

Collaboration

Summer 1999

Journal of the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother

Vol. 25, No. 2



When I was a child of about thirteen, for nearly a year every night as soon as I had gone to bed it seemed to me that I went out of my body and rose straight up above the house, then above the city, very high above. Then I used to see myself clad in a magnificent golden robe, much longer than myself; and as I rose higher, the robe would stretch, spreading out in a circle around me to form a kind of immense roof over the city.

Then I would see men, women, children, old men, the sick, the unfortunate coming out from every side; they would gather under the outspread robe, begging for help, telling of their miseries, their suffering, their hardships. In reply, the robe, supple and alive, would extend towards each one of them individually, and as soon as they had touched it, they were comforted or healed, and went back into their bodies happier and stronger than they had come out of them.

—Glimpses of the Mother's Life,
vol. 1, pp. 224-5

Why people don't practice the yoga • How the yoga moves within one aspirant •
A voyage of returning • The movies move forward •
Sri Aurobindo's reminiscences and observations



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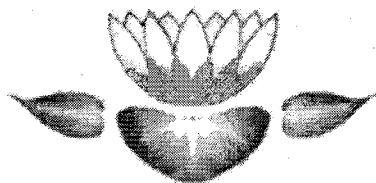
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About the artists in this issue: Dakshina lives and paints in Lodi, California. Margaret Phanes, a graphic artist, lives in Santa Cruz, California. Sam Spanier is a painter living at Matagiri in Woodstock, New York. Victoria Uytana was only forty years old when she passed away this year; we miss her. Vishnubhai Eschner lives in Lodi, California.

About the cover: "Kali Descending." E-Art by Vishnubhai Eschner, based on an original photo the Mother on the occasion of "Kali Puja" in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, on 21 October 1954. Photo courtesy Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust.



BEGINNINGS

Why people don't practice the yoga

These selections are from "The Divine Answers," a section of the Bulletin of Physical Education, April 1961, p. 71.

Have we the right to put questions if we do not practise what you say?

One has always the right to do anything. You can put any question you like. Practise? Well, each one is to choose whether he wishes to practise or not to practise, whether he considers it useful or not, is it not so? It is a thing that cannot be imposed; it must be done freely. But questions you can always put.

Now I am going to put a question: "Why do not people practise?" Do you know, you, why people do not practise? (*Mother turns round asking everyone*) You? And You?

Perhaps because people are lazy!

Surely, it is one of the chief reasons. And then they cover their laziness with good excuses, of which the first one is to say, "I cannot, I do not," or, "I have tried and did not succeed," or again, "I do not know by which end to begin!" It does not matter what reason, the very first one that comes up. Well, people do not practise because they do not find it worthwhile to take the trouble— that also is part of laziness, it needs too much effort! But you cannot live without effort! If you rejected all effort you would not stand on your legs, nor walk nor even eat.

I believe that people do not practise, first because it has not got a reality concrete enough to dominate all other things of life, because the effort appears disproportionate to the result. But this kind of effort is only a beginning; once you are inside, it is no longer the same thing.

You ask me what you must do. It would be better to ask what you must be, because the circumstances and activities in life have not much importance. What is important is our way of reacting towards them.

Human nature is such that when you concentrate on your body you fall ill, when you concentrate on your heart and feelings you become unhappy, when you concentrate on the mind you get bewildered.

There are two ways of getting out of this precarious condition.

One is very arduous; it is a severe and continuous tapasya. It is the way of the strong who are predestined for it.

The other is to find something worth concentrating upon, that diverts your attention from your small personal self. The most effective is a big ideal, but there are innumerable things that enter into this category. Most commonly people choose marriage because it is the most easily available. To love somebody and to love children makes you busy and compels you to forget a little your own self. But it is rarely successful, because love is not a common thing.

Others turn to art, others to science, some choose a social or a political life, etc., etc.

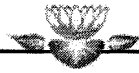
But here also all depends on the sincerity and the endurance with which is followed the chosen path. Because here also there are difficulties and obstacles to surmount.

So, in life, nothing comes without an effort and a struggle.

And if you are not ready for the effort and the struggle, then it is better to accept the fact that life will be dull and unsatisfactory and submit quietly to this fact.



The Mother. (Drawing by Dakshina)



NEW LETTERS ON YOGA

Understanding levels of dreams and sleep

by Johannes Vloothuis

With respect to the sleep state and dreaming and experiences on other planes when asleep, or in samadhi experiences (*svapna* dream state type) on other planes, I have noticed that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have classified them somewhat in this way. This is my terminology:

1. Noncoherent subconscious memory or physical related
2. Noncoherent memory not necessarily past related
3. Coherent memory direct or symbolic
4. Clear coherent memory
5. Direct experience
6. Conscious dreaming (lucid dreaming)
7. Samadhi dreaming (intensified lucidity)
8. Controlled samadhi dreaming (movement to different levels)
9. Waking dreaming

For example, level 6 or lucid dreaming (which is the ability to know that one is dreaming while one is in the dream state) is different from level 5 (which is experiencing a dream as if one were there actually in the dream as if awake). It is more than the memory of level 4 since one actually feels oneself quite living the experience while it is happening.

Ordinarily, lucid dreaming, level 6, when one achieves it, is at only approximately fifty percent of the intensity of our waking state. It is usually acquired while in the sleep state itself, and the focus of attention is lessened by that very fact. Also, one can easily fall back into level 5 and forget that one is dreaming while in that state and lose the "lucidity."

Intensified lucidity, level 7, is about ninety percent of the intensity of the waking state awareness or more (more consciousness has been drawn inside than level 6), since that is acquired through meditation and concentration or descent of the higher consciousness.

I am focusing on the types of experiences here that take one into the lower inner worlds (subtle physical, vital, or mental, or maybe even the psychic world). There are also the samadhi states that take one into the inner consciousness without actually leaving the body and going into the inner worlds themselves per se.

Of course these percentages are somewhat arbitrary, but they can be a way of indicating something that actually happens to describe the degree of "wakefulness" or intensity of awareness that is acquired or achieved while in the alternate state of the in-

ner consciousness itself. Note that level 7 lucidity is not as easily lost as level 6, and is much more stable.

There are methods that can be used to bring one state up to the next. For example, if you find yourself spontaneously in a lucid dream while normally otherwise asleep (level 6), you can focus your attention in such a way as to become even more conscious in that dream and thereby change it to a samadhi-type intensity of awareness (level 7), then move upwards or inwards from whatever plane or world you find yourself—that is, move from the vital to the mental plane, or go deeper inside into the psychic (level 8) and then extend and prolong the experience even more in duration and intensity of awareness.

Even when one awakens from the "dream" after that, the inner awareness persists somewhat while awake, and the inner consciousness gets extended towards the waking state till the capacity to be aware even in the waking state (level 9) of a part of ourselves that always dwells there (on the inner level) already is achieved, as a result of bringing that inward state forward.

I'm sure a lot of people in the Integral Yoga are having these kinds of experiences related to some degree of these different levels mentioned here above, and I think it would be in our mutual benefit to discuss the knowledge behind this and what Sri Aurobindo and the Mother had to say about it all. A detailed reference to states 1 to 5 (perhaps 6 could be included also) can be found in the *Life Divine*. Here is a short quote from that section.

The subconscious dreams constitute the bulk of our most ordinary sleep-experience and they are those we usually remember; but sometimes the subliminal builder is able to impress our sleep consciousness sufficiently to stamp his activities on our waking memory. If we develop our inner being, live more inward than most men do, then the balance is changed and a larger dream-consciousness opens before us; our dreams can take on a subliminal and no longer a subconscious character and can assume a reality and significance.

It is even possible to become wholly conscious in sleep and follow throughout from beginning to end or over large stretches the stages of our dream-experience; it is found that then we are aware of ourselves passing from state after state of consciousness to a brief period of luminous and peaceful dreamless rest, which is the true restorer of the energies of the waking nature, and then returning by the same way to the waking consciousness. (Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, p. 425).

Johannes Vloothuis (jhav@lara.on.ca) is active in the Burlington, Canada, study group.



CURRENT AFFAIRS

French discussion group

A new French discussion group has been started by Jean-Jacques Vanhoutte. It covers all topics related to the Mother's *Agenda*. To subscribe, send e-mail to majordomo@auore-france.net, and in the body (not the subject heading) type: subscribe agenda_de_mere. To send a message to the group, use the email address agenda_de_mere@auore-france.net.

Jean-Jacques writes "Ce prodigieux document de plus de 6000 pages, 13 volumes, relate jour après jour, pendant 22 ans, l'exploration de Mère dans la conscience du corps et la découverte d'un "mental cellulaire" capable de re-former la condition du corps et le lois de l'espèce, aussi radicalement qu'un jour les premiers balbutiements d'un "mental pensant" ont transformer les conditions de l'anthropoïde. C'est un véritable document de l'évolution expérimentale. Une révolution de la conscience qui change les lois de l'espèce. Aussi minitueusement qu'un savant dans son laboratoire, Mère remonte à l'origine de la première formation de la matière, au code primordial, et, "par hasard", bute sur le mécanisme de la mort, c'est à dire sur le pouvoir de changer la mort, et sur une energie "nouvelle" qui rejoint étrangement les plus récentes théories de la physique de la matière. La clef de la matière contient la clef de la mort et la clef de la prochaine espèce.

For more information about the list, please contact Jean-Jacques (e-mail: auore@auore-france.net).

Delhi branch website

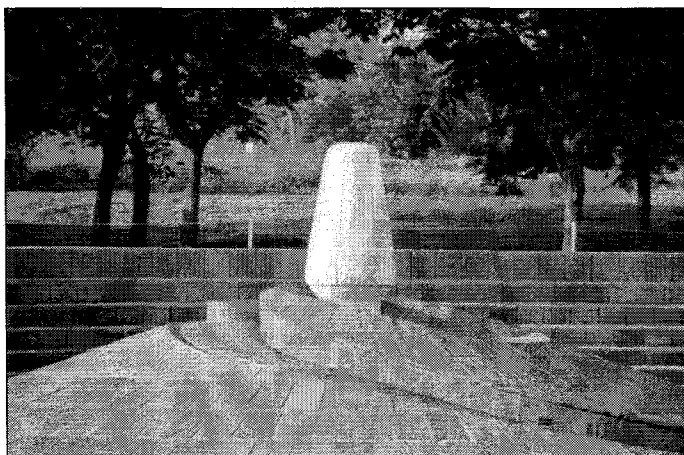
A new web site has been created for the New Delhi branch of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram: <http://www.collaboration.org/centers/delhi/index.htm>. The site is maintained by Bhuvana Nandakumar. For more information, please contact her (e-mail: msbhuvana@hotmail.com).

Networking web site

Aurela Sequoia maintains a web site for networking in the Integral Yoga. It is available at <http://www.collaboration.org/centers/sasaranam/index.htm>

Golden Chain web site:

Golden Chain, an alumni association newsletter for Sri Aurobindo International Center of Education, (SAICE) is available at <http://members.xoom.com/goldenchain/>



Auroville's lotus-shaped urn: symbol of human unity. (photo courtesy Auroville)

The city the earth needs needs you

Auroville's development according to its original plans is being threatened by rapidly escalating land prices and increasing real estate speculation on the Auroville plateau. Securing the remaining land is now urgently needed:

- For a coherent development of the city and its infrastructure;
- To link up the existing areas of forest and organic farm land into a continuous green zone around the city area
- To consolidate Auroville's efforts to create, together with the local population, a sustainable bioregion in harmony with the Earth.

This summer, the Sri Aurobindo Association has been sponsoring a visit by Guy Ryckaert and Shivaya from Auroville. The purpose of their visit is to give presentations at AUM in Colorado, in California, and elsewhere on the urgency of the land situation in Auroville.

They will also be contacting different groups and individuals in the U.S. who are interested in Auroville or in fundraising for Auroville.

Their itinerary can be seen on the Internet at <http://www.collaboration.org/auroville/avland.html>.

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).

"The purpose of Auroville is to realize human unity." —The Mother



CHRONICLES & RECOLLECTIONS

How the yoga moves within one aspirant

by Nora Archambeau

Introduction

I would like to offer many thanks to Mother and to Sri Aurobindo for bringing me to this point in my life.

The first time I encountered Integral Yoga was at the end of 1993. I was about to embark on a seven-week trip throughout Asia with my first stop being in India. My intention was to locate an ashram to visit. Having worked with Indians in international education for six years, I wanted to understand and experience more of the spiritual side of their culture. At the same time, I had recently been accepted into a graduate program whose foundation was built on the philosophy of Integral Yoga. I was directed to a book in the school's bookstore that included the name and address of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry, India. I was immediately excited and felt that this was the town I should visit.

I first visited Pondicherry—"Pondy" to those who adore her—in November, 1993. During my stay, I had two striking experiences. The first was meeting an Australian woman who simply loved the people and the Indian culture and had a wonderful, endearing way of introducing me to both.

