulfillment. My soul was never fulfilled and felt worse because it ultimately knew this was the wrong direction. Clinton may have come to the same conclusion by now.

Mentally, I knew the difference between sex and love, but not emotionally. In the body, in the sex center, the energy moved always outward toward relief, toward gratification, toward possession—temporarily, until the after-sex depression set in. Then the swing toward abstinence—temporarily, until pre-sex anticipation revived with more intensity because of my addictive habit pattern from which there appeared no way out. I had precisely programmed sex to be the way out of feeling deprived. I looked at all this with compassion for myself, with honesty so it could become clear. I used my psychic being to see all this. This way of writing about it is inadequate of course, but I know now that anyone can use their psychic being to find solutions if they want. Got it? How many times did Mother need to tell me?

How do you broaden and enlighten your consciousness? If each one of you [Mother is speaking to some teachers from the school] could find his psychic being and unite with it, all problems would be solved. The psychic being is the Divine's representative in the human being. It's true you know: the Divine isn't something far-off and out of reach: the Divine is within you, but you aren't fully conscious of it. You have rather—so far it is acting more as an influence than a Presence.





## I found out the body is innocent, a miraculously perfect gift of the Divine.

It must become a conscious Presence, so at each moment you can ask yourself how—how the Divine sees.

That's how it is: first, how the Divine sees; then, how the Divine wills—then, how the Divine does. It has nothing to do with going off to inaccessible regions: it's right here. Although, for the moment, all the old habits and the general unconsciousness have put a sort of lid on it, which prevents us from seeing and feeling. We must—we must lift that, lift it off. Basically, we must become conscious instruments—conscious—conscious of the Divine.

Normally it takes an entire lifetime, or even several lives in some cases. But here, in the present conditions, you can do it in—a few months. Those who have an ardent aspiration can do it in a few months.

It's the mind that prevents you from feeling it. One must be, you see. All you do is mentalise everything—everything. What you call "consciousness" is thinking things out; that's what you call consciousness. But that's not it at all! That's not consciousness. Consciousness—should be wholly lucid and wordless. (The Mother, *Agenda*, vol. 13, pp. 360–362)

Today is 17 November 1998: exactly twenty-five years after Mother left her body. My experience was lucid and wordless. I'm just back from a short walk in the woods along the ascent to truth path. Rain had fallen during the night. It was damp and cold, but a late afternoon sun broke through the clouds and the golden leaves of autumn grew bright among the dark evergreen of the redwood and pine trees. The new moss glowed green on the stones. I stopped in the silence of a sunlit spot. There was only the sound of a stream swollen from the rain. I waited on the path broken by shadows and sun shafts. Then I came back, with nothing to do and no place to go except to write to Mother that I am listening, and I do want to know. "Mother, your victory will be complete."

As part of the path to completion, I went, as a psychic being, back to contact the original state of being in union with the Divine. It is not in the past, it is in the now, and here I could heal the future. Does it make sense? Whatever I do in the now is healing the past and the future or it is a step toward death. What I never healed in my past was exactly what I kept stepping into in my future. Repeat, repeat on my wheel of ignorance. That's why I never seemed to get anywhere. Change of countries, jobs, lovers and whatever gave me some excitement but no inner change. The inner change came by clearing all the links and ties to this mortal state that I could write out, and all feelings that held me in fixed state as being something other than simply an immortal child of God who has assumed a temporary mortal identity to learn something. I was guided by the Mother. It was her touch of love that made it possible.

Only now because of that psychic journey back to the soul before the body is there healing. This was a journey in the body, actually, through my cells which have recorded every vibration which they have ever experienced. I went back to the root cause of my suffering, my rejection. The *no* which happened back before I had a body, in the immortal life. In the Divine free state, I chose to fall out with God because I wanted to experience the knowledge of good and evil, of separateness. This is the deal with the devil in myself and the link with the forces of darkness. I rejected and ejected.

Yes, I did that and it was a state, a twist, in my soul. I experienced it as a feeling in my body, which I brought to the body and it is not comfortable there, and I had cut it off from awareness to feel better. This is the thing that I did not want to know or feel about myself. Yet this is the basic cause of my suffering, the agitation, the restlessness, the unsettled feeling that something is wrong somewhere down deep beyond reach. Now I feel it, now I accept it, now I can be different. I found out the body is innocent, a miraculously perfect gift of the Divine created by God in my biological mother. My parents contributed their vibrations which added some distortions and duplications to the *no* I brought with me to the body.

For this inner journey the psychic witness me was essential. Here, absolutely, I needed the nonjudgmental state, the compassionate state to remain calm and balanced. The emotional release in my body washed out some of it, but I had to walk through this dark night which comes up in all the literature for the pilgrim soul. Of course it's in *Savitri*:

The heart of evil must be bared to his eyes . . .  
For this he must go down into the pit,  
For this he must invade the dolorous Vasts.

(*Savitri*, p. 451)

Sri Aurobindo showed me how to touch conscious forces within me to lead me from the mortal state to the immortal one for the release of my soul. Now I can heal those feelings of rejection which I brought with me into the body and which I had locked into what I also received vibrationally from my biological mother in terms of her own feelings. There is the other batch I received from my father and everyone in that early environment when I was, like every child, a psychic sponge. Mother explains how each one of us is born with some special twist and then about the sediment we inherit:

With our idiotic human logic, we think, "That [the special twist] is what should go first," but it is not true: it is what goes last! Even when it all becomes clear, clear (*gesture above*), even when you have all the experiences, that habit stays on and it keeps coming back. So you push it back: it



rises again from the subconscious; you chase it away: it comes back from outside. (*Agenda*, vol. 4, pp. 385–386)

Earlier in the above conversation, she says:

This [the body] isn't you, it's the sediment. You still have your body's self esteem! You should feel: this isn't me, it isn't me. It is...yes, what was put together more or less clumsily and ignorantly by father, mother, maybe with the influence of grandparents . . . That discovery I made at the age of about fifteen or sixteen, or seventeen. I began to see clearly all the "gifts" (if we can call them that) that come from father, mother, parents, grandparents, education, people who looked after me, that whole mudhole, as it were into which you fall headfirst . . . When you see it all and you begin to say, "But this isn't me!" and you feel it isn't you: "It isn't me! No—me is what looks on; me is what wills; me is what knows . . ." (*Agenda*, vol. 4, pp. 384–385)

I used the witness me, this observer to see and feel but not judge or react. Assuming it to be a scientist made it easier to accept what I found by saying: "Well, look at that, look at what is coming up now." I did not freak out, could stay detached and felt the Divine presences there too as witnesses. Now I'm absolutely sure how everything is known and nothing is hidden because it cannot be. Yet I have acted as if my thoughts were my own secret. Pretty dumb. How can there be secrets in spirit—aren't we all spiritual beings!

I thank Satprem who delivered Mother's *Agenda* into my hands. He has now taken the *Agenda* all the way into his own body. I can hear his voice:

But there is no possible new species nor any future for the earth unless we go to the physical root of that which causes the Destruction—of everything: men and beasts, for billions of years. And there is but one possible way to go in search of that first terrestrial grave, that is to plunge into one's own body, into these cells and atoms, and to cut through that "something which causes death," while remaining alive. (Satprem, *Evolution II*, back cover)

The evolutionary change is not waiting for me to wake up. The Earth is changing now. Becoming fully conscious is my evolutionary change. I have to contaminate the mass consciousness and not continue the other way around. "I think it will happen when there is a great enough number of conscious people who absolutely feel there is no other way . . ." (Satprem, *Mind of the Cells*, p. 216)

Mother spoke often of this contagion, as she called it. It is how I transfer body to body all my feelings, all that I hold in my body to everything that is around me because that is the nature of our reality. It is not solid, it is a vibratory field. Satprem experiences his own body as a porous body:

The body seems not only to be porous to all that comes, but also to be spread out everywhere without barrier. No sooner does it look at something, a near or distant fact, an event, a person, than it instantly finds itself in it or him, as though directly plunged into the situation—at times it is harrowing, or the body starts sobbing helplessly as if seized with all the sorrows of the world. (*Evolution II*, pp. 92–93)

My feelings, my body is totally public and the pollution or salvation of the earth comes from this fact. Everyone is sensitive, psychic, but more or less blocked by an ego shield, the individual iron block or the black armor of the milieu, as Satprem calls it. The iron block is my self-image which Mother exposed as a block to moving from the Old World to the New World.