The second experience occurred while sitting in my room at the Park Guest House on Thanksgiving day. It had been about five days since my arrival in India, and I had not had any extended, nor meaningful, conversation with an Indian. I felt that to experience the culture meant truly engaging with the people. I looked up from the table and chair where I sat and looked at a somewhat ominous photo of Mother. I started receiving the words, "Go to the French book shop." (Two days prior, I had visited the book shop and met a lovely Indian woman who was one of the first to extend a sincere smile, full of warmth, to me.) So, I got up, closed my journal, and walked to the bookshop to, hopefully, reconnect. Well, I did, and by the end of my stay in Pondy, I felt truly grateful that I was sent this message and indeed heeded its words. I consider these experiences to be my first encounter with Mother. I have been drawn to Integral Yoga ever since.

"Following Integral Yoga makes my life easier. . ."

Integral Yoga

Integral Yoga is a philosophical and spiritual way of life based on both surrendering and aspiring in pursuit of truth. This is how I define Integral Yoga. Following this path helps me to get closer and closer to my authentic self and Self. At the time of this writing, the energetic forces of Mother and Sri Aurobindo are helping me to break down the resistances I put up to protect myself from further hurt and disappointment. While defense systems are natural and even necessary at times, protecting oneself too much can also keep out love and connectedness. This is not what I want nor is it true to my nature. In addition, when I am sincere in my requests to these two incredible spiritual teachers, I find that the means to know what I should do are given to me almost instantaneously. Let me offer you an example.

Recently, I was experiencing communication difficulties with another sadhak and did not know how to connect in an honest and authentic way. I asked Mother for forgiveness toward this sadhak and to please give me the means to talk to him. I soon felt the opportunity was given and therefore seized it. Next, I just trusted that whatever came out of me was what needed to be said. Fortunately, some resolution was achieved between us. While I believe that Integral Yoga works at transforming us, we also have to be open, aware, and conscious of our own steps and actions.

Following Integral Yoga makes my life easier in several ways. It helps to uncover the layers of personas I have developed over the years, it brings me closer to ongoing connectedness with all sentient beings, and it diminishes loneliness and sometimes isolation in the individualistic, western world I live in. In addition, practicing Integral Yoga makes me psychically stronger.

What continues to attract me to this yoga is how well I feel being in the presence of Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's vibrations. While recently participating in one of the monthly retreats at the Sri Aurobindo Sadhana Peetham in Lodi, California, I experienced a wonderful state of being: self-confident, calm, serene, present, aware, and alert. I was without anxiety and not longing for anything else. I felt whole within myself. I also feel well in the presence of other aspirants of the yoga.

Integral Yoga is a vehicle for practicing collaboration within a collective. Collaboration within Integral Yoga harnesses the gifts and talents we each carry and calls us to bring them forth in the group. It allows for differences of expression and opinion and respects these differences while offering venues that encourage consensus. These are not easy tasks to accomplish within any group, yet they pave the way toward peaceful co-existence in the world.

It is often said that this yoga encourages certain qualities that are commonly reflected in the individuals practicing it. The joyful discovery for me has been the qualities of sweetness, love, sincerity, harmony, individualism, collaboration, authenticity, courage, willingness, play, truth, abundance . . . and the list goes on. These are all qualities inherent within and integral to the yoga because they assist in the process of chipping away the nonessential layers of one's being and getting to the core of one's essential being—a beautiful, fulfilling, mysterious, and often challenging journey.



Surrender and aspiration

Surrender and aspiration are driving forces within Integral Yoga and have become personal principles for me to live by. The Mother (*The Sunlit Path*, p. 21) writes, "Surrender is the decision taken to hand over the responsibility of your life to the Divine. Everything else comes naturally after it, for the whole process starts with surrender." As for aspiration, Sri Aurobindo speaks of it as the call of the being for higher things, for the Divine, for all that belongs to the higher or divine consciousness.

Surrendering is putting one's complete trust in something higher, larger, more profound, than oneself. It is not trying to control a situation, an individual, a plan, or an event. It is participating in life with conscious decision making in choice and in action while turning over the outcome of your life to the Divine. It is taking that leap of faith over and over again until it becomes automatic. It is taking risks. And, as a westerner who is not totally self-surrendered, I believe that using personal will to discern and discriminate is a necessary part of the decision-making process. It is in times of conflict, confusion, or indecision when I feel that I am especially challenged to assert my personal will and to act out my part in this play called life with God.

Aspiration, I find, works in tandem with surrender. Once surrendering has occurred, one must follow or aspire to take the necessary steps that will hopefully lead to the best outcome for the situation, the individual, the plan, or the event at hand. It is about setting the intention of aspiration in the heart, then persevering toward reaching clarity, increased awareness, peace, and fulfillment of the desired goal.

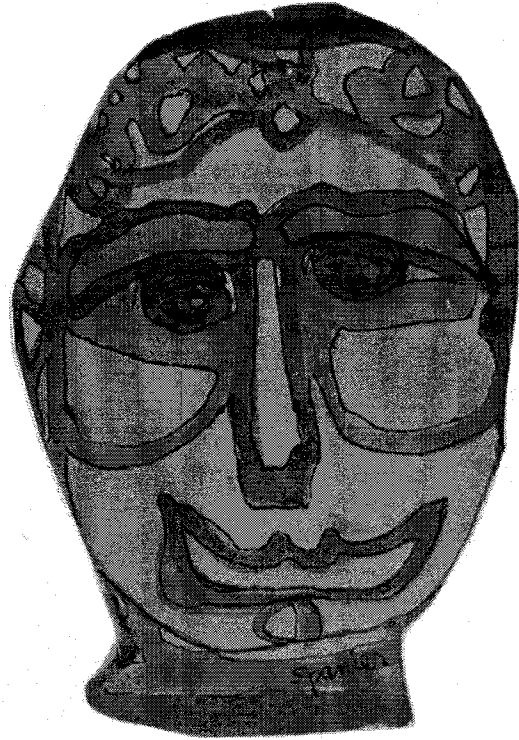
One way I practice surrender in my daily life is simply reminding myself of it when I start to feel overwhelmed. When I start to feel that I alone am supposed to have the answer to something and have put my trust into that something or someone outside of myself, this is when I know I need to pause. Next, I need to step out from under the egoic self, from the distrusting part of myself, from the other, and relinquish my trust to God, the Divine, Mother, Sri Aurobindo. A wave of relief comes over me, I feel less tense, and am soon back to my center.

Some basic ways I practice aspiration in my daily life include eating and sleeping well (vegetarian food and eight hours of sleep); exercising (to increase flexibility, strength, and stamina); reading the works of Mother and Sri Aurobindo (whose words are in and of themselves a force in action); attending monthly retreats (to connect and collaborate with other aspirants); and following what intuitively feels right in the Yoga.

This is how the yoga moves within one aspirant. The yoga moves differently in different people. Perhaps sharing my experience will lend itself to hear how the yoga operates within others.

Namaste Mother. Namaste Guruji. Namaste.

Nora Archambeau is a recent graduate of the California Institute of Integral Studies, and lives in Oakland, California. She can be reached at narchambeau@hotmail.com.



"Untitled." (Ink drawing by Sam Spanier)

From early times

by Sam Spanier

Recently while going through fifty years of artwork preparing for a retrospective show, I found this color drawing I did in 1940 at age fifteen, many, many years before I was consciously aware of the Mother. I later met her in 1962 at the Ashram.

Sam lives at Matagiri, "Mother's Mountain," a center which has become a beacon of Sri Aurobindo's light near Woodstock, New York. He and Eric Hughes co-founded Matagiri with Mother's blessings in the late sixties.



Sam Spanier in his Paris studio, 1952. (Photo courtesy Sam Spanier)



aspiration, to receive the Spiritual Truth and manifest it in all your thoughts, feelings, actions and nature. (Sri Aurobindo, from *A Practical Guide to Integral Yoga*, pp.108-109).

I very much appreciate traveling, and on this trip I was reminded of some of the reasons: to experience other cultures, to have adventures and serendipity, to stand back from one's "ordinary life," to experience unfamiliar geography, exploration, spontaneity, and rushes of new imagery. But another important aspect of travel is that of pilgrimage. With an attitude of consecration and openness, one responds to the longing and the call for a pilgrimage; and how profoundly fulfilling it is when one's faith is strengthened on such a journey! As Sri Aurobindo said, "Faith is the soul's witness to something not yet manifested, achieved or realized, but which the Knower within us, even in the absence of all indications, feels to be true or supremely worth following or achieving." (*Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library*, (SABCL), vol. 23, pp. 572-573).

And then back in Pondicherry! The courtyard of the samadhi in the Ashram had such an ineffably beautiful and spiritual atmosphere. I stayed in the International Guest House which was comfortable, quiet, and clean. In the solitude of my room and at the samadhi, I cultivated the "consent of my soul." I was reminded that "The Mother's Force is not only above on the summit of the being. It is there with you and near you, ready to act whenever your nature will allow it. It is so with everybody here." (SABCL, vol. 25, p.139).

Returning to Auroville it was amazing to behold so many trees! It was exhilarating to see Auroville's diverse growth and progress. Each day there I visited the inner chamber of the Matrimandir, an experience which was powerful, soft, truly awesome, force-full and grace-full. It is indeed a place of silence and concentration.

After reconnecting with Auroville and the ashram, I experienced a strengthening of faith and a deeper sense of consecration in my life. I am thankful to have made such a trip to India and the corresponding voyage inside myself. As Sri Aurobindo said:

"If this is all, then all is surely well;
If there is more, then all can still be well . . .
My spirit has glimpsed the glory for which it came."
(Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri*, Book 6, Canto 1, pp. 424, 435).

Truth.

Seabury Gould is a singer, musician, composer, and storyteller living in Ojai, California. He has taught music to children of all ages, and lived in India for two years. He performs for both adults and children, and has two albums and a CD, Times and Places, of storytelling with music.

Above: Sri Aurobindo's Samadhi. (Photo by Victoria Uytana)

A voyage of returning

Seabury Gould

The following are excerpts from an essay based on a trip to India in 1995. Seabury lived in South India during parts of 1974, '75, '79, and '80.

As a musician, I cherished the Mother's words: "The role of music consists in helping the consciousness to rise towards spiritual heights." (*Collected works of the Mother*, vol. 12, pp. 242-243).

In Madras I had a wonderful extended visit with Dr. K. Subramanian, a most inspiring master of the vina (and my teacher twenty years ago). It was profound and nourishing to experience karnatic music in private intimate performances.

In Visakhapatnam, I had the great pleasure of visiting I. V. L. Sastry, an accomplished and devout musician and dedicated teacher and singer.

In Hyderabad, I visited the late Dr. Madhusudan Reddy, professor, scholar, author, and director of the Institute of Human Study, a center dedicated to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Being in that sacred atmosphere, and feeling more in touch with the force, the words of Sri Aurobindo rang true:

It is necessary if you want to progress in your Sadhana that you should make the submission and surrender of which you speak sincere, real and possible. This cannot be as long as you mix up your desires with your spiritual aspiration . . . If you are to do this Yoga, you must have only one desire and





THE POETRY ROOM

The following four-poem set is an example of a unique poetic dialogue between poets on Auroconf.

Wish

I were a grain of basmati,
In fragrance bubble and toil.
I were a little bird on tree,
Whistling, darting in glee.
I were a sharp narrow sun ray,
Warming a little child's palm.

Alas,
I am but hard dry rusk,
Seeking the hot chocolate.
I am but the corner donkey,
Waiting for the master's load.
I am but the charcoal bag,
Seeking the fire to be consumed.

Will I ever learn to wish,
A wish that is never mine?

—Chandresh Patel

A Wish Again

Yes, Bliss it would be
when my burden and me
were aware
that for all this trouble
Someone does Care
Alas, as long I feel the burden
I am the burden
And how much more do I need to carry
before the ray of Sun
awakens in me
the inner smile
that will make my burden
and me
go for the long and True Mile
Since I know
I will be

—August Timmermans

Better a toad on the road
That leads toward the One,
Than a ruby
In the sword
Of a fighter of the Light.

—Aurela Sequoia

Reply to a wish

O can there be a better fate
Than rusk awaiting chocolate?
The separate self to be immersed
Within His all-consuming thirst?

Perhaps that of the donkey humble
Who bears his load without a grumble
A faithful servant to his Master,
He strives to plod a little faster.

Yet think I that the charcoal bag
Behind these others does not lag,
Engulfed within the Flame's embrace,
What higher fate, this state of Grace?

—Dakshina



*The Mother at the occasion of "Kali Puja,"
Pondicherry, 21 October 1954. Photo:
Courtesy Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust.*



Sun smile

It began as an ache
reading could soften
not dissolve
Aspiring
through the Dark
Digging a tunnel
until there was The Spark
A tiny Ray
comforting
At last, it could be
amidst all
that do not know
A long time it takes to Grow
Penetrating Life
Wrestling with Obstacles
Defeat is often announced
Yet strength always triumphs
Weakness and strength
alternating
Opening Upward
the answer
Convincing is Your Strength
My Great Mother
Conquering my weakest link
I can see
that change is
the right movement
in the right moment
Patience is Yours too
and Love
and Tenderness
Make me wish
I were there with You
Until then
You give me
the Strength of the
Sun Smile

—August Timmermans

Who is that lady?

Selected from Savitri by Benjamin Irvin

She made earth her home, for whom heaven was too small.
In a human breast her occult presence lived;
He carved from his own self his figure of her:
She shaped her body to a mind's embrace.
Into thought's narrow limits she has come;
Her greatness she has suffered to be pressed
Into the little cabin of the Idea,
The closed room of a lonely thinker's grasp:
She has lowered her heights to the stature of our souls
And dazzled our lids with her celestial gaze.
Thus each is satisfied with his high gain
And thinks himself beyond mortality blest,
A king of truth upon his separate throne.
To her possessor in the field of Time
A single splendour caught from her glory seems
The one true light, her beauty's glowing whole.
But thought nor word can seize eternal Truth:
The whole world lives in a lonely ray of her sun.
In our thinking's close and narrow lamp-lit house
The vanity of our shut mortal mind
Dreams that the chains of thought have made her ours;
But only we play with our own brilliant bonds;
Tying her down, it is ourselves we tie.
In our hypnosis by one luminous point
We see not what small figure of her we hold;
We feel not her inspiring boundlessness,
We share not her immortal liberty.
Thus is it even with the seer and sage;
For still the human limits the divine:
Out of our thoughts we must leap up to sight,
Breathe her divine illimitable air,
Her simple vast supremacy confess,
Dare to surrender to her absolute.
Then the Unmanifest reflects his form
In the still mind as in a living glass;
The timeless Ray descends into our hearts
And we are rapt into eternity.
For Truth is wider, greater than her forms.
A thousand icons they have made of her
And find her in the idols they adore;
But she remains herself and infinite.

—Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri*, pp. 275-276



NOTES FROM THE FIELD

Transcending the tangible: the yoga online (part 2)

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, Dave Hutchinson sent a series of questions to each moderator. 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 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 Money lists are the most recent, having been formed to work together on the specific question of the role of money in our col-

lective 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>.

What advice would you give to participants on an online forum? Has being a moderator given you special insight into the topic you are discussing?

Ben: Yes absolutely. Participation in these forums can be like belonging to a study group. Sometimes in a group you are pushed to study a little harder than you would on your own; also in a group you can learn from one another, gain tremendously from one another's perspective.

The advice I would like to give to the average member of the forum is to participate when the feeling moves you, to share, to even take a risk, not to hesitate. I think it can be a very healthy and invigorating exercise to assert one's views. We have so many people on the list who rarely say a word, but I am sure that there are times when they have felt like it. At that time, go with that feeling state that is in your heart—this can be exhilarating as well as liberating. After all, we are among friends and like-minded people.

Janis: I have received wonderful insights from forum members and good background knowledge and much encouragement. To benefit from the forums, I would advise members to relax, open up, ask questions, say what they feel. Don't be afraid to say things as you see them. Someone out there will benefit from your unique perspective.

Don: I tried for twenty-seven years to find people to talk to about integral psychology. Even within the Aurobindonian community, there has been some resistance to talking about integral psychology. I found more people to talk to within one month of coming online than in the previous twenty-seven years. Several months later, the psychology forum began, and quite regularly, issues I have been struggling to understand for decades are slowly becoming clear—issues of human development, planes and parts of the being, and even the very nature of consciousness.

The greatest thing that could happen for each member of the forum is to really understand what it means to be a co-moderator. To read each letter as if you were the moderator of the forum; to try to understand where things fit in the whole; to sense the trend of things; to try to find what your own passion is and to try to find the words to express this.



"Surfing the Net." (E-art by Vishnubhai Eschner)



Has being a moderator affected your life, changed relationships with others, allowed you to perceive people or events in a different light? Do you talk about it with those you are close to or work with?

Janis: Since I live in a community where there is no Integral Yoga study group, being a moderator stimulates me to study and try to understand more. It is quite time consuming but the time is well spent and I feel that as a moderator I have benefited enormously.

Don: It's completely changed my life. I would guess this is not the common experience of moderators. In my case, it's because I have experienced so much difficulty finding people with whom to share my interests in integral psychology. Most important is simply the great joy in sharing something I love so much. But also, there is so much that I simply can't work out by myself, for which I need feedback in order to gain a deeper understanding.

In the course of trying to understand what it means to be a leader, I have understood many other leadership roles I undertake—I can see in classroom discussions, in being a group therapy leader and a live discussion group leader that my whole sense of participation is different and deepened from being a moderator. I often talk about this with friends.

I've also learned a tremendous amount of what is involved in human communication. When I first got on e-mail, and observed the tremendous difficulties people had listening to each other, I assumed there was something uniquely difficult about communication online, which I assumed had something to do with lack of emotional expression available through the computer. It was almost a year before I started to realize I was seeing the same kind of communication snafus everywhere, in both one-to-one and group conversations. I finally came to see I was just seeing an intensified version of human communication difficulties.

My mantra recently has been one I learned from Pace University instructor Rachel Lauer: "Assume miscommunication." This is such an extraordinary facilitator of communication. If I realize that the norm for many if not most human communications is misunderstanding, then I am far less likely to get annoyed or irritated when I see my words reflected back to me in a form I could never even imagine.

One reason communication is particularly difficult, not only on the Psych forum but on all the forums, is that we are trying to put into words experiences that are really beyond words. I suspect that given a minimum of five years of face-to-face communication, it might be possible to develop the kind of inner contact necessary to really transcend the outer words. Not having that opportunity for now, I think it is a miracle the extent to which real communication does occur.

Does being a moderator of an online forum require you to be a fast typist or reader, or to have extra patience with people, or have deeper insight? Are there methods of physical, electronic, or mental organization which help you to sort it all out?

Chandresh: It does require one to have extra patience.

Janis: A moderator needs time, patience, and most of all a direct pipeline to the Supreme. Failing all that, we must open ourselves to the highest insights and intuitions that we can receive. I do not see that we need any special technical knowledge. But if there are physical, electronic, or organizational methods to help us sort it all out, I'm sure our fellow moderators and forum members would be glad to help out. Among us all, there is a world of information and expertise waiting to be tapped.

Don: I've gone through numerous sorting systems. The one that works for me now is to have a very carefully delineated assortment of folders into which all letters go as soon as they arrive.

Can you discern deeper movements of consciousness which affect the forum as a whole, for example a wave of compassion overtaking the members? Is it possible to work with these larger movements?

Chandresh: On Auroconf, the longest-running forum, there are constantly new persons joining and leaving which change the mood and contributions of the forum. There are always so many divergent viewpoints that I don't see one uniform direction of discussion.

Janis: Formerly, I was concerned that there were so few comments coming into the Synthesis forum. I felt my input might not be stimulating the discussion. But other moderators said they were having the same problems. So, I just decided to keep on as a moderator with the faith that the majority who do not comment are still receiving some benefit and that their comments will be forthcoming when they are ready.

Don: This really goes to the core of what the Psych forum means to me. I remember when we first took a "psychic being" break, taking a month or so just to put up quotes on the psychic being. There really was an aura of a kind of lovingness that seemed to be present in relation to the forum, to the cyber-community which made up the forum.

I've noticed that there are certain themes that come up and go away and then reemerge—it really does seem like there are certain core elements in the community which weave the most delicate and subtle, subliminal strands of the larger web of the forum. I've found often when writing that it is as if some kind of force is guiding my hands as I type and I even find sometimes that I am surprised to discover something I've written that wasn't what I originally had intended. I hope that as moderator I can discern the deeper and larger movements. In fact, I think the core of what I



mean by acting as a co-moderator is to have all of us, every member, begin to become sensitive to these deeper waves of consciousness which go to make up this cyber-community.

"The matter-to-spirit adventure is much more intense and interesting because of science and technology."

Many people see spiritual life as a counterpoint to the constantly changing, distracting world around us. Does a forum distract from the spiritual life by promoting too much mental activity?

Chandresh: I don't feel that for spiritual growth, such constant change is distracting from inner development.

Janis: A forum is truly like running water. Yet so are the participants. What I have noticed is that a forum member may have a strong presence on the forum for awhile, then fade, then come back again. It is a process—our members are also like running water. Sometimes members may need to back off from the forum for a while and assimilate what they have learned. There are a few members who manage to have a more or less constant presence on the forum. They are the backbone that enables the majority to participate as they are so inclined.

Don: What a strange idea that spiritual life is in any way different from the flowing energy of evolution, but I suppose you mean different from the rajasic, egoistic distractions of life. Well, it seems to me that the very essence of a spiritually based forum is to provide that still point where we can step back and reflect on our lives. And since most of our lives promote a lack of mental activity, I can't see how reflection would interfere with our spiritual development.

It is not mental activity in itself but the egoistic clinging to points of view that impedes the flow of inspiration from higher regions. In fact, I hope as the nature of the mind, and the physical, vital, and thinking minds in relation to higher levels of mind and also to the psychic mind becomes clear that the Psych forum can become more and more of a place to facilitate exactly that kind of transformation of the mind that Sri Aurobindo writes is an essential aspect of the supramental yoga.

If we look at these forums as a spiritual use of technology, what might that signify for the future? Are there other technologies which can be used in a similar fashion? Are we as spiritual beings changing our relationship to science and technology?

Chandresh: The computer is the underlying tool that has enabled the total revolution of which the Internet is one offspring. We as spiritual beings are or at least should be changing our relationship to science and technology. All life is yoga. The matter-to-spirit adventure is much more intense and interesting because of science and technology.

Janis: Primarily, these forums signify an intensified means of communication. From them we gain a feel for the Integral Yoga worldwide. We are in instantaneous communication with devotees in the Netherlands, France, Germany, Australia, Kazakstan, Singapore, India, Israel, Russia, and more. We are a dynamic world movement that is gaining momentum.

The Internet has not only shown us a worldwide presence but also put people in the same country in touch who had not previously known each other. In some cases, it has stimulated the formation of study groups or centers. Special projects are implemented via the forums. The Psych forum is beginning to work on a publication. The integral education group is working together to open the first Sri Aurobindo elementary school in the U.S. Other projects will evolve, such as an Integral Yoga university using distance learning as its tool of communication. The possibilities in communication and education will continue to advance and be refined as the technology develops.

Don: Again, I don't think it is so much a matter of form as a matter of consciousness. I can easily imagine a time, not in the distant future, when we might use virtual reality to meet face-to-face in a virtual meeting group, while our physical bodies are in countries scattered throughout the planet. As with all other technologies, the consciousness we bring to it will be a much larger determinant of our spiritual relationship with the technology than anything inherent in the technology itself.

Where might these forums go in the future? Are there different ways of interacting which could be tried? What would be your vision of an ideal online forum?

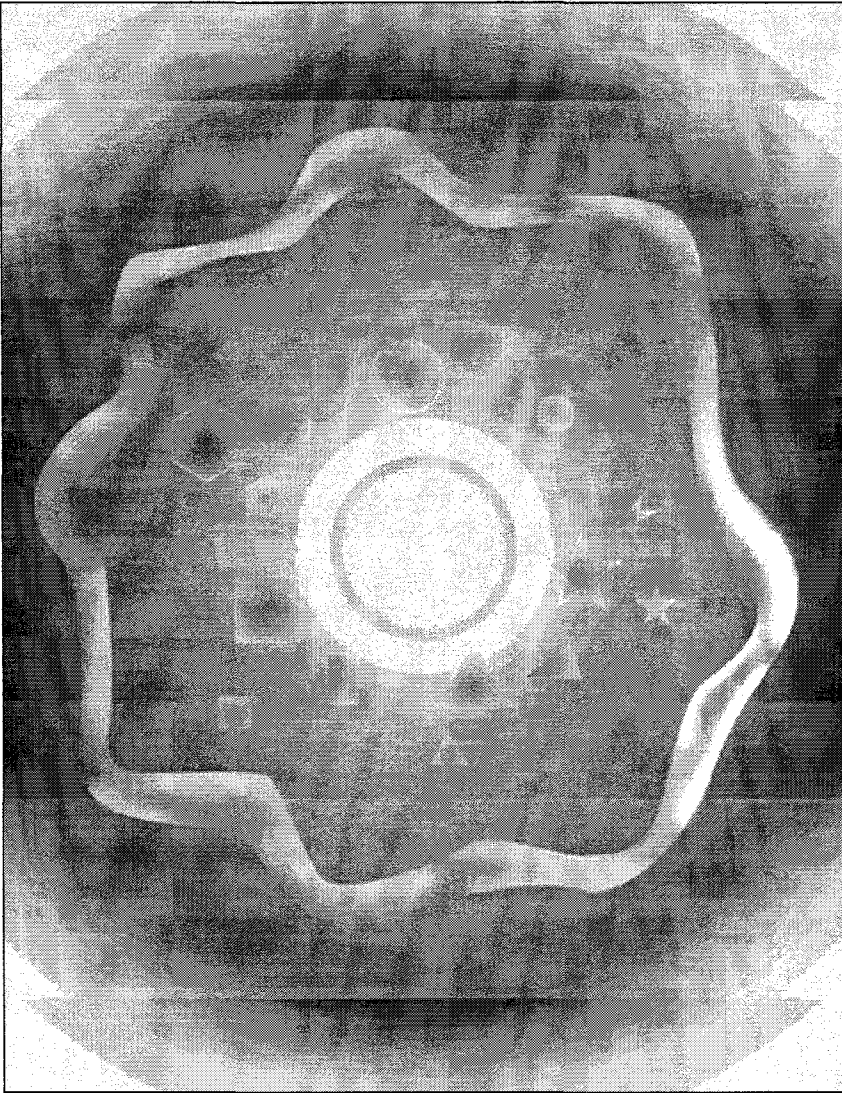
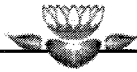
Chandresh:

1. Video conferencing would be a good next extension to online forums. On a darshan day beginning from 6:00 am Greenwich Mean Time, each center can have a collective meditation every hour, so that each center in that time zone can meet others from their time zone online for a collective meditation. Anyone can join any of the collective meditation around the globe too.