The obstacle is the concentric vibration, a sort of concentric vibration, meaning that instead of being part of an infinite eternity, things are considered in relation to oneself. That's the obstacle. The egocentric stupidity! (Satprem, *Mind of the Cells*, p. 37)

I thought I would cease to exist without that. The loss of my self-image, my ego, felt like real death because what else is there beside who I am, what I do, all my things, my history, my projected future, my fantasies, etc? Mother addresses this often:

They [people] become afraid—afraid of losing themselves in this light, in this freedom. They want to remain what they call "themselves." They love their falsehood and their slavery. Something in them loves it and remains clinging to it. They feel that without their limits, they would no longer exist.

That is why the journey is so long, so difficult. For if one would truly consent no longer to be, everything would become so easy, so swift, so luminous, so joyous—though perhaps not in the way men conceive of joy and ease. At heart, there are very few who would consent to having no darkness or who can conceive of light as anything other than the opposite of obscurity: "Without shadow, there would be no painting. Without struggle, there would be no victory. Without suffering, there would be no joy." That is what they think, and as long as they think like that, they are not yet born to the spirit. (*Agenda*, vol. 1, p. 247).

Mother repeats this often, but I was very slow to get it. She always simply returns to the Divine, usually with a gesture of her hands rising in an offering. It always comes down to: "Lord, only you, your will." My important *me* was in the way because I thought and felt without it I am lost.

There you are. There isn't any "you," there isn't any "we must be patient," there isn't any "it will come in its own time," there isn't any—of all those very reasonable things, they don't exist anymore—it's That (*Mother lowers her fist sharply*), like a sword-blade. It's That. And it's That despite everything:



the Divine. The Divine alone. All that hodgepodge of bad will and revolt and—all that (*Mother raises an unalterable finger*) has to be swept away. (*Agenda*, vol. 12, p. 162).

That made it so clear to me. The Divine alone. To really want that inner soul state as a priority, to live in that New World, to create this physical life as the life divine, yes. My death is not something that happens at the end of my life, like I always thought, but happens now in every choice I make. I was simply making a habit of death by every choice to fulfill desires and wants rather than a life of my real need for love and oneness. “They would rather die and keep their old habits than live in an immortal way and give them up.” “Up above, everything is fine, but down below it’s swarming. In fact, it is a battle against little, very tiny things: certain habits of being, certain ways of feelings, of reacting . . .” (Satprem, *The Mind of the Cells*, pp. 81, 71).

My old habit toward death used the speediness in my mind, the tension, to cover up my battle with the truth of who I am. I normally ran from one thing to the next on automatic pilot under the illusion that I was thinking things out. I was only playing out the old patterns from childhood, seeking some acknowledgment and the missing love and oneness that I had rejected in my soul, but needed more than anything because that is what I am created out of, and only need to go home to now.

Then I could actually feel everything falling into place. My scale of values turned upside down. Watering the flower pot, washing the dishes and all that sort of thing that had so little care or importance for me, had another significance when in partnership with the Supreme. Mother is direct and clear about it:

There is no scale of importance! That’s entirely our mental stupidity, because either nothing is important, or everything is equally important. The speck of dust you wipe off the table, or ecstatic contemplation, it’s all the same. (Satprem, *The Mind of the Cells*, p. 72)

That’s quite a change of perspective. Yet this is actually the real state, where I can be myself and natural, a sublime state and I had chosen to live in a deformed state, a falsehood. Mother spoke of this many times and I had read all about it. She did it:

It is getting to be very concrete: you do this (*gesture to the left*) and everything becomes artificial, hard, dry, false, deceitful—artificial. You do that (*gesture to the right*) and everything becomes vast, calm, luminous, limitless, happy. And that’s all it takes (*Mother tilts her hand from side to side*). (Satprem, *The Mind of the Cells*, p. 106)

That’s all it takes! The glimmer of a bright future is calling in my present, the now which is where I am creating my future. Now I can walk peacefully along the ascent to truth path and feel whatever comes in each moment, accept it, whether it is something I used to judge positive or negative: bliss or the void, abundance or

deprivation—all of it, equal and important. Hey, those are only reminders for that little inner shift, and that is the cry, the call that cuts it all away—in that clearing, there’s room for the Divine to be, eternally. It is a beautiful path. It is the sunlit path.

The Lord hast willed and Thou dost execute;  
A new Light shall break upon earth.  
A new world shall be born,  
And the things that were promised shall be fulfilled.  
(The Mother, *Prayers and Meditations*, September 25, 1914)

Mother wrote this in 1914. In 1956, she re-wrote it because it happened:

Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute:  
A new light breaks upon the earth,  
A new world is born.  
The things that were promised are fulfilled.  
(*Agenda*, vol. 1, p. 74)

In 1999, where is that New World? “. . . In the end it always comes down to the same thing: a substantial individual progress is required—a serious and sincere progress—then everything works perfectly.” (*Agenda*, vol. 13, p. 86)

Any doubt about the choice? My adventure really begins now with the “lover’s everlasting Yes.” One friend who knows is an ascended Matrimandir worker, Ruud Lohman. He completed in 1986 his Auroville adventure, just as he finished his book on Matrimandir. We buried his body in the Matrimandir gardens as compost under the flowers Mother has named Victory. The last words at the end of his book are my beginning:

The message to the next Millennium is crystal clear—hard, yes, difficult, yes, but brilliantly clear, too. Over a thousand pages of *The Life Divine*, thirteen volumes of the *Agenda*, twenty-four thousand verses of *Savitri*, and all the curves and spaces and symbols of Matrimandir proclaim the same message of Divine Love, which has now to be manifested on Earth in greater intensity, more physically, more thoroughly, more—lovingly. And when we shall ask the Crystal, as in *Savitri* at the very end of all the adventures; she will again answer, with a final word:

Awakened to the meaning of my heart  
That to feel love and oneness is to live  
And this the magic of our golden change  
Is all the truth I know or seek, O Sage.  
(Ruud Lohman, *A House for the Third Millennium*, p. 98-99)

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## Transcending the tangible: the yoga online, Part 1

*The Integral Yoga community has been actively engaging in discussions over the Internet for several years, primarily through electronic mail lists. Such a list allows a person to send a message to an entire group, and each list typically has a moderator who has responsibility for how the list is run. In order to take the pulse of our online community, I sent a series of questions to each moderator, and through their answers we see what an online forum is, how they are used, what their relation is to yoga, and where they might go in the future.*

*The four people who participated in this survey are Don Salmon, moderator of the Psychology (Psych) list; Janis Coker, moderator of the Synthesis list; Chandresh Patel, moderator of the two Money-Power lists; and Ben Irvin, moderator of the Savitri list.*

*The Synthesis and Savitri lists focus on the respective books by Sri Aurobindo; in a sense they are similar to a study group. The Psych list is more open, and engages in a wide-ranging discussion of integral psychology as it related to many different fields. The two Money lists are the most recent, having been formed to work together on the specific question of the role of money in our collective and individual sadhana. In addition to these specific lists there is a general list for any topic related to the Integral Yoga, called Auroconf. For a description of all the e-mail lists, please see <http://www.miraura.org/grp/net.html>.*

—David Hutchinson, editor, Spring '99 Collaboration

*What is your role as a moderator of an online discussion?*

**Ben:** I see my role as no different from the role of any other participant on the list, that is, simply to contribute, respond and share as the spirit moves me. I don't feel that I guide or correct the conversations, but rather simply join the flow or add my link to the chain. Each new message is a potential new direction, amplification, or correction, and can come from any quarter.

**Janis:** These forums have become a true collective in which members who have never met physically nevertheless feel they know each other. We're friends. We have a common bond. We don't need to explain to each other who Mother and Sri Aurobindo are or what they have done for the world and what they have taught. We don't need to tell each other what we look like or what is our occupation. What comes through strongly in this medium is the essence of the participant, his or her soul.

The forums are truly democratic in that each member fully respects the other members, takes their comments seriously, and responds sincerely—from the heart. As a moderator, I take my role as that of facilitator. I may ask questions or make comments that summarize or that lead to a next step in the discussion or that bring together related material and comments.

I have gained vastly more from being a forum participant than from reading and studying on my own (although that is still necessary and important); and I have gained vastly more from being a forum moderator than from being a participant. As a forum moderator, I have to dig and study and put into words what I have understood. This is a real learning experience for me and I feel blessed to have the opportunity. I feel a humility in association with others on the forum who have attained such great knowledge and insight. I feel that they deepen my understanding.

**Don:** I try as best as I can, on this as well as other forums to take the stance of a comoderator on every forum I that I belong to. Tuning into the general flow of conversation, I try to ask myself, "What is the most constructive thing I can say which will be both in harmony with what is being said and which can support the movement of the conversation?"

On the Psych forum, I have struggled to find the best balance of active versus passive leadership. I vary my style from being a direct leader to standing back and letting the conversation roll.

There are at least four very different and often conflicting needs of forum members. Some want a more intellectual forum; some want a more emotional bhakti type; some want a very project-oriented forum; and some want a free-wheeling spontaneous forum.

*What are the characteristics of interacting through e-mail? Does it foster certain parts of the being, or tend towards specific kinds of response?*

**Ben:** E-mail is a very interesting medium on which to hold these conversations. It is severely limited by the necessity to use the written word to express our thoughts and feelings, which has subtle yet significant differences from the spoken word. It is slow and cumbersome and often awkward. Often what we write doesn't sound like what we were trying to express, and in that sense the mental is much more easily conveyed than the emotional.

One thing I find interesting about this medium is that it is similar to the way the sadhaks communicated with Sri Aurobindo and the Mother for a time, that is by writing short letters on a variety of topics. Now we have adopted a very similar format and procedure, albeit electronic, which has become a significant way for a segment of the community to communicate among ourselves. People who may never have communicated, or only very rarely, are now able to communicate quite effectively over long distances, to talk to one another at any time. It's like having constant access to a Sri Aurobindo study group, devotees, and fellow followers, right at our fingertips.

**Chandresh:** Because of distance and time which separate the various subscribers to this forum, there seems to be the sense of "anything goes" for some persons. I believe the postings at times would have reflected different intonation had the persons communicating met each other before physically at least one or more times.





But conversely, it allows diverse and far-reaching members to share their yoga practices with each other from around the globe, which would not be possible in any other setting.

**Janis:** Comments are refreshingly candid and intuitive. This e-mail medium seems to spark an immediate response. There are a few, however, who take the time to look retrospectively at a trend in the discussion and then formulate an overview.

**Don:** It is difficult in a large faceless community for people to feel safe in revealing personal experiences and feelings. There is a mixture of intellectual expression and a more personal sharing of experiences. Combined with the complexity of Sri Aurobindo's writings, straightforward expression is sometimes difficult.

### Achieving consensus

*Do you try to achieve consensus, since people are so far apart in space, and sometimes in the time which they take to respond?*

**Chandresh:** Reaching a consensus may not be the final goal of these electronic media. There may be some who may not agree, and it is okay. On an open forum like Auroconf, almost any thread may have supporters from both sides of an issue.

**Janis:** I do not feel the necessity on the forums of reaching a consensus. We are all different. Some are new to the Integral Yoga; some are longtime devotees. The newcomers may often bring a fresh perspective, an observation that the more seasoned participants may have taken for granted. All the comments are appreciated and all serve to deepen our understanding on many levels. Consensus is needed if there is some action to be taken, such as setting up a web site or some other creative and mutual project.

**Don:** When consensus is requested, usually no more than five members write in. The biggest obstacle I can see with e-mail forums is that it can be so difficult to have a flowing discussion. Once one thread of discussion is started, someone usually throws in another idea which is tangentially related, so it is often difficult to gain clarity on a particular point. On the other hand, this is the very strength of the medium, in that it allows time for people to reflect, who in a live, group discussion might simply be interrupting and trying to push their point of view without listening to others. One thing that is absolute about this medium is that everybody listens. Whether they actually hear what others are saying—well, that's another question!

### When disagreements arise

*What happens when disagreements arise? Should people be excluded for bad behavior?*

**Chandresh:** First I mostly take a passive role and then I attempt to moderate. If the forum has a specific topic and if the member does not follow reasonably expected norms and keep within the intent of the forum, then he would be made to leave.

**Ben:** In the case of disagreements it's always the same thing, try to rise to or find a higher ground where the truth of both or all sides can be equally and dispassionately seen and perhaps united into an all-inclusive truth. This can really be done, and it is a quite enjoyable and satisfying exercise, because if done right, everybody wins. Everything can be there in the written word, myriads of forms of the ego, as well as the heights of compassion, devotion, truth and wisdom.

**Janis:** Forum members tend to work together harmoniously, and divergent views are generally respected. Of course, as a moderator, I encourage each one to contribute in his or her own way. Although bad behavior has not occurred on the Synthesis forum, I have noticed on other forums that if bad behavior does occur, the group will point it out and expect the perpetrator to change his behavior.

**Don:** I always try to do the same thing—which is try to bring together the various perspectives and integrate them from a wider point of view. We have never had a problem with bad behavior on the Psych forum, but I have no problem at all with excluding someone if it is necessary. I try to bring together various perspectives, integrate them in a larger whole, and finally reach some kind of consensus with as many members as possible regarding the offending member. I would want to have exclusion as a very last resort, and I emphasize very.

### Norms of interaction

*Do online gatherings require the same degree or kind of trust, honesty, participation, and responsibility as a physical meeting, or are new norms of interaction emerging?*

**Ben:** In most ways a forum is similar to a physical gathering where there is mutual respect and trust. However there is also a significant degree of anonymity on these forums which perhaps leads to exchanges that might not take place in a face-to-face meeting. This can be good, as a person might feel a little more secure in letting deeper feelings be known.

**Chandresh:** In a physical gathering a small group of persons tends to dominate the discussion because of etiquette, comfort level, or their ability to quickly push their point or take over the queue from other like-mannered persons. As opposed to this, in an online forum, anyone who is interested in participating has a chance of having input. The threads that can spawn with online discussions are many compared to a physical gathering, as there the group tends to have mostly one or two threads of discussion on a main topic.





*Ferns awaiting the snow. (Photo: Marta Belén)*

**Janis:** The fact that there are many lurkers on a forum to me indicates that there are those who feel they are not yet ready to respond, or they may be too busy with their jobs and personal lives to do so. I feel that the lurkers are still gaining something from the forum. The anonymity of a forum seems to encourage people to become members who would otherwise not do so. Also, participants can read messages or respond in their own time when they feel inspired to do so. We do not have to get dressed up and drive in foul weather to a meeting. On the Internet, we can go there in whatever attire and at whatever time suits us. We can respond or not respond, and stay as long as we want.

There is so much more freedom in virtual reality. The fewer rules the better. There have emerged only two rules: to keep to the subject matter (more or less and in your own way) and to respect the other group members.

**Don:** Despite the physical differences, the distance, the lack of face-to-face contact—honesty, trust, and the rest are essential to the best functioning of this cybercommunity. There are several advantages that facilitate sharing and participation.

There is no interruption, something that almost never happens in a live group. Even if someone doesn't really attempt to try on someone else's point of view, at least there is an almost certain guarantee that everyone's words will be heard. Furthermore, there is the opportunity to read again someone else's words—this is a tremendous advantage that online groups have as opposed to live gatherings.

There is the very important element of time—time to read through and reflect on the letters; time, sometimes days and even weeks, to let the implications of a letter settle in; and time to put together a careful and thoughtful response.

There is an emotional directness and intensity that is very difficult to get in an online forum, yet there is a clarity and open-mindedness that is possible on an online forum that is often difficult to get in a live group. Perhaps the best way to combine the two would be to have photos plus annual or biannual meetings for all interested forum members.

## The group soul

*Do these online groups have their own mind or soul in the way that physical groups do, and is this affected by the character of the Internet as an overarching entity?*

**Chandresh:** The community character is as prevalent on the Internet as in a physical group. There are many netiquettes [rules of behavior for the Internet] that were developed from the early days with academic overtones which provided a more open and free format. Being also a tool which is used mostly by educated and usually rich persons, there is also a tendency to be focused on the commercial aspect of life more than the earlier educational and informational aspect. As access is more and more open to the general public, there are also issues of social ills becoming part of the online world. Online versions of adult porn, child pornography, luring of youngsters, spamming, fraud are emerging.