2. Video conferencing for a global lecture given by a sadhak with a question-and-answer session following the lecture from around the globe.

3. Multi-language version of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's works available to anyone online.

4. Collective bhajans or musical expressions via video conferencing.



"Cosmos Shapes" Digital art by Margaret Phanes

The ideal forum would be one where instant translation of each person's views can be broadcast to the rest of the forum members to understand in their native tongue. And a combination of numbers one to four above.

Janis: The future is already here in some respects. Many forums are taking advantage of the availability of full texts to cut-and-paste selections to the forum without having to manually copy the material. I'm not so sure that static photos would improve our communication. We have already formed mental conceptions of each other that the photos might not match. If we do use photos, it would be good to start out with them on a new forum.

There are numerous possibilities with audio technology. Surely the process could be perfected whereby forum members could participate in real time at meetings and conferences, such as actually attending the AUM on the Internet, listening to the presentations, and asking questions.

What if, through audio and video technology, we could "go" to Auroville, see it like a movie, and talk to the Aurovilians? Surely, this technology is not too far-fetched. The technology of distance learning has many applications to our group learning process.

Don: Recently the creator of our web page suggested working on a collective project, creating a book together. I could see some kind of book or at least set of chapters being written, but actually I don't like the old-fashioned image of a book. What I would much rather do is create an interactive web page with images, perhaps three-dimensional representations of planes and parts of the being. You could point your mouse to different domains and enter into the subliminal or the superconscious. I would love to have art and music representing different parts of the being—imagine clicking on the thinking mind and hearing a Bach fugue—then clicking on the higher vital and hearing the most intense Chopin nocturne, or perhaps click the lower vital and hear the Balinese monkey chant.

It would be nice to have a bulletin board section on the page, where anyone from around the world who is not necessarily a member of the forum could post messages and comments. This could open up the dialogue with transpersonal psychologists and scientists and artists from other disciplines. I would like to have a page on the web site called "The Coming of the Subjective Age" where once a week members might compose a column looking at world events in the light of the collective developmental stages outlined by Sri Aurobindo.

How to subscribe

To subscribe to the Auroconf list, send an e-mail message to the list (auroconf-subscribe@compatible.com) and in the body of the message, type *subscribe auroconf*. Follow the same procedure for the Psych, Synthesis, and Savitri lists, using their names instead of auroconf.

To subscribe to the Money list, send an e-mail to cpatel@caesium.com and in the body type *subscribe Money*.

Don Salmon is active in many projects related to the study and practice of psychology in the Integral Yoga community. He can be reached at virtreal@jps.net. Ben Irvin lives in New York, and can be reached at irvinb@ix.netcom.com. Janis Coker lives in Florida and can be reached at janisfl@aol.com. Chandresh Patel is active in the San Jose community of Sri Aurobindo disciples, and is a member of the Sri Aurobindo Association. He can be reached at cpatel@caesium.com.



REVIEWS

The movies move forward

by Michael Miovic

Hollywood has been called many things over the years, but it has never been accused of being a factory of truth-vision and truth-images. Rather, it would seem to be the opposite: not just a place where mundane realities are unconsciously reflected, but at times an active force of falsehood.

And why not? In a world where evolutionary and regressive forces contend for influence over the human scene, cinema has an enviable capacity to mold awareness. The arts that once shaped the consciousness of each new age—prose, poetry, theater, painting, music—have either lost their audience entirely, or at least lost their place at the front of the class. Movies are now what common people most commonly consume for “entertainment,” and Hollywood is the epicenter of this mass culture.

Europe makes artistic movies that the few savor and the many dismiss; Latin America has risen as the mother of soap operas, which are themselves derivative of Hollywood movies; and Africa watches strange, distant white people parade across her developing screens. True, Asia has her own giants, Bollywood [Bombay's Hollywood] the most gigantic of them all, but these are still docile, housebound giants. Hollywood invades and conquers.

And yet this is a situation that can, and one hopes will, in time change. For as much as movies have the power to deceive, to abase, to give a voice and audience to lower vital and even asuric forces, cinema as a medium is not evil and naturally can be turned to a higher task. Cinema has a power of immediacy and engrossing absorption that could be turned quite nicely to capturing glimpses of the inner and spiritual life. Combining in one medium the visual, musical, literary, and theatrical arts, it can become a powerful ally in the dawning of a spiritual age.

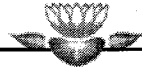
It is therefore with much hope that I review here four recently released Hollywood movies that are, it seems, steps in the right direction. Three are new, one a rerelease of an old classic, and none a thoroughly psychic or spiritual expression. But taken together they would seem to indicate the persistent action of a higher consciousness upon the primitive Hollywood brain that is challenging the falsehood's uncontested claim over the vapid Californian sunshine. Perhaps, akin to the violent plains of the Serengeti several millions of years ago, Los Angeles' flat expanses of freeways may yet give birth to a new, vertical vision that will gaze upward to God and inward to the soul.

The first two films were released in 1996 and are quite different in tone and appeal, but bear a similarity in genre, which is

science fiction. *Contact*, starring Jody Foster, was a very well received and gentle movie that was suitable for all ages. The story concerns a scientist (Jody Foster) who has dedicated her career to scanning the heavens for radio signals that may have been emitted by alien life forms. She decodes a signal from an alien intelligence, and the signal turns out to give detailed instructions about how to make a spaceship to carry one human being into the distant reaches of space and make contact with this alien civilization. Jody Foster is eventually chosen to go on this mission, and she has an extraordinary experience that she is unable to communicate in words to the citizens of planet earth upon her return. Most doubt her account or accuse her outright of lying; the only one to believe her in the end is an old friend, a theologian, who understands her plea for faith in experiences that exceed the capacity of the mind to understand. Although the scientist had previously maintained a staunchly atheistic stance, she now softens and agrees that there are truths that lie beyond the ken of human reason.

It is not the moral of this story that is intriguing from the perspective of Integral Yoga so much as the details of the movie. Without these, the film might have become a dry and intellectual evangelical statement, not the evocative evolutionary intimation which it is. Jody Foster's voyage spans no more than several seconds as measured by observers on earth: the spherical space vehicle in which she is carried apparently misfires from its huge, gyrating launching pad and plunges into a tank of water below. Her journey is more an adventure in consciousness than in physical space, and this is what engenders the debate upon her return. The mass of humanity has trouble accepting that what she experienced was real, as her exploration did not occur within the expected parameters of space and time. From the perspective of yoga such a metaphor for inner discovery is transparent. One might surmise that it is not only a metaphor, but a factual hint of things to come, an inspired suggestion that a more spiritually advanced technology will seize upon methods for swiftly moving consciousness instead of laboriously transporting bodies hither and yon.

Another marvelous detail of the movie are the special effects employed to visualize Jody Foster's contact with the alien intelligence, and the tone and flavor of that meeting. Hollywood artists have become adept at rendering visions of nebulae and the glories of cosmic space, and here they spared no expense. Yet that is still within the realm of the old science fiction. What is new and delightful here is the contact sequence itself. Instead of finding herself in the presence of some huge and hideously sculpted alien devourer, a many-limbed and many-mouthed monster as terrifying as Arjuna's vision of the Vishwarupa, we get just the opposite. Jody Foster awakens to find herself on a luxuriant, tropical beach lined with gracefully arched palm trees and banked by a lagoon of cool, ultramarine waters. It is a scene from her childhood in Florida, only rendered now in liquid silver and opalescent hues that effectively evoke a higher and inner plane of being, perhaps from the illumined mind. Jody Foster sees her long-dead father approaching her on the beach, and as he speaks we learn that the aliens have deliberately chosen to meet her via this projected scene



in her consciousness, because they wanted her to feel safe and at peace. They explain that this is just a first meeting, and that as humanity evolves and becomes more capable of interacting peacefully with higher intelligences throughout the galaxies, these avenues of communication will be expanded. The emotional undertones of this contact sequence are very tender and loving, and this fact alone marks a healthy departure from the tired cliché of the invading aliens.

The other science fiction film of note, *Sphere*, is not nearly so comforting nor does it contest the formula that aliens are dangerous. Starring Dustin Hoffman, this film is set at the opposite end of the unknown: at the bottom of the sea. A group of scientists are sent down to investigate a huge spaceship which the U.S. Navy has discovered on the sea floor. They are perplexed to find that the ship is labeled with an American flag. As they explore the entrails of the vehicle, they deduce that it is in fact a ship from the future which has somehow been projected backwards in time. The only clue they find that might help them solve this strange mystery is in the cargo bay: an immense golden sphere that seems to be made of liquid metal. The special effects here are stunning, for the sphere is utterly mesmerizing. Its surface seems to be alive with the ripples of breathing water.

Yet here the plot darkens. The small crew of scientists runs into haunting troubles. They are overtaken by inexplicable illnesses, equipment failures, and then the assault of some unseen terrifying creature that is lurking in the darkness of the sea's depths. In the midst of this they make computer contact with the mysterious golden sphere, and soon realize that it is an alien intelligence that is trying to communicate with them. Without going into the details, this part of the story, which constitutes the greater part of the movie, grows increasingly nightmarish and claustrophobic. One by one the scientists are killed off or die in disasters, and an almost unbearable tension develops among the various members of the party. Unbeknownst to the others, each is privately lured to investigate the sphere alone, and in the process of doing so is momentarily absorbed into the sphere and then released. An intense atmosphere of paranoia develops as each member of the party, along with the audience, begins to suspect both the others and the sphere as being involved in a murderous plot to destroy the team.

The story ends with the surviving members of the crew blowing up the spaceship and escaping to the surface of sea. As they wait in the decompression chamber before reporting their terrifying findings to the U.S. Navy, they realize that the sphere is not an

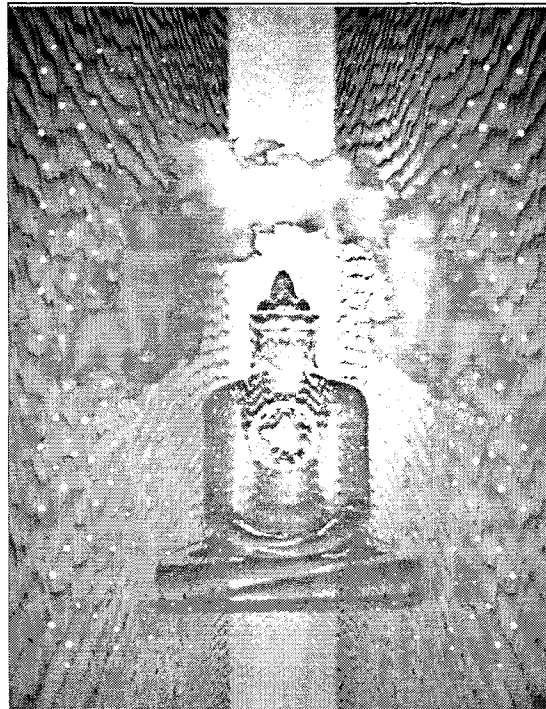
inimical alien per se, but rather that it is a being who has the power to turn their inner impulses, dreams and fantasies into reality. As humans in our current state of evolution are filled with dark forces that we do not control, we are not yet ready to house such a power of manifestation without causing harm. The group therefore decides to concentrate and imagine that the sphere has disappeared, reasoning that if they do so en masse, the sphere will also materialize this reality as well. And in fact the plan works: as they are meditating, the mysterious golden sphere shoots up from below the sea and flies off into outer space again. The survivors then awake, their memory of their recent adventure completely erased.

Sphere is a frightening and disquieting film, its message not as transparent as that of *Contact*, but its symbolism, if understood, is deeper.

I took the golden sphere to be a very nice symbol of the Matrimandir and hence the supramental consciousness. I doubt the makers of the movie intended this, but I think that they responded to a subliminal inspiration due to the pressure of the supramental on the earth atmosphere. If you grant me this, then *Sphere* is really an allegory about humanity's rejection of the supramental descent; because of the presence of darkness, obscurity, and falsehood in our depths, we are not yet able to contain such a tremendous power of manifestation without wreaking havoc. In a sense then, the nightmare of modern times is the working out of the clash between the forces of light which are evolving, and the forces of darkness which resist. I may add in passing that it is significant that both *Contact* and *Sphere* feature prominently a large

sphere which is associated with either the voyage to, or the action of, a higher and more powerful intelligence. It seems that the Matrimandir has become what the Jungians would call a new archetype in the collective subconscious!

An entirely different sort of film is *Pleasantville*, just released this last year. In this movie, two teenagers (a brother and sister) are inadvertently sucked into a TV set and inserted into an idyllic, nondescript town somewhere in California in the 1950's. Pleasantville, as the town is named, is a sort of living stereotype of puritanical American ideals projected in soap operas from the 1950's. Everyone is prim and proper and polite, there is no discord or crime, teenagers are well behaved and sexually abstinent, all public services are flawless, and everyone is entirely content with their assigned gender and age roles. Fathers work and mothers cook, the high school basketball team always wins, and the firemen spend their time playing cards and saving stranded cats. No one has ever known anything new or disharmonious, no one



"Inner Life." (Digital art by Margaret Phanes)



knows what the word unpleasant might mean and, to top it off, no one has ever seen colors. This is a world of black and white, both literally and figuratively, for a central conceit of the film is that all of Pleasantville appears in black and white, exactly as an old TV show might.

The situation begins to change, however, with the arrival of these two teenage visitors from the future who have been raised in a world that is anything but pleasant. The girl, the older of the two, is unabashedly promiscuous and brings sex to the local teens. As this new reality spreads among the young lovers, their world literally begins to come alive with color. Apples on the trees turn red, then the young teens are astounded to find that their limbs and clothing are springing to life. The cinematography is enchanting, and visually the device of contrasting a black and white world with the birth of technicolor is masterfully handled, the latter infecting and gradually consuming the former as the story unfolds. One has a continual sense of wonderment at each new touch of rose red, emerald green, azure, and the peachy blush of living human flesh; instinctively the heart vibrates with joy as color slowly seizes the screen.

Yet the mind holds back full consent until well past the middle of the film, for one wonders initially whether this is merely to be a clever apology for modern American sexual mores. One does worry that the final message of the film will simply be a glowing endorsement of hedonism and youthful libido. This possibility is brought to a peak when the erstwhile reserved middle-aged housewife has a sexual awakening through the influence of the protagonist teenage girl.

But from this point on the plot matures rapidly. Grown dissatisfied with the rigidity of her life as a housewife, the woman falls in love with a local cook who has had his own awakening to color via the passion of painting. As he paints her portraits in rhythmic lines and vibrant hues, they are both reborn through their new love for each other. Like many other youths and adults around town who are awakening via one avenue or another, they too turn color. And this now spreading new collective consciousness is not without consequence: at home the woman's uncomprehending husband is left heart-broken, and around town a wave of condemnation and protest arises. Marauding gangs of black-and-white people assail the colored folks, families are split by contention, and the mayor of Pleasantville holds town meetings in which plans are set forth to prohibit any behavior that would lead to the conversion to color or the expression thereof. Against this narrow, repressive, and aggressive mentality, the brave new pacifist world of freedom and vitality must protect itself in order to survive.

The crowning touches come late, but are revealing. The naughty girl who has turned many a young man bright red, yet has mysteriously remained black and white herself, suddenly gets bored with regularly exercising her lower vital and takes a new interest in studying. It is only then, when she awakens to the wonders of cultivating her mind, that she blossoms into full color. And her brother, who has been attempting peacefully to prevent the corruption of Pleasantville, or at least to contain the damage, since the film's inception, has his moment of truth when he comes to

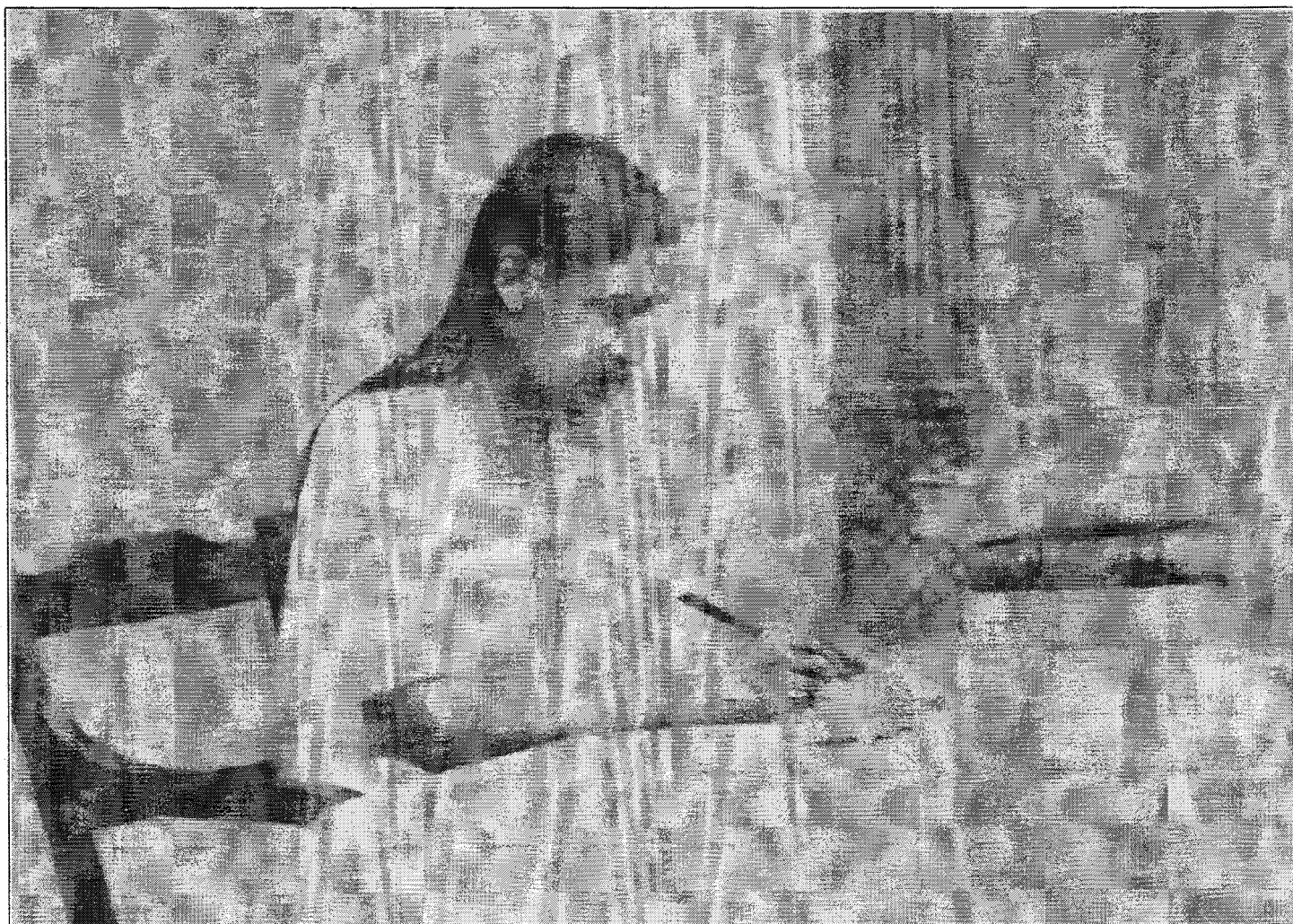
the defense of their mother who is being attacked by a mob. In the act of lashing out in violence, he, too, joins the land of the rainbow-hued, and from that point on plays a leading role in championing the cause of color in Pleasantville.

I took the film to be a symbol of the psychic push from behind that is beginning to have a transformational effect on the outer being on a collective scale. I doubt the producers consciously intended this meaning; more likely they simply responded subliminally to a pressure in the earth's atmosphere. What each of the cases of turning to color seemed to hold in common was the opening of a plane or part of the being which brought with it new possibilities for a growth in consciousness and a manifestation of that growth in action. Even those who began with sex did not end there; rather, the outer act was a gateway to the development of something higher, such as a softening and widening of sentiment and the emergence of the higher vital. For others the opening was clearly higher from the outset, such as the aesthetic sensibility in the new painter, the opening of the mind in the protagonist girl, and the birth of courage in the protagonist boy. In the end *Pleasantville* was neither a nostalgic evocation of the simple order of the past, nor a defense of the chaotic moral decay of the present, but a charming and joyful exploration of the crisis of transformation through which the human species is now passing on its path to the future.

The final movie is the new rerelease of a timeless classic, *The Wizard of Oz*. A lavish flop when it was first released in 1939, it went on to become the most watched and best loved film of all time. Even the Mother herself saw this masterpiece and gave it her seal of approval. She described it as an exact transcription of the beings and forces one may meet in the inner vital worlds, and remarked that many of the details of the film were perfect. In particular she noted that Dorothy's ruby red shoes were precisely the color she had seen in her own inner experiences.

To see the *Wizard of Oz* again on the silver screen after a lapse of almost sixty years is a marvel. The large scale and re-colorization brings out a whole atmosphere that has become tarnished and diminished on the television reruns. As in *Pleasantville*, the scene changes from black and white to color as Dorothy enters into a new consciousness, in this case the land of Oz. We join her as she travels to the Emerald City, aided by her three steadfast companions and protected by the Good Witch of the North as she faces her great foe, the Wicked Witch of the West. The acting is incomparable, the music delightful, the message uplifting. This is a film that is pure harmony and charm. It is neither profound nor complex, but until we are blessed with the birth of a truly inspired spiritual cinema, it is still the gold standard by which our efforts should be judged. Auspicious then, that in this time of strong hints and bright promises, the soul of Hollywood should spontaneously put forth her finest accomplishment, as if to remind herself of her higher calling and capacities. Now, if she just follows that yellow brick road, we may yet find our way home.

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Sri Aurobindo in Pondicherry. Photo taken between 1911 and 1920, courtesy Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust

SOURCE MATERIAL

Reminiscences and observations

The following letters to disciples are taken from the "Reminiscences and Observations" chapter of On Himself, Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, 1972, vol. 26, pp. 351–390.

Last word in human nature

Lies? Well, a Punjabi student at Cambridge once took our breath away by the frankness and comprehensive profundity of his affirmation: "Liars! But we are all liars!" It appeared that he had intended to say "lawyers," but his pronunciation gave his remark a deep force of philosophic observation and generalisation which he had not intended! But it seems to me the last word in human nature. Only the lying is sometimes intentional, sometimes

vaguely half-intentional, sometimes quite unintentional, momentary and unconscious. So there you are! . . .

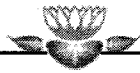
Of course you are right about the lies—these are of all sorts—and also about all men being *duracara*,—only some are virtuous *duracaras* [bad behavior, ill conduct] some sinful ones and some a mixed lot! I don't mean to deny that there are Harischandras and Shukadevas here and there but one has to take a microscope or a telescope to find them.

I.C.S. papers

Q: Do you think your I.C.S. examination answer papers of 1892 have been preserved by the authorities? I was thinking of getting them if possible, in order to preserve them as a relic with us. Perhaps they do not give them out or they might have disposed of them.

A: Not likely that they keep such things.

—1 May 1936



Taste of Mahratta cookery

I hope your dinner at Dewas did not turn out like my first taste of Mahratta cookery—when for some reason my dinner was *non est* and somebody went to my neighbour, a Mahratta Professor, for food. I took one mouthful and only one. O God! Sudden fire in the mouth could not have been more surprising. Enough to bring down the whole of London in one wild agonising swoop of flame!

Charm of Kashmir

Quite agree with your estimate of Kashmir. The charm of its mountains and rivers and the ideal life dawdling along in the midst of a supreme beauty in the slowly moving leisure of a houseboat—that was a kind of earthly Paradise—also writing poetry on the banks of the Jhelum where it rushes down Kashmir towards the plains. Unfortunately there was the over-industrious Gaekwar to cut short the Paradise! His idea of Paradise was going through administrative papers and making myself and others write speeches for which he got all the credit. But after all, according to the nature, to each one his Eden.

—7 November 1938

The Gaekwar

When I knew him the Gaekwar was a free-thinker without any religion; I don't know if he has altered his views since. Formally, he is of course a Hindu.