**Janis:** The existence of the Internet on which these forums function can be productive of creative projects, such as new web pages, or of joint projects that can take shape on the Internet, such as distance learning or creative writing. The medium fosters the participation and input of many contributors to a project and thus accelerates information and learning.

**Don:** One aspect of the larger electronic community I am always very cognizant of is the fact that many people on the forum, often the people who participate the most, receive anywhere from fifty to as many as one hundred e-mail letters a day. Sometimes, when the volume on the Psych forum suddenly increases dramatically, two or three people write in to unsubscribe.

## Essence of an electronic forum

*What is the essence of an electronic forum? Is it a meeting place of souls, which transcends space and time? An intellectual testing ground? A social club? An*



*experiment in new technology? A magnified bulletin board? A shared, collective consciousness?*

**Ben:** I think it's a gathering of minds primarily on the mental plane, in a quite linear format, but of course all of the other planes can be right there behind, and can take a certain degree of prominence. The mental predominates on this type of medium, but the heart and devotional sense can also take a central place, the soul is always present somewhere behind, sometimes influencing these, so in a sense it is there too. I think discussions can easily become too intellectual or pseudo-intellectual and not suffused or backed up by personal experience, and this is something to guard against.

**Chandresh:** A mixture of all of the above? A new expression of human unity and collective consciousness which transcends tangible realms and boundaries.

**Janis:** A "shared collective consciousness" to me best describes our forums. A newcomer online may be somewhat hesitant to share views, but soon comes to feel more comfortable in participating. In my own experience, I have gradually been able to explore and share my own ignorance and shortcomings, as well as my own insights. In all cases, I have received help and inspiration from the group. As time goes on and the group consciousness evolves, the sharing among members deepens.

**Don:** I like to think of it as a shared collective consciousness and meeting place of souls. I think if the Psych forum were merely intellectual, it would have very little life to it; similarly, it is not merely an experiment in technology or a bulletin board. Now that we have some information about most forum members posted on the web page, I am hoping that even more of a shared collective consciousness will develop. I think also that posting photos would be a nice way to establish more of a sense of community.

### **Toward greater integrality**

*Are there ways to make these forums more integral, more inclusive of other aspects of life?*

**Ben:** Collective simultaneous meditations might be a way to supplement some of the limitations of these forums.

**Chandresh:** Sometimes you have a feeling of what the other person is really saying or meaning behind the words. Also, you can at times anticipate what some of the other forum members

will react to, or how, in certain discussion threads. It is similar as in case as if you have known this person physically for time.

**Janis:** One of the most meaningful happenings in my life was to attend AUM 98 and actually meet some of the people with whom I had been corresponding on the forums. Mutually, we felt instantaneous recognition and friendship, as if we had been knowing each other for a long time. The first thing we did when we met was to fall into each other's arms in a big bear hug—no genteel handshakes for us!

A way to make our interactions as forum members more meaningful would be to arrange for occasional meetings in the physical. Another way would be in a collective effort of some kind. For instance, the Psych forum is getting ready to write a book collectively, on the Internet.

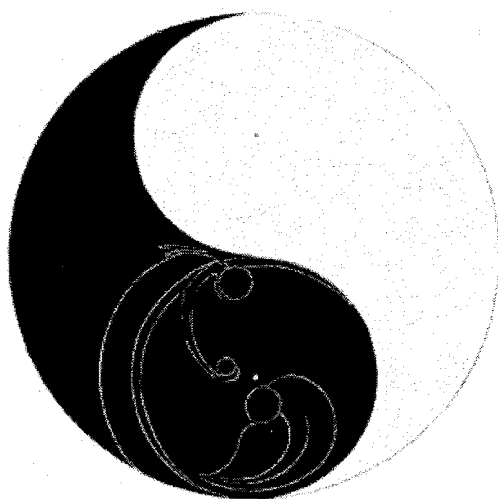
**Don:** I think it's a matter of consciousness, not form. We're no more limited in an online group than in face-to-face conversation. In some ways, there is less of an attachment to physical difference and certainly less gender stereotyping in an online group. There is certainly nothing that impedes emotional and mental closeness, nor is there anything that hampers a soul communion. There is something so profoundly personal and intimate about the fact that I press the "send button" and I know that within hours, sixty

people in countries around the world will be sitting in their most intimate environment, their homes, and reading through the words I have sent out. I don't think that anything in particular is needed externally to make this more of a yogic experience.

*Part 2 of this interview will appear in the next Collaboration.*

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*"Yan-yn." (Drawing by Janina Stroka)*



## ESSAY

### Parts and planes of the being: An introduction

by Matthijs Cornelissen

With special thanks to Dr. A. S. Dalal.

*This essay was written for the Psych online forum, to help others get a clearer idea of the various parts of the being. To subscribe to the forum, send e-mail to [psych-subscribe@compatible.com](mailto:psych-subscribe@compatible.com). In the subject line, type subscribe psych. Leave the message of the body blank.*

“We are not only what we know of ourselves but an immense more which we do not know; our momentary personality is only a bubble on the ocean of our existence.”  
(Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, p. 555)

The main terms Sri Aurobindo uses to describe the planes and parts of the being can be grouped in three different sets:

- Terms that belong to a concentric system: outer nature, inner nature, innermost or true nature, psychic being, psychic entity.
- Terms that belong to a vertical system based on the Vedic “sevenfold chord of being”: matter, life, mind, supermind, sat, chit-tapas, ananda.
- Terms related to our center of identification: ego, soul and self.

#### The concentric system

In the concentric system Sri Aurobindo distinguishes an outer nature, an inner nature and an innermost or true nature with the psychic at its center.

Our outer nature consists of that part of which we are conscious to some extent in our normal everyday life. The longer we study ourselves, the more clear it becomes that this is only a very tiny part of our being as a whole.

The term *inner nature* to indicate the rest of ourselves may give the wrong impression that we are dealing only with a small, dark, and isolated piece. The opposite is true. Our inner nature is vaster and more luminous than our outer nature and it has access to broader and higher ranges of experience and knowledge. Therefore Sri Aurobindo often uses the term *subliminal* which indicates that we are dealing with a part of ourselves that is indeed below the threshold of our ordinary, outer awareness but that is neither smaller nor less conscious than our outer nature.

At the very center of each thing, of each creature, there is a psychic entity, a tiny spark of the Divine, without which it could not exist.

In the subliminal we are connected vertically to layers above and below our ordinary awareness, and horizontally to other people and to the myriad of forces and beings that surround us. The part of the subliminal which deals with our own deeper and higher being Sri Aurobindo calls the *intraconscious*, and the part which connects us to others and to the cosmic forces around us he calls the *circumconscious*.

The deeper layers of the inner nature Sri Aurobindo calls sometimes the *innermost*, sometimes the *true nature*. At the very center of each thing, of each creature, there is a *psychic entity*, a tiny spark of the Divine, without which it could not exist. In the human being this psychic spark or soul, found at the heart of our true nature, slowly grows through many lifetimes into a more extensive, qualified, psychic being. While progressing from life to life this psychic being brings a larger and larger part of the inner nature and finally even the outer nature under its direct control.

At present in most people this psychic being is however only a very small and hardly influential part of their nature. Generally it is hidden deep below the surface and it shows its presence only in rare moments of real love, of gratitude, spiritual aspiration, in the appreciation of truth or beauty. Sri Aurobindo compares it to a constitutional ruler, who can at any time be overruled by his ministers. (*The Life Divine*, p. 900)

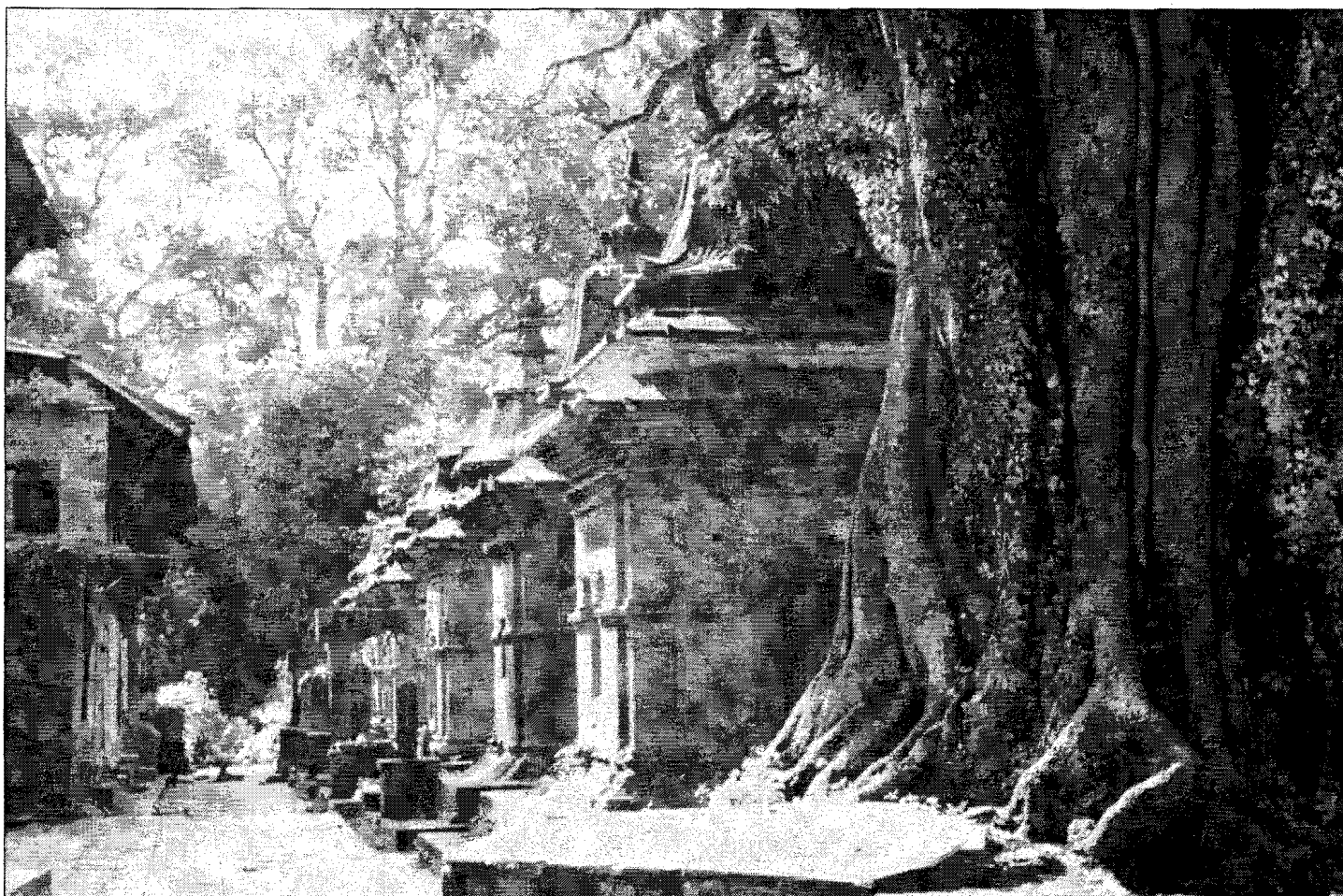
#### Sri Aurobindo's cosmology

Before we can proceed to the details of the vertical system, it is necessary to digress a little to Sri Aurobindo's cosmology. There is a deep connection between psychology and cosmology in Sri Aurobindo's work: the individual exemplifies in himself the essence of the cosmic structure and the cosmic movement.

Sri Aurobindo's world-view is built around the concept of an evolution of consciousness: not just the evolution of more and more complex forms of matter and life, but the evolution of higher and higher levels of consciousness.

According to Sri Aurobindo consciousness is the original stuff out of which the Universe is created. Consciousness first *involved* itself into the seeming unconsciousness of Matter, and evolution is its slow re-emergence. He says moreover that when Life evolved, it did not appear just like that, by chance, out of nonlife, it grew out of matter under pressure from an already pre-existing plane of vital consciousness. Similarly, mind did not evolve by chance out of nonmind; it evolved in material life under pressure from a preexisting mental plane. In other words, life and mind existed already, independently, in their own planes or worlds before they became manifest in our material world. It was under pressure from these preexisting worlds that the minor and constrained forms of earthly life emerged out of matter and that the human mind evolved out of earthly life.

This is what the evolution has achieved till now. But the evolution is not finished: mental humanity is much too imperfect to be the final stage of Nature's effort. The human is only a transitional being. According to Sri Aurobindo we are now at



*Graded hierarchy: a row of temples to Shiva outside of Kathmandu, Nepal. Known as Pashupatinat (from the name Pashupati, lord of animals), it is the holiest site in Nepal. (Photo: Vasumati Elerick, 1998.)*

the beginning of the next, fourth, stage of evolution in which again a new type of consciousness is evolving. Sri Aurobindo called the next step the truth-consciousness or simply the supermind.

Human beings are in this long sequence the first creatures sufficiently evolved to collaborate actively in their own evolution. Integral Yoga can thus be seen as the willed concentration in the individual of powers and processes that Nature itself is using on a much vaster scale, but also much more slowly, for the collective transition to the next stage.

#### The vertical system

**A**gainst this backdrop of the evolution of consciousness we can understand now how the terms Sri Aurobindo uses for the description of the vertical, hierarchical system apply with only minor modifications to

- Levels and types of consciousness
- Stages of collective and individual evolution
- Independently existing planes or worlds
- Parts of our own personal nature
- Forces and beings

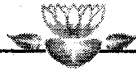
The terms for the vertical system Sri Aurobindo derived from an ancient Vedic division in seven layers, from top down:

- Sat (existence)
- Chit-Tapas (consciousness-energy)
- Ananda (bliss)
- Supermind
- Mind
- Life
- Matter

Of course Sri Aurobindo would not be Sri Aurobindo if he took this system too seriously. In the chapter of the *Life Divine* called "The Sevenfold Chord of Being" (p. 262 onwards), he is hardly on his way when he adds an eighth element and folds his neat ladder up with the footnote: "The Vedic Seers speak of the seven Rays, but also of eight, nine, ten, or twelve." The more usual representation remains however this simple ladder of seven steps, with an added horizontal dimension in which the psychic sits "behind the heart."

Each of these seven powers or principles forms a more or less independent world, a plane of existence with a





corresponding type of consciousness. The different planes influence and penetrate each other and there can be concrete formations from one plane in the other planes.

Each plane of our being—mental, vital, physical—has its own consciousness, separate though interconnected and interacting; but to our outer mind and sense, in our waking experience, they are all confused together. The body, for instance, has its own consciousness and acts from it, even without any mental will of our own or even against that will, and our surface mind knows very little about this body-consciousness, feels it only in an imperfect way, sees only its results and has the greatest difficulty in finding out their causes. It is part of the yoga to become aware of this separate consciousness of the body, to see and feel its movements and the forces that act upon it from inside or outside and to learn how to control and direct it even in its most hidden and (to us) subconscious processes. But the body consciousness itself is only part of the individualised physical consciousness in us, which we gather and build out of the secretly conscious forces of universal physical Nature.

We are connected vertically to layers above and below our ordinary awareness, and horizontally to other people and to the myriad of forces and beings that surround us.

There is the universal physical consciousness of Nature and there is our own which is a part of it, moved by it, and used by the central being for the support of its expression in the physical world and for a direct dealing with all these external objects and movements and forces. This physical consciousness-plane receives from the other planes their powers and influences and makes formations of them in its own province. Therefore we have a physical mind as well as a vital mind and the mind proper; we have a vital-physical part in us—the nervous being—as well as the vital proper; and both are largely conditioned by the gross material bodily part which is almost entirely subconscious to our experience. (Sri Aurobindo, *Letters on Yoga*, p. 347)

The mental plane, which is the most typically human, can be subdivided into five clearly distinct subplanes of different types of mental consciousness:

- Overmind<sup>1</sup>
- Intuitive mind

- Illumined mind
- Higher mind
- Ordinary mind

The ordinary mind itself is subdivided into three layers:

- Thinking mind
- Dynamic mind
- Expressive mind (also called externalising or physical mind)

In the country of the lotus of the head  
Which thinking mind has made its busy space,  
In the castle of the lotus twixt the brows  
Whence it shoots the arrows of its sight and will,  
In the passage of the lotus of the throat  
Where speech must rise and the expressing mind  
And the heart's impulse run towards word and act . . .  
(Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri*, p. 529)

Within the vital plane a distinction is often made between the lower vital and the higher vital.