—7 July 1936

The age of Swami Brahmananda

There is no incontrovertible proof. 400 years is an exaggeration. It is known however that he lived on the banks of the Narmada for 80 years and when he arrived there, he was already in appearance at the age when maturity turns toward overripeness. He was when I met him just before his death a man of magnificent physique showing no signs of old age except white beard and hair, extremely tall, robust, able to walk any number of miles a day and tiring out his younger disciples, walking too so swiftly that they tended to fall behind, a great head and magnificent face that seemed to belong to men of more ancient times. He never spoke of his age or of his past either except for an occasional almost accidental utterance. One of these was spoken to a disciple of his well known to me, a Baroda Sardar, Mazumdar (it was on the top storey of his house by the way that I sat with Lele in Jan. 1909 and had a decisive experience of liberation and Nirvana). Mazumdar learned that he was suffering from a bad tooth and brought him a bottle of Floriline, a toothwash then much in vogue. The Yogi refused saying, "I never use medicines. My one medicine is Narmada water. As for the tooth I have suffered from it since the days of Bhao Girdi." Bhao Girdi was the Maratha General Sadashiv Rao Bhao who disappeared in the Battle of Panipat (1) and his body was never found. Many formed the conclusion that Brahmananda was himself Bhao Girdi, but this was an imagination. Nobody who knew Brahmananda would doubt any statement of his—he was a man of perfect simplicity and truthfulness and did not seek fame

or to impose himself. When he died he was still in full strength and his death came not by decay but by the accident of blood-poisoning through a rusty nail that entered into his foot as he walked on the sands of the Narmada. I had spoken to the Mother about him, that was why she mentioned him in her *Conversations* (2) which were not meant for the public—otherwise she might not have said anything, as the longevity of Brahmananda to more than 200 years depends only on his own casual word and is a matter of faith in his word. There is no "legal" proof of it. I may say that three at least of his disciples to my knowledge kept an extraordinary aspect and energy of youth to a comparatively late or quite advanced age—but this perhaps may be not uncommon among those who practise both Raja and Hatha Yoga together.

—1 February 1936

Sister Nivedita and Sister Christine

I knew very well Sister Nivedita (she was for many years a friend and a comrade in the political field) and met Sister Christine,—the two closest European disciples of Vivekananda. Both were Westerners to the core and had nothing at all of the Hindu outlook; although Sister Nivedita, an Irish woman, had the power of penetrating by an intense sympathy into the ways of life of the people around her, her own nature remained non-oriental to the end. Yet she found no difficulty in arriving at realisation on the lines of Vedanta.

"The most dangerous man in India"

The Divine may be difficult, but His difficulties can be overcome if one keeps at Him. Even my smilelessness was overcome which Nevinson had remarked with horrors more than twenty years before—"the most dangerous man in India," Aurobindo Ghosh who "never smiles." He ought to have added: "but who always jokes"—but he did not know that, as I was very solemn with him, or perhaps I had not developed sufficiently on that side then. Anyhow, if you could overcome that—my smilelessness—you are bound to overcome all the other difficulties also.

—11 February 1937

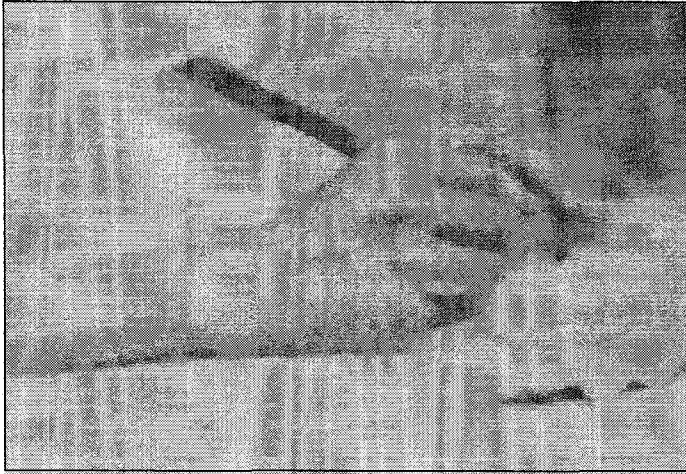
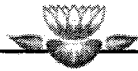
Austere and grand!

Q: The Overmind seems so distant from us, and your Himalayan austerity and grandeur takes my breath away, making my heart palpitate!

A: O rubbish! I am austere and grand, grim and stern! Every blasted thing I never was! I groan in an un-Aurobindian despair when I hear such things. What has happened to the common sense of all of you people? In order to reach the Overmind it is not at all necessary to take leave of this simple but useful quality.

Common sense by the way is not logic (which is the least commonsense-like thing in the world), it is simply looking at things as they are without inflation or deflation—not imagining wild imaginations—or for that matter despairing "I know not why" despairs.

—23 February 1935



Pain and physical ananda

As for Divine rapture, a knock on head or foot or elsewhere can be received with the physical Ananda of pain or pain and Ananda or pure physical Ananda—for I have often, quite involuntarily, made the experiment myself and passed with honours. It began by the way as far back as in Alipore Jail when I got bitten in my cell by some very red and ferocious-looking warrior ants and found to my surprise that pain and pleasure are conventions of our senses. But I do not expect that unusual reaction from others. And I suppose there are limits.

—13 February 1932

Prayer, not a machinery

As for prayer, no hard and fast rule can be laid down. Some prayers are answered, all are not. An example? The eldest daughter of my Mesho, K. K. Mitra, editor of *Sanjibani*, not by any means a romantic, occult, supraphysical or even imaginative person, was abandoned by the doctors after using every resource, all medicines stopped as useless. The father said “There is only God now, let us pray.” He did, and from that moment the girl began to recover, typhoid fever and all its symptoms fled, death also. I know any number of cases like that. Well? You may ask why should not then all prayers be answered? But why should they be? It is not a machinery—put a prayer in the slot and get your asking. Besides, considering all the contradictory things mankind is praying for at the same moment, God would be in a rather awkward hole, if he had to grant all of them—it wouldn’t do.

—7 October 1936

Gurugiri

X’s objection to Grace would be valid if the religionists mattered, but in spiritual things they don’t. Their action naturally is to make a formula and dry shell of everything, not Grace alone. Even “Awake, Arise, Arise” leads to the swelled head or the formula—can’t be avoided when Mr. Everyman deals with things divine. I had the same kind of violent objection to Gurugiri [guru-hood], but you see I was obliged by the irony of things or rather by the inexorable truth behind them to become a Guru and preach the

Guruvada [the doctrine that stresses the indispensability of the guru to the spiritual seeker]. Such is Fate.

—16 January 1936

Shiva temperament

I have no special liking for the ideal of Shiva, though something of the Shiva temperament must necessarily be present. I never had any turn for rejection of the money power nor any attachment to it. One has to rise above these things; but it is precisely when one has risen above that one can more easily command them.

—15 January 1936

True asceticism

It depends on what is meant by asceticism. I have no desires but I don’t lead outwardly an ascetic life, only a secluded one. According to the *Gita*, *tyaga* the inner freedom from desire and attachment, is the true asceticism.

—9 July 1937

Poverty

Poverty has never had any terrors for me nor is it an incentive. You seem to forget that I left my very safe and “handsome” Baroda position without any need to it, and that I gave up also the Rs. 150 of the National College Principalship, leaving myself with nothing to live on. I could not have done that if money had been an incentive.

If you don’t realise that starting and carrying on for ten years and more a revolutionary movement for independence in a country wholly unprepared for it is not living dangerously, no amount of puncturing of your skull with words will give you that simple perception. And as to the Yoga, you yourself were perorating at the top of your voice about its awful, horrible, pathetic and tragic dangers. So—

Society manners and spiritual life

But when on earth were politeness and good society manners considered as a part or a test of spiritual experience or true Yogic Siddhi? It is no more a test than the capacity of dancing well or dressing nicely. Just as there are very good and kind men who are boorish and rude in their manners, so there may be very spiritual men (I mean here by spiritual men those who have had deep spiritual experiences) who have no grasp over physical life of action (many intellectuals too, by the way, are like that) and are not at all careful about their manners. I suppose I myself am accused for rude and arrogant behaviour because I refuse to see people, do not answer letters, and a host of other misdemeanours. I have heard of a famous recluse who threw stones at anybody coming to his retreat because he did not want disciples and found no other way of warding off the flood of candidates. I, at least, would hesitate to pronounce that such people had no spiritual life or experience. Certainly, I prefer that Sadhaks should be reasonably considerate towards each other, but that is for the rule of collective life and harmony, not as a Siddhi of the Yoga or an indispensable sign of inner experience.

—December, 1935



Yogic peace and sattwic temperament

Q: People of sattwic temperament in ordinary life behave practically in the same manner as the Sadhaks who realise spiritual peace as a result of Yoga. Can it be said that in the sattwic people the peace descends but in a hidden manner, or is it due to their past lives that they have the sattwic temperament?

A: Of course they have gained their power to live in the mind by a past evolution. But the spiritual peace is something other and infinitely more than the mental peace and its results are different, not merely clear thinking or some control or balance or a sattwic state. But its greater results can only be fully and permanently manifest when it lasts long enough in the system or when one feels spread out in it above the head and on every side stretching towards infinity as well as penetrated by it down to the very cells. Then it carries with it the deep and vast and solid tranquillity that nothing can shake—even if on the surface there is storm and battle. I was myself of the sattwic type you describe in my youth, but when the peace from above came down, that was quite different. *Sattvaguna* disappeared into *nirguna* and negative *nirguna* into positive *traigunyatita*.

—22 July 1935

Training for physical work

It is not a question of liking but of capacity—though usually (not always) liking goes with the capacity. But capacity can be developed and liking can be developed or rather the *rasa* you speak of. One cannot be said to be in the full Yogic condition—for the purposes of this Yoga—if one cannot take up with willingness any work given to one as an offering to the Divine. At one time I was absolutely unfit for any physical work and cared only for the mental, but I trained myself in doing physical things with care and perfection so as to overcome this glaring defect in my being and make the bodily instrument apt and conscious. It was the same with some others here. A nature not trained to accept external work and activity becomes mentally top-heavy—physically inert and obscure. It is only if one is disabled or too physically weak that physical work can be put aside altogether. I am speaking of course from the point of view of the ideal—the rest depends upon the nature.

As for the deity presiding over the control of servants, godown work as well as over poetry or painting, it is always the same—the Shakti, the Mother.

—11 December 1934

Genius for lolling

As for your pious desire to loll a little now after your bout of stupendous work, well, there is no *how* about it: one just lolls if one has the genius for it. I have, though opportunities are now lacking for showing my genius. But it can't be taught nor any process invented: it is just a gift of Nature.

Seeing unknown people by inner vision

Yes, of course, I remember about X—I can't say I remember him because I never saw him, at least in the flesh. What he probably means by the Supramental is the Above Mind—what I now call Illumined Mind – Intuition – Overmind. I used to make that confusion myself at the beginning.

There is not enough to go upon to say whether he really sees the Mother or an image of her as reflected in his own mind. But there is nothing extraordinary, much less improbable in seeing a person whom one has never seen—you are thinking as if the inner mind and sense, the inner vision, were limited by the outer mind and sense, the outer vision, or were mere reflection of that. There would be not much use in an inner mind and sense and vision if they were only that and nothing more. This faculty is one of the elementary powers of the inner sense and inner seeing, and not only Yogins have it, but the ordinary clairvoyants, crystal-gazers, etc. The latter can see people they never saw or heard of before, doing certain precise things in certain very precise surroundings, and every detail of the vision is confirmed afterwards by the persons seen—there are many striking and indubitable cases of that kind. The Mother is always seeing people whom she does not know; some afterwards come here or their photographs come here. I myself have these visions, only I don't usually try to remember or verify them. But there were two curious instances which were among the first of this kind and which therefore I remember. Once I was trying to see a recently elected deputy here and saw someone quite different from him, someone who afterwards came here as Governor. I ought never to have met him in the ordinary course, but a curious mistake happened and as a result I went and saw him in his bureau and at once recognised him. The other was a certain Y whom I had to meet, but I saw him not as he was when he actually came, but as he became after a year's residence in my house. He became the very image of that vision, a face close-cropped, rough, rude, energetic, the very opposite of the dreamy smooth-faced enthusiastic Vaishnava who came to me. So that was the vision of a man I had never seen, but as he was to be in the future—a prophetic vision.

—24 October 1934

The swaying sensation

Q: I was standing on the scaffolding [on the wall] which was swinging to and fro. Once I saw the walls nearby swinging like a pendulum I understood the reason, but the sight of swinging walls was so vivid that I put my hand on the wall nearby to be convinced that it was not moving—yet the “eye-mind” refused to accept the evidence of the “touch-mind”!

A: But what was it due to? The sense of swinging of the scaffolding communicating itself to the walls as it were in the impression upon some brain centre? After travelling long in a boat I had once or twice the swaying sense of it after coming off it, as if the land about me was tossing like the boat—of course a subtle physical impression, but vivid enough.

—4 April 1935



Thinking from outside the body

Q: Owing to much reading I feel a strain and dryness in the head and find it difficult to sleep. But while reading and remembering I feel as if the process goes on somewhere in the chest and not in the head and yet the strain is felt in the head. Why is this so?

A: The chest action is rather curious, because it is the vital mind that is there and the Romans always spoke of the mind as if it were in the heart. But memory and reading would rather be in the physical mind. But anyhow the brain is a conveying instrument for all these activities and can feel the strain if there is any. The best relief for the brain is when the thinking takes place outside the body and above the head (or in space or at other levels but still outside the body). At any rate it was so in my case; for as soon as that happened there was an immense relief; I have felt body strain since then but never any kind of brain-fatigue. I have heard the same thing from others.