A.S. Dalal, in his upcoming book *Towards a Greater Psychology*, combines the different vertical systems into one series of eleven layers:

- Sachchidananda (Truth - Consciousness - Bliss)
- Supermind
- Overmind
- Intuitive mind
- Illumined mind
- Higher mind
- The mental
- The vital
- The physical
- The subconsciousness
- The inconscient

Sri Aurobindo calls the layers above the ordinary mind the higher consciousness.

The layers above the overmind he groups together as the divine consciousness or upper hemisphere.

Beside this sevenfold chord of being with all its subdivisions and groupings, there is still another set of terms that is ordered in a clear vertical hierarchy. It is based on level or degree of awareness: inconscient, subconscious, ordinary waking conscience, and superconscient.

The inconscient base of the creation is also called the ne-scient.

The words *subconscious* and *subconscient* are used with two somewhat different meanings. They are sometimes used simply to indicate all that is below our ordinary consciousness, but more typically, they are used for a specific plane situated below the physical waking consciousness. In that last sense, the subconscious contains the first crude beginning of conscious movement when creation just arises out of the sleep of the inconscient. Into it sinks back whatever has been rejected from the higher levels of con-





Shiva temple in Nepal. (Photo: Vasumati Elerick, 1998)

sciousness; from it rise up the thousands of atavisms that mar our progress.<sup>2</sup>

Our ordinary waking consciousness is limited to a small portion of the physical, vital, and lower mental planes. Most of what happens on the physical, vital, and mental

planes remains below its threshold of awareness. The higher ranges of the mental plane, the supramental, and sachchidananda are superconscious to it.

The words *superconscious* and *superconscious* are used by Sri Aurobindo again

with two different meanings, simply for any consciousness which is above our ordinary waking consciousness and, more specifically, for that type of consciousness which is divine, that is, beyond dualities.

#### The center of identification

An essential element of the Integral Yoga is to shift one's center of identification from the temporary formation of the ego in the outer nature to the true self in the central being.

The 'I' or the little ego is constituted by Nature and is at once a mental, vital and physical formation meant to aid in centralising and individualising the outer consciousness and action. When the true being is discovered, the utility of the ego is over and this formation has to disappear—the true being is felt in its place. (Sri Aurobindo, *Letters on Yoga*, p. 277)

We can experience our central or true being as a kind of vertical axis at the core of our being. Above all the planes and worlds it is the jivatman who eternally and immutably presides over our nature. On the lower levels it is our psychic being who has descended, as the delegate of our eternal self, into the "world of becoming."

The true being may be realised in one or both of two aspects—the Self or Atman and the soul or Antaratman, psychic being, Chaitya Purusha. The difference is that one is felt as universal, the other as individual supporting the mind, life and body. When one first realises the Atman one feels it separate from all things, existing in itself and detached . . . . When one realises the psychic being, it is not like that; for this brings the sense of union with the Divine and dependence upon It and sole consecration to the Divine alone and the power to change the nature and discover the true mental, the true vital, the true physical being in oneself. Both realisations are necessary for this yoga. (Sri Aurobindo, *Letters on Yoga*, p. 277)



On each of the three planes, physical, vital, and mental, we can distinguish a different aspect of our inner and outer nature. On each plane we can also distinguish a distinct self or purusha: there is a physical, a vital and a mental purusha. The combination of a self with a corresponding part of nature, Sri Aurobindo calls a being. So we can speak of an inner and an outer physical being, an inner and an outer vital being, an inner and an outer mental being.

**Mental man is much too imperfect a creature to be the final stage of Nature's effort.**

The psychic being stands behind all this. It supports our whole nature through the individual selves of each plane. While the outer layers of our being remain for a long time determined by the forces working in the surrounding outer nature, the inner layers generally come more easily under influence of the psychic element.

One must first acquire an inner Yogic consciousness and replace by it our ordinary view of things, natural movements, motives of life; one must revolutionise the whole present build of our being. Next, we have to go still deeper, discover our veiled psychic entity and in its light and under its government psychicise our inner and outer parts, turn mind-nature, life-nature, body-nature and all our mental, vital, physical action and states and movements into a conscious instrumentation of the soul. Afterwards or concurrently we have to spiritualise the being in its entirety by a descent of a divine Light, Force, Purity, Knowledge, freedom and wideness. It is necessary to break down the limits of the personal mind, life and physicality, dissolve the ego, enter into the cosmic consciousness, realise the self, acquire a spiritualised and universalised mind and heart, life-force, physical consciousness. Then only the passage into supramental consciousness begins to become possible, and even then there is a difficult ascent to make each stage of which is a separate arduous achievement. (Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 267)

Bon Voyage!

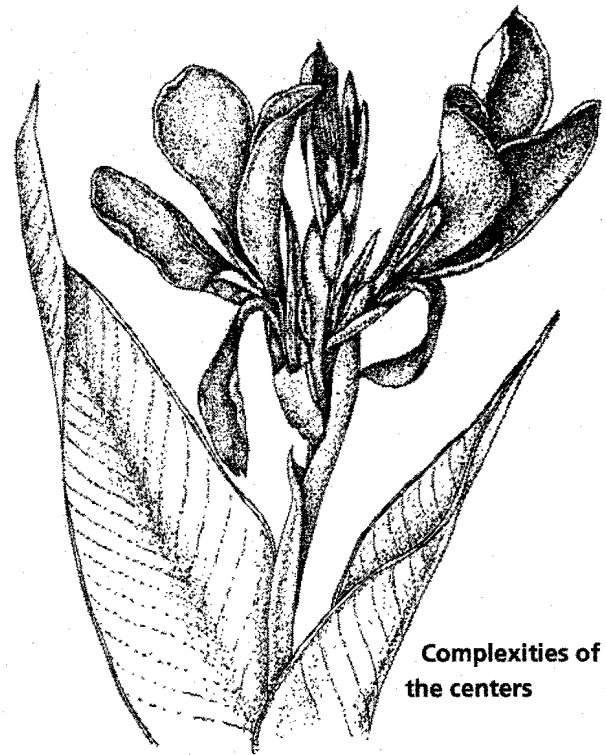
#### Notes

1. It may be noted that the term *overmind* for the topmost layer of the lower hemisphere was introduced by Sri Aurobindo only after the Arya period. In the unrevised parts of the *Synthesis of Yoga* (in part of the "Yoga of Divine Knowledge," the "Yoga of Devotion," and "The Yoga of Self-Perfection") the words *super-*

*mind* and *supramental* are not yet used in the specific sense he later gave to them. In these texts they are often used to denote what he later called the overmind, and sometimes even simply to denote anything above the ordinary mind. For a clear exposition of the difference see page 262 of his *Letters on Yoga*.

2. Sri Aurobindo doesn't use the term the *unconscious*. Freud's "unconscious" covers more or less what Sri Aurobindo calls the lower vital regions of the subconscious. Jung's "collective unconscious" has some overlap with Sri Aurobindo's "subliminal."

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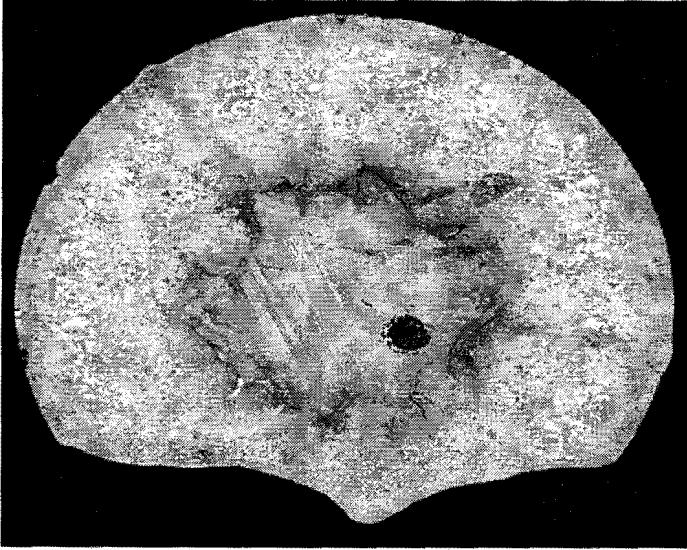
**Complexities of the centers**

#### Indian Shot (*Canna indica*)

Racemes of large showy multicolored flowers with soft petals

*Responds to several influences at a time.*

(from *Flowers and Their Messages*, p.45)



Cross-section of Vesta, a 500-kilometer asteroid which orbits past Mars, showing its different layers. (Computer-generated image: Jim Hurley)

## REVIEWS

### Lisping gizmos and the supercomputer sangha

**Book: The Age of Spiritual Machines, Raymond Kurzweil, Viking Penguin, 1999.**

by David Hutchinson

**W**e are coming to a bend in the road for human civilization, and unless you're paying close attention, you might suddenly find yourself in a new realm without knowing how you got there. The world is about to become animated—automated—and that's just the beginning. After mechanization comes consciousness, machine consciousness. The question for 2010 is not where your computer is, but who it is becoming.