—19 December 1934

A hint

Q: I concentrate so much on reading that no room is left for Sadhana-thinking with the result that as soon as I come out of that concentration anything can enter in my mind. Is this not an undesirable practice from the point of view of discipline in Sadhana?

A: I should say... that if you could divide your attention between the reading and Sadhana thought and concentration move, it might be better from the point of view you mention. I mean that there should be sufficient concentration to create in your mind a Sadhana atmosphere which you can bring up to the surface as soon as you leave reading or whenever it is needed to set right an invading movement. Otherwise the subconscious forces have free play and gain power. Besides the condition becomes subconscious, i.e. inert and like a drift. At least that is what I have seen recently in my dealings with my own subconscious, so I pass on the hint to you.

—27 May 1935

Subconscious dreams

Q: I do not find any change in the character of my dreams as yet—I get the usual kind of dreams about home-life, eating, meeting strange people, moving about, etc. Why has there been no change in this respect in spite of my three years of Sadhana here?

A: Dreams of this kind can last for years and years after the waking consciousness has ceased to interest itself in things of that kind. The subconscious is exceedingly obstinate in the keeping of its old impressions. I find myself even recently having a dream of revolutionary activities or another in which the Maharaja of Baroda butted in, people and things I have not even thought of passingly for the last twenty years almost. I suppose it is because the very

business of the subconscious in the human psychology is to keep all the past inside it and, being without conscious mentality, it clings to its office until the light has fully come down into it, illuminating even its corners and crevices.

—17 December 1934

Q: For the last few days I am having frequent dreams of eating. Does it indicate greed for food or a need in the body or is it a sign of coming illness as they believe in the villages?

A: I don't think so—it is probably old impressions from the subconscious material (not vital—therefore a memory rather than desire) rising up in sleep. I remember a time when I was always seeing dishes of food even though I did not care a hang about food at that time.

—2 April 1934

Different personalities

Q: I am still not able to maintain the right attitude in my own Sadhana and yet I give advice to others in their difficulties. Is this not hypocrisy and insincerity?

A: Well, one can give good advice even when one does not follow it oneself—there is the old adage “Do what I preach and not what I practise.” More seriously, there are different personalities in oneself and the one that is eager to advise and help may be quite sincere. I remember in days long past when I still had personal struggles and difficulties, people came to me from outside for advice etc. when I was in a black depression and could not see my way out of a sense of hopelessness and failure, yet nothing of that came out and I spoke with an assured conviction. Was that insincerity? I think not,—the one who spoke in me was quite sure of what he spoke. The turning of all oneself to the Divine is not an easy matter and one must not be discouraged if it takes time and other movements still intervene. One must note, rectify and go on—*anirvinnacetasa*.

—24 February 1935

Human responsibility

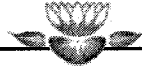
My experience shows me that human beings are much less deliberate and responsible for their acts than the moralists, novelists and dramatists make them, and I look rather to see what forces drove them than what the man himself may have seemed by inference to have intended or purposed—our inferences are often wrong and even when they are right touch only the surface of the matter.

—22 June 1934

Horoscopes and astrology

I can't say anything about the horoscope, as I have forgotten the little astrology I knew.

—14 September 1936



Astrologers tell all sorts of things that don't come true. According to one I was to have died last year, according to another I was to have gone out from Pondicherry in March or May last year and wandered about India with my disciples till I disappeared in a river (in a ferry). Even if the prediction were accurate according to the horoscope it need not fulfil itself, because by entering the spiritual life one opens to a new force which can change one's destiny.

—22 August 1937

Q: X told me that today [April 4, 1936] is the birthday of Pondicherry because you came here on this date. If one can place oneself in the year 2036 A.D. he may find that 4th April is celebrated as the birthday of the earth's spiritual life. Perhaps the horoscope of the earth may show this more accurately; but is there a horoscope of the earth as there are horoscopes of some villages?

A: Pondicherry was born long ago—but if X means the re-birth, it may be, for it was absolutely dead when I came. I don't know that there is a horoscope of the Earth. There was nobody present to note the year, day, hour, minute when she came into existence. But some astrologer could take the position of the stars at the moment when I got out of the boat and build up the terrestrial consequences upon that perhaps! Unfortunately he would probably get everything wrong, like the astrologer who predicted that I would leave Pondicherry in March 1936 and wander about India till 1948 and then disappear while bathing in a river among my disciples. I believe he predicted it on the strength of Bhṛigu Samhita—the old dodge; but I am not sure. Long ago I had a splendid Mussolinic-Napoleonic prediction of my future made to me on the strength of the same old mythological Bhṛigu.

—4 May 1936

The old and the new buildings

Q: Some people here are very glad to know that I was preparing the roof of the house by adopting the old method used by forefathers for generations. In this case old may be good but to some people all old is gold. Perhaps they would be happy if the new European systems of medicine like homeopathy and naturopathy are rejected and the old Ayurveda only allowed. But I wonder they cannot see how superior are reinforced concrete buildings and roads to old methods—and for earthquakes, would the Ayurvedic buildings stand the shocks?

A: Well, if it is done really according to old methods, an Ayurvedic building can stand many earthquakes. I remember at the time of the Bengal earthquake all the new buildings in the place where the Provincial Conference was held went down but an old house of the Raja of the place was the sole thing that survived unmoved and unshaken. Also when the Guest House roof was being repaired, (it was an old building) the mason (one of the most skilful we have met) said that this roof had been built in a way that astonished him, it was so solid and strong, no houses now were being built like that. So perhaps it is not Ayurveda, but

the degenerate ways of the descendants of Charaka that is responsible for the poor and bad building we see around us. I have also seen a remark by an English architect in Madras that it was surprising to see how old ramshackle buildings survived and stood all shocks while others built in the most scientific modern way "sat down" unexpectedly. The really old things whether in India or Europe were always solid; shoddy I think began in between—before the discovery of concrete. We have to leave the old things but progress to equally or more solid new things.

—29 March 1937

Learning French

Q: It seems most people who want to learn French read more than they assimilate. They read rapidly lots of French stories, novels, dramas, and as a result they hardly assimilate the idioms, phrases, grammatical peculiarities, etc. I think one ought to read a book three to four times. Rapid reading of French books creates an illusion that one understands all that one reads.

A: I suppose most learn only to be able to read French books, not to know the language well. . . . It is not many who know French accurately and idiomatically. . . . I don't think many people would consent to make a principle of reading each book three or four times in the way you advocate, for very few have the scholarly mind—but two or three books should be so read. I learnt Sanskrit by reading the Nala-damayanti episode in the Mahabharata like that with minute care several times.

—25 March 1937

Spiritual Life and Outward Utility

Q: What is the need for so many here to learn French? Are you preparing them for giving lectures or opening centres in France or French-knowing countries?

A: Are life and mind to be governed only by material utility or outward practicality? Spiritual life would then be inferior even to ordinary mental life where people learn for the sake of acquiring knowledge and culturing the mind and not only for the sake of some outward utility.

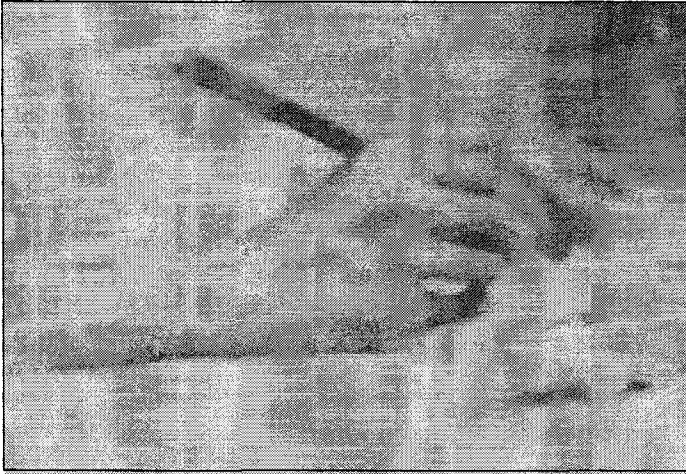
—24 March 1937

Disadvantage of familiarity

Q: Is it true that the deep significance of mantras like "Om Santi" and words like "paix" (peace in French) is lost because of too much familiarity?

A: Yes, it must be the familiarity—for I remember when I first read the Om Shanti Shanti Shanti of the Upanishads it had a powerful effect on me. In French it depends on the form or the way in which it is put.

—14 February 1936



ing and I at once caught it up as the right and only word for certain things, for instance, the thinking in masses which is a frequent characteristic of the Overmind.

—2 April 1947

The Synthesis of Yoga

The *Synthesis of Yoga* was not meant to give a method for all to follow. Each side of the Yoga was dealt with separately with all its possibilities, and an indication as to how they meet so that one starting from knowledge could realise Karma and Bhakti also and so with each path. It was intended when the Self-Perfection (3) was finished, to suggest a way in which all could be combined, but this was never written. *The Mother* and the *Lights* were not intended to be a systematic treatment of the Sadhana as a whole; they only touch on various elements in it.

—18 May 1936

At the time when the last chapters of *The Synthesis of Yoga* were written in the *Arya*, the name “Overmind” had not been found, so there is no mention of it. What is described in those chapters is the action of the Supermind when it descends into the Overmind plane and takes up the Overmind workings and transforms them. The highest Supermind or Divine gnosis existent in itself, is something that lies beyond still and quite above. It was intended in latter chapters to show how difficult even this was and how many levels there were between the human mind and Supermind and how even Supermind descending could get mixed with the lower action and turned into something that was less than the true Truth. But these latter chapters were not written.

—13 April 1932

Q: In the *Arya* there is no mention of the Overmind. You have mentioned the supramental or Divine Reason in the gradations of the Supermind, but from its description it is quite different from the Overmind. Why was the Overmind not mentioned and clearly distinguished from the Supermind in the *Arya*?

A: The distinction has not been made in the *Arya* because at that time what I now call the Overmind was supposed to be an inferior plane of the Supermind. But that was because I was seeing them from the Mind. The true defect of Overmind, the limitation in it which gave rise to a world of Ignorance is seen fully only when one looks at it from the physical consciousness, from the result (Ignorance in Matter) to the cause (Overmind division of the Truth). In its own plane Overmind seems to be only a divided, many-sided play of the Truth, so can easily be taken by the Mind as a supramental province. Mind also when flooded by the Overmind lights feels itself living in a surprising revelation of Divine Truth. The difficulty comes when we deal with the vital and still more with the physical. Then it becomes imperative to face the difficulty and to make a sharp distinction between Overmind and Supermind—for it then becomes evident that the Overmind Power (in spite of its lights and splendours) is not sufficient to overcome the Ignorance because it is itself under the

Record in book-production

Q: X told me that Y has translated a novel in English half of which is corrected by you; this practically means that X makes you translate somebody’s novel instead of himself translating *Arya* which would be more reasonable. What ordeals for you to pass through! Perhaps the person who remarked in a London paper that you had written five hundred books was not quite wrong; by this time your letters to Sadhaks would make three or four books for each of them and if to these are added your poems, translations and other writings the total would not be less than five hundred.

A: The idea of Y translating *Arya* makes the hair stand on end! It would be much easier for me to write five hundred books. Perhaps I have done so—if all I have scribbled is to be taken into account against me. But most of it will not see the light of day—at least of public day; I may still escape establishing the record in book-production.

—3 February 1935

The *Arya*

Q: It is said that the *Arya* began on the day the World War broke out or just before it. Has this not some significance? Was it not a kind of parallel movement?

A: The *Arya* was decided on the 1st June [1914] and it was agreed that it would start on the 15th August. The war intervened on the 4th. “Parallelism” of dates if you like, but it was not very close and certainly nothing came down at that time.

—9 September 1935

The *Arya* was, in fact, a financial success. It paid its way with a large surplus.

... “global” also has established itself and it is too useful and indeed indispensable to reject; there is no other word that can express exactly the same shade of meaning. I heard it first from X who described the language of *Arya* as expressing a global think-



law of Division out of which came the Ignorance. One has to pass beyond and supramentalise Overmind so that mind and all the rest may undergo the final change.

—20 November 1933

Q: What about the publication of the “Synthesis”? They are all asking me about it. So many are eager that it should see the light, fed up as we all are with the analysis of the universe through science of mind and ignorance of life, what?

A: I hope you are not referring to the whole colossal mass of *The Synthesis of Yoga*,—though that too may be ready for publication before the next world-war (?) or after the beginning of the Satya-yuga (New World Order?). If you mean the “Yoga of Works,” I am writing or trying to write four or five additional chapters for it. I hope they will be ready in a reasonable time; but my daily time is short and chapters are long. In the absence of exact prophetic power, that is all I can say.

—2 March 1944

Essays on the Gita

Q: I had read your *Essays on the Gita* thrice before, still when I started reading it again recently I found that there were so many ideas in it which I had missed before. I think if I read it over and over again I would find newer and newer ideas every time.