Science, especially computer science, is on a roll; it has billion-dollar companies, tens of thousands of programmers (inside and outside corporate walls), and a rapidly expanding array of technologies and programs. Devices at every level are emerging, from pocket-sized gizmos which can tell you where you are anywhere on earth, to unbelievably powerful "personal" computers which can model the inside of the heart in virtual reality. Their brain power, measured in chip density or speed of computation or storage space, is doubling every year, and is expected to continue to do so for at least the next twenty years. In other words, next year they will be twice as powerful, a year after that four times as powerful, and a year after that eight times more powerful than

#### The three pillars of science

Matter. Life. The Mind. Historians will most likely record that the crowning achievement of twentieth-century science was unraveling the basic components underlying these three pillars, culminating in the splitting of the atom, the decoding of the nucleus of the cell, and the development of the electronic computer.

Michio Kaku, *Visions – How Science Will revolutionize the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*.

they are today. After twenty years of doubling, the computer that you buy in a discount electronics shop will be a million times what it is today.

To put it another way: a personal computer now has approximately the brainpower of an insect; in 2020, it will have the brainpower of a human being. After that, the computing power of such machines will continue to grow, quickly outstripping the "computing" of any individual human.

You might say, "So what? Computers are mechanical objects, not beings I need to have a relationship with. Will my coffee machine get upset if I don't speak to it in the morning?" Good question. Ask yourself again in ten years, or better yet, ask your coffee machine after you've told it what your schedule for the day is going to be.

What defines the boundaries between different types of beings? Can an animal be self-aware? Do insects have emotions? Can a machine have consciousness? Wait—about ten years—before you answer. Give that exponential growth curve time to do a few more doublings. By the way, will humans be evolving exponentially at the same time?

Until reading Kurzweil, I had been convinced that artificial intelligence (AI) was not possible. But arguments for and against AI are theoretical. "God shall grow up while the wise men talk and sleep" (Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri*, Book 1, Canto V)

Machines can now talk, transcribe speech, or translate a book. Soon they will be able to read a book and summarize it, follow the news for you, make intelligent recommendations, use animated personalities. Then they will be able to recognize patterns, learn by themselves, gather information from the Internet, relate information from different contexts. Soon it will be possible to connect them to humans (with implantable chips or other devices) for a variety of special purposes, such as to enhance hearing, vision, movement, or specific organs. Those implants will communicate using wireless technology with other chips. Depending on how you view it, this is either a slippery slope or a grand advance. Either way, it is happening, no matter what the philosophers say.

A number of other trends are also reaching the same bend in the road, and several of them will interact with computer power to produce sweeping changes. The entire genetic map of the human being, the human genome, is due to be completed in a few years, which will initiate a new phase of medicine. The global



### The three laws of robotics

1. A robot may not injure a human being, or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm.

2. A robot must obey the orders given it by human beings except where such orders would conflict with the First Law.

3. A robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Law.

—Isaac Asimov, *I Robot* (1950)

encyclopedia/discussion called the World Wide Web is still growing exponentially (except in this case, doubling every few months). As software agents, extensions of a person's intellectual pursuits, begin to scour the web, the advantages these insect minds have over humans in keeping track of the immensity of the info-world will become clear. Expect significant changes in at least business, communication, and education.

**B**ioengineering (working with the building blocks of life at the level of DNA) is steadily making advances, and nanotechnology (building machines at the level of molecules) will become possible in the next decade, producing new beings of carbon and silicon. Are we (spiritually) ready for that?

Back to your coffee machine. Even if philosophers don't deign to consider consciousness outside of carbon-based life, the average person will be having daily conversations with household gadgets. The question of computer consciousness will arise more insistently every year; the only way to avoid it will be to live in a cave. (Assuming, of course, that your cave is far enough away from the soon-to-be Wireless World Wide Web). Everyone will face this issue; it will be on our minds, in our minds.

I find the prospect of superhuman machine consciousness forbidding, and a little chilly, like stainless steel. If humans are the highest rung on the evolutionary ladder, do we now give place to an infinitely extendable computer intelligence? Will a day come when the earth stands still, awaiting our robot superpolice to decide our fate as a species? Or do we coevolve with our machines toward the next level in human consciousness? When we reach a stage where a common machine thinks better than we, say in about thirty years, then perhaps the best way to guide their development is by developing a different capacity than thought, such as intuition or gnosis.

That turn in the road is really an upward ramp, and we need to grow wings of consciousness if we're to survive the trip. As computers make the evolutionary saltus into a new level of complexity, spiritual evolution will propel us into an active interpenetration of consciousness between the human and the machine. As science develops faster machines, spiritual practitioners need to develop and extend the essential energy of consciousness, shakti, in all its manifestations. As machines link up in ever-wider nets,

growing and exchanging information, sadhaks of every stripe will link up in ever-wider communities of awareness, creating a shared essential unity, where our consciousness, strengthened and deepened, can deal with the results of future science.

Then, as a million-brained computer discovers Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, through an online version of *Life Divine*, for example, the community of sadhaks may have a mentor available for this nascent computer yogi, and civilization will get ready for yet another leap.



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### Dictionary in a pen

Seiko's new Quicktionary Reading Pen . . . lets users scan, see, and hear text out loud. [It] can give the definition and syllabic breakdown for more than 200,000 words.

—*Sacramento Bee* newspaper, 21 March 1999

### New age novel from India

**Book: Parallel Journeys**, by Anu Majumdar, *Life Positive*. 149 pages.

The book is coined "the first new-age novel from India" and its story weaves in and out of the Vedic past and the contemporary present, interlinking two strangers on their parallel journeys that bind them closer with each step. As the cover says, "A memory unfolds...a deep truth reveals itself...as two seekers retrace centuries-old footprints on the sands of time to discover the dance of the gods."—AM

*Anu Majumdar can be reached at anu@auroville.org.in.*

### Telephone, cinema, Sri Aurobindo

As for the telephone and cinema, there is something of what you say, but it seems to me that these and other modern things could have taken on a different character if they had been accepted and used in a different spirit. Mankind was not ready for these discoveries, in the spiritual sense, nor even, if the present confusions are a sign, intellectually ready.

—Sri Aurobindo, *Letters on Yoga*, p. 203





## SOURCE MATERIAL

### Futuric personhood

*This selection is from Sri Aurobindo's The Life Divine, pp. 994–995 and pp. 1010–1011.*

A supramental gnostic individual will be a spiritual Person, but not a personality in the sense of a pattern of being marked out by a settled combination of fixed qualities, a determined character; he cannot be that since he is a conscious expression of the universal and the transcendent. But neither can his being be a capricious impersonal flux throwing up at random waves of various form, waves of personality as it pours through Time. Something like this may be felt in men who have no strong centralising Person in their depths but act from a sort of confused multi-personality according to whatever element in them becomes prominent at the time; but the gnostic consciousness is a consciousness of harmony and self-knowledge and self-mastery and would not present such a disorder.

There are, indeed, varying notions of what constitutes personality and what constitutes character. In one view personality is

regarded as a fixed structure of recognisable qualities expressing a power of being; but another idea distinguishes personality and character, personality as a flux of self-expressive or sensitive and responsive being, character as a formed fixity of Nature's structure. But flux of nature and fixity of nature are two aspects of being neither of which, nor indeed both together, can be a definition of personality.

For in all men there is a double element, the unformed though limited flux of being or Nature out of which personality is fashioned and the personal formation out of that flux. The formation may become rigid and ossify or it may remain sufficiently plastic to change constantly and develop; but it develops out of the formative flux, by a modification or enlargement or remoulding of the personality, not, ordinarily, by an abolition of the formation already made and the substitution of a new form of being,—this can only occur in an abnormal turn or a supernormal conversion.

But besides this flux and this fixity there is also a third and occult element, the Person behind of whom the personality is a self-expression; the Person puts forward the personality as his role, character, persona, in the present act of his long drama of manifested existence. But the Person is larger than his personality, and it may happen that this inner largeness overflows into the surface formation; the result is a self-expression of being which can no longer be described by fixed qualities, normalities of mood, exact lineaments, or marked out by any structural limits. But neither



*"This wonderful world of delight waiting at our gates for our call, to come down upon earth . . ."*  
—The Mother. (Photo of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother courtesy Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust)





is it a mere indistinguishable, quite amorphous and unseizable flux: though its acts of nature can be characterised but not itself, still it can be distinctively felt, followed in its action, it can be recognized, though it cannot easily be described; for it is a power of being rather than a structure.

**The gnostic Individual would be such an inner Person unveiled, occupying both the depths,—no longer self-hidden,—and the surface in a unified self-awareness.**

The ordinary restricted personality can be grasped by a description of the characters stamped on its life and thought and action, its very definite surface building and expression of self; even if we may miss whatever was not so expressed, that might seem to detract little from the general adequacy of our understanding, because the element missed is usually little more than an amorphous raw material, part of the flux, not used to form a significant part of the personality. But such a description would be pitifully inadequate to express the Person when its Power of Self within manifests more amply and puts forward its hidden daemonic force in the surface composition and the life. We feel ourselves in presence of a light of consciousness, a potency, a sea of energy, can distinguish and describe its free waves of action and quality, but not fix itself; and yet there is an impression of personality, the presence of a powerful being, a strong, high or beautiful recognisable Someone, a Person, not a limited creature of Nature but a Self or Soul, a Puruṣha.

The gnostic Individual would be such an inner Person unveiled, occupying both the depths,—no longer self-hidden,—and the surface in a unified self-awareness; he would not be a surface personality partly expressive of a larger secret being, he would be not the wave but the ocean: he would be the Puruṣha, the inner conscious Existence self-revealed, and would have no need of a carved expressive mask or persona.

**T**his would be the nature of the being, life and action of the gnostic individual so far as we can follow the evolution with our mental conception up to that point where it will emerge out of Overmind and cross the border into supramental gnosis. This nature of the gnosis would evidently determine all the relations of the life or group- life of gnostic beings; for a gnostic collectivity would be a collective soul-power of the Truth-Consciousness, even as the gnostic individual would be an individual soul-power of it: it would have the same integration of life and action in unison, the same realised and conscious unity of being, the same spontaneity, intimate oneness-feeling, one and mutual truth-vision and truth-sense of self and each oth-

er, the same truth-action in the relation of each with each and all with all; this collectivity would be and act not as a mechanical but a spiritual integer.

A similar inevitability of the union of freedom and order would be the law of the collective life; it would be a freedom of the diverse play of the Infinite in divine souls, an order of the conscious unity of souls which is the law of the supramental Infinite. Our mental rendering of oneness brings into it the rule of sameness; a complete oneness brought about by the mental reason drives towards a thoroughgoing standardisation as its one effective means,—only minor shades of differentiation would be allowed to operate: but the greatest richness of diversity in the self-expression of oneness would be the law of the gnostic life. In the gnostic consciousness difference would not lead to discord but to a spontaneous natural adaptation, a sense of complementary plenitude, a rich many-sided execution of the thing to be collectively known, done, worked out in life.

For the difficulty in mind and life is created by ego, by separation of integers into component parts which figure as contraries, opposites, disparates: all in which they separate from each other is easily felt, affirmed and stressed; that in which they meet, whatever holds their divergences together, is largely missed or found with difficulty; everything has to be done by an overcoming or an adjustment of difference, by a constructed unity. There is, indeed, an underlying principle of oneness and Nature insists on its emergence in a construction of unity; for she is collective and communal as well as individual and egoistic and has her instrumentation of associativeness, sympathies, common needs, interests, attractions, affinities as well as her more brutal means of unification: but her secondary imposed and too prominent basis of ego-life and ego-nature overlays the unity and afflicts all its constructions with imperfection and insecurity.

A farther difficulty is created by the absence or rather the imperfection of intuition and direct inner contact making each a separate being forced to learn with difficulty the other's being and nature, to arrive at understanding and mutuality and harmony from outside instead of inwardly through a direct sense and grasp, so that all mental and vital interchange is hampered, rendered ego-tainted or doomed to imperfection and incompleteness by the veil of mutual ignorance.

In the collective gnostic life the integrating truth-sense, the concordant unity of gnostic nature would carry all divergences in itself as its own opulence and turn a multitudinous thought, action, feeling into the unity of a luminous life-whole. This would be the evident principle, the inevitable result of the very character of the Truth-Consciousness and its dynamic realisation of the spiritual unity of all being. This realisation, the key to the perfection of life, difficult to arrive at on the mental plane, difficult even when realised to dynamise or organise, would be naturally dynamic, spontaneously self-organised in all gnostic creation and gnostic life.





## APROPOS

What the strange machine man is. You fill him with bread, wine, fish, and radishes, and out come sighs, laughter and dreams.—Nikos Kazantzakis

Human language is like a cracked kettle on which we beat out tunes for bears to dance to, when all the time we are longing to move the stars to pity.—Gustav Flaubert

We are not human beings trying to be spiritual. We are spiritual beings trying to be human.—Jacquelyn Small

There is something in other people's religions that is incomprehensible.—Huston Smith

If the world were a logical place, men would ride sidesaddle.—*Casual Living Catalog*

The prerequisite of originality is the art of forgetting, at the proper moment, what we know.—Arthur Koestler

The fish trap exists because of the fish. Once you've gotten the fish you can forget the trap. The rabbit snare exists because of the rabbit. Once you've gotten the rabbit, you can forget the snare. Words exist because of meaning. Once you've gotten the meaning, you can forget the words. Where can I find a man who has forgotten words so I can talk with him?—Chuang-tzu

We have not had a thousand failures. We have discovered a thousand things that don't work.—Thomas Edison

Always make new mistakes.—Esther Dyson, *Release 2.0*

It's not what you look at that matters, it's what you see.—Henry David Thoreau

The job of the artist is to create bridges between what we know and what we don't know.—Walter Mosely, *Blue Light*

It does not do you good to leave a dragon out of your calculations, if you live near him.—J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit*

Somebody was saying to Picasso that he ought to make pictures of things the way they are—objective pictures. He mumbled he wasn't quite sure what that would be. The person who was bullying him produced a photograph of his wife from his wallet and said, "There, you see, that is a picture of how she really is." Picasso look at it and said, "She is rather small, isn't she? And flat?"—Gregory Bateson

The beauty of every day is to discover the art of living.—Nancy Ware, breast cancer survivor

The search for the truth is in one way hard and another easy—for it is evident that no one of us can master it fully, nor miss it wholly. Each one of us adds a little to our knowledge of nature, and from all the facts assembled arises a certain grandeur.—Aristotle

I often dream about falling. Such dreams are commonplace to the ambitious or those who climb mountains. Lately I dreamed I was clutching at the face of a rock, but it would not hold. Gravel gave way. I grasped for a shrub, but it pulled loose, and in cold terror I fell into the abyss. Suddenly I realized that my fall was relative; there was no bottom and no end. A feeling of pleasure overcame me. I realized that what I embody, the principal of life, cannot be destroyed. It is written into the cosmic code, the order of the universe. As I continued to fall in the dark void, embraced by the fall to the heavens, I sang to the beauty of the stars and made my peace with the darkness.—Heinz Pagels, physicist and quantum mechanics researcher, before his death in a 1988 climbing accident

The further backward you look, the further forward you can see.—Winston Churchill

A beaver and another forest animal are contemplating an immense man-made dam. The beaver is saying something like "No, I didn't actually build it. But it's based on idea of mine."—Edward Fredkin

We know what we are, but know not what we may become.—William Shakespeare

Anyone who, upon looking down at his bare feet, doesn't laugh, has either no sense of symmetry, or no sense of humor.—Descartes

At dinner time [the cat] would sit in a corner, concentrating, and suddenly they would say, "Time to feed the cat," as if it were their own idea.—Lillian Jackson Braun

We get our behavior, like measles, from one another.—Sir Francis Bacon

Spreading news has become a yogic siddhi. Even before anything is decided, it leaks out!—Sri Aurobindo, *Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, vol. III, p. 84

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