A: That is a common experience—most books with any profundity of knowledge in them have that effect. Almost all spiritual problems have been briefly but deeply dealt with in the *Gita* and I have tried to bring out all that fully in the *Essays*.

—1 November 1936

The Future Poetry

It was not the intention to make a long review of Cousins’ book in *The Future Poetry*, that was only a starting-point; the rest was drawn from Sri Aurobindo’s own ideas and his already conceived view of Art and life.

The Mother

The Mother had not the same origin as the other books mentioned. (4) The main part of this book describing the four Shaktis, etc., was written independently and not as a letter, so also the first part.

Q: I sent you a review of *The Mother* a few days back. Have you seen it?

A: Yes. I think it will give the reader the impression that *The Mother* is a philosophical or practical exposition of Yoga—while its atmosphere is really not that at all.

—1 March 1937

Early political views and current problems

Q: Have you seen my review of *The Ideal of the Karmayogin*?

A: Yes, I have seen it, but I don’t think it can be published in its present form as it prolongs the political Aurobindo of that time into the Sri Aurobindo of the present time. You even assert that I have “thoroughly” revised the book and these articles are an index of my latest views on the burning problems of the day and there has been no change in my views in 27 years (which would surely be proof of a rather unprogressive mind). How do you get all that? My spiritual consciousness and knowledge at that time was as nothing to what it is now—how would the change leave my view of politics and life unmodified altogether? There has been no such thorough revision; I have left the book as it is, because it would be useless to modify what was written so long ago—the same as with *The Yoga and its Objects*. Anyway the review would almost amount to a proclamation of my present political views—while on the contrary I have been careful to pronounce nothing—no views whatever on political questions for the last I don’t know how many years.

—21 April 1937

The Yoga and its Objects

The book represents an early stage of Sri Aurobindo’s Sadhana and only a part of it is applicable to the Yoga as it has at present taken form after a lapse of more than twenty years.

—28 October 1934

Yogic Sadhan

Your friend writes about my disapproval of Vairagya in *Yogic Sadhan*. But *Yogic Sadhan* is not my composition, nor its contents the essence of my Yoga, whatever the publishers may persist in saying in their lying blurb, in spite of protests.

—4 May 1934

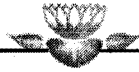
The Yogi from the North (Uttara Yogi) was my own name given to me because of a prediction made long ago by a famous Tamil Yogi, that thirty years later (agreeing with the time of my arrival) a Yogi from the North would come as a fugitive to the South and practise there an integral Yoga (Poorna Yoga), and this would be one sign of the approaching liberty of India. He gave three utterances as the mark by which this Yogi could be recognised and all these were found in the letters to my wife.

As for *Yogic Sadhan* it was not I exactly who wrote it, though it is true that I am not a Mayavadin.

A. G.

I do not use the initials A.G.—They have been discarded long ago.

—14 September 1933



Sri Aurobindo Prasange

It is not about Baroda nor my own writing—it is some conversations, I do not know how far correctly reported, by a young man who came from Chandernagore here for a short time. I don't know if it is of any value. It belongs to the long ago and things have changed much since then.

—25 January 1935

Philosophy without logical argument

Q: One thing more I would like to ask you about logic. You wrote to X that though people call you a philosopher you have never learnt philosophy. Well, what you have written in the *Arya* is so philosophical that the greatest philosopher of the world can never expect to write it. I don't mean here the bringing down of the new Truth, but the power of expression, the art of reasoning and arguing with intellect and logic.

A: There is very little argument in my philosophy—the elaborate metaphysical reasoning full of abstract words with which the metaphysician tries to establish his conclusions is not there. What is there is a harmonising of the different parts of a many-sided knowledge so that all unites logically together. But it is not by force of logical argument that it is done, but by a clear vision of the relations and sequences of the Knowledge.

—4 November 1936

Writing philosophy, fame and propaganda

Look here! Do these people expect me to turn myself again into a machine for producing articles? The times of the *Bande Mataram* and *Arya* are over, thank God! I have now only the Ashram correspondence and that is “overwhelming” enough in all conscience without starting philosophy for standard books and the rest of it.

And philosophy! Let me tell you in confidence that I never, never, never was a philosopher—although I have written philosophy which is another story altogether. I knew precious little about philosophy before I did the Yoga and came to Pondicherry—I was a poet and a politician, not a philosopher. How I managed to do it and why? First, because X proposed to me to co-operate in a philosophical review—and as my theory was that a Yogi ought to be able to turn his hand to anything, I could not very well refuse; and then he had to go to the war and left me in the lurch with sixty-four pages a month of philosophy all to write by my lonely self. Secondly, because I had only to write down in the terms of the intellect all that I had observed and come to know in practising Yoga daily and the philosophy was there automatically. But that is not being a philosopher!

I don't know how to excuse myself to Y—for I can't say all that to him. Perhaps you can find a formula for me? Perhaps: “so occupied, not a moment for any other work, can't undertake because he might not be able to carry out his promise.” What do you say?

—4 September 1934

As to Y, I don't care whether he is right or wrong in his eagerness to get the blessed contribution from me. But the first fact is that it is quite impossible for me to write philosophy to order. If something comes to me of itself, I can write, if I have time. But I have no time. I had some thought of writing to Z pointing out that he was mistaken in his criticism of my ideas about consciousness and intuition and developing briefly what were my real views about these things. But I have never been able to do it. I might as well think of putting the moon under my arm, Hanuman-like—although in his case it was the sun—and going for a walk. The moon is not available and the walk is not possible. It would be the same if I promised anything to Y—it would not get done, and that would be much worse than a refusal.

And the second fact is that I do not care a button about having my name in any blessed place. I was never ardent about fame even in my political days; I preferred to remain behind the curtain, push people without their knowing it and get things done. It was the confounded British Government that spoiled my game by prosecuting me and forcing me to be publicly known and a “leader.” Then, again, I don't believe in advertisement except for books etc., and in propaganda except for politics and patent medicines. But for serious work it is a poison. It means either a stunt or a boom—and stunts and booms exhaust the thing they carry on their crest and leave it lifeless and broken high and dry on the shores of nowhere—or it means a movement. A movement in the case of a work like mine means the founding of a school or a sect or some other damned nonsense. It means that hundreds or thousands of useless people join in and corrupt the work or reduce it to a pompous farce from which the Truth that was coming down recedes into secrecy and silence. It is what has happened to the “religions” and is the reason of their failure. If I tolerate a little writing about myself, it is only to have a sufficient counter-weight in that amorphous chaos, the public mind, to balance the hostility that is always aroused by the presence of a new dynamic Truth in this world of ignorance. But the utility ends there and too much advertisement would defeat that object. I am perfectly “rational,” I assure you, in my methods and I do not proceed merely on any personal dislike of fame. If and so far as publicity serves the Truth, I am quite ready to tolerate it; but I do not find publicity for its own sake desirable.

This “Contemporary Philosophy,” British or Indian, looks to me very much like book-making and, though the “vulgarisation” of knowledge—to use the French term—by bookmaking may have its use, I prefer to do solid work and leave that to others. You may say that I can write a solid thing in philosophy and let it be book-made. But even the solid tends to look shoddy in such surroundings. And, besides, my solid work at present is not philosophy but something less wordy and more to the point. If that work gets done, then it will propagate itself so far as propagation is necessary—if it were not to get done, propagation would be useless.

These are my reasons. However, let us wait till the book is there and see what kind of stuff it is.

—2 October 1934



Answer to a request for a message

Q: What has happened to my letter of request for a Message to grace the Special Number of *Mother India* of August 15? I have heard nothing from you.

A: I have been trying to get you informed without success about the impossibility of your getting your expected Message from me for the 15th August. I had and have no intention of writing a Message for my birthday this year. It is psychologically impossible for me to manufacture one to command; an inspiration would have to come and it is highly improbable that any will come in this short space of time; I myself have no impulse towards it. But how is it that you have clean forgotten my rule of not writing any article for an outside paper, magazine or journal—I mean other than those conducted from the Ashram by the Ashram—and even for these I write nothing new except for the *Bulletin* at the Mother's request,—also my reasons for this fixed rule?

If I started doing that kind of thing, my freedom would be gone; I would have to write at everybody's command, not only articles but blessings, replies on public questions and all the rest of that kind of conventional rubbish. I would be like any ordinary politician publishing my views on all and sundry matters, discoursing on all sorts of subjects, a public man at the disposal of the public. That would make myself, my blessings, my views and my Messages exceedingly cheap; in fact, I would no longer be Sri Aurobindo. Already the *Hindusthan Standard*, the *Madras Mail* and I know not what other journals and societies are demanding at the pistol's point special messages for themselves and I am supposed to stand and deliver. I won't. I regret that I must disappoint you, but self-preservation is a first law of nature.

—3 August 1949

Object of special issues (5)

The object of such special issues is not to exhibit me to the public and show them all ends of me, i.e., to make me go through all my possible performances on a public stage. The object is to make the reading public better acquainted with the nature of this Yoga and the principle of what is being done in the Ashram. The private matters of the Ashram itself are *not* for the public—at most only so much as the public can see. *A fortiori* anything personal and private about me is also taboo. I come in only so far as it is necessary for the public to know my thought and what I stand for. You will notice that my life itself is so written as to give only the grey precise surface facts, nothing more. All propensity to make me figure in the big Barnum circus of journalistic "features" along with or in competition with Joe Zones the prize-fighter, Douglas Fairbanks, H. G. Wells, King George and Queen Mary, Haile Selassie, Hobbs, Hitler, Jack the Ripper (or any modern substitute of his) and Mussolini should be strictly banished from the mentality for evermore and the day after.

—24 September 1935

To a biographer

I see that you have persisted in giving a biography—is it really necessary or useful? The attempt is bound to be a failure, because neither you nor anyone else knows anything at all of my life; it has not been on the surface for men to see.

You have given a sort of account of my political action, but the impression it makes on me and would make, I believe, on your public is that of a fiery idealist rushing furiously at an impossible aim (knocking his head against a stone wall, which is not a very sensible proceeding) without any grasp of realities and without any intelligible political method or plan of action. The practical people of the West would hardly be well impressed by such a picture and it would make them suspect that, probably, my Yoga was a thing of the same type.

Misunderstanding of Sri Aurobindo's writing

People do not understand what I write because the mind by itself cannot understand things that are beyond it. It constructs its own idea out of something that it catches or that it has caught and puts that idea as the whole meaning of what has been written. Each mind puts its own ideas in place of the Truth.

—6 June 1936

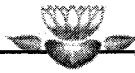
I do not mind if you find inconsistencies in my statements. What people call consistency is usually a rigid or narrow-minded inability to see more than one side of the truth or more than their own narrow personal view or experience of things. Truth has many aspects and unless you look on all with a calm and equal eye, you will never have the real or the integral knowledge.

I do not believe in human judgments because I have always found them fallible—also perhaps because I have myself been so blackened by human judgments that I do not care to be guided by them with regard to others. All this, however, I write to explain my own point of view; I am not insisting on it as a law for others. I have never been in the habit of insisting that everybody must think as I do—any more than I insist on everybody following me and my Yoga.

—December, 1934

If I write about these questions from the Yogic point of view, even though on a logical basis, there is bound to be much that is in conflict with the current opinions, e.g., about miracles, the limits of judgment by sense-data etc. I have avoided as much as possible writing about these subjects because I would have to propound things that cannot be understood except by reference to other data than those of the physical senses or of reason founded on these alone. I might have to speak of laws and forces not recognised by reason or physical science. In my public writings and my writings to Sadhaks I have not dealt with these because they go out of the range of ordinary knowledge and the understanding founded on it. These things are known to some, but they do not usually speak about them, while the public view of much of those as are known is either credulous or incredulous, but in both cases without experience or knowledge.

—December, 1935



Secrecy in spiritual matters

Q: Would it not sometimes be dangerous to speak truth, e.g., in politics, war, revolution? The truth-speaking moralist who would always insist on not concealing anything may bring disaster by revealing the plans and movements of one side to the opposite side.

A: Politics, war, revolution are things of stratagem and ambush—one cannot expect the truth there. From what I have heard X himself has played tricks and dodges there. Y told me it was impossible to lead men in politics or get one's objects without telling falsehoods by the yard and he was often feeling utterly disgusted with himself and his work, but supposed he would have to go through with it to the end.

There is no necessity to reveal one's plans and movements to those who have no business to know it, who are incapable of understanding or who would act as enemies or spoil all as a result of their knowledge. Secrecy is perfectly admissible and usual in spiritual matters except in special relations like that of the Shishya to the Guru. We do not let people outside know what is going on in the Ashram but we do not tell any lies about it either. Most Yogis say nothing about their spiritual experiences to others or not until long afterwards and secrecy was a general rule among the ancient Mystics. No moral or spiritual law commands us to make ourselves naked to the world or open up our hearts and minds for public inspection. Gandhi talked about secrecy being a sin but that is one of his many extravagances.

—17 May 1936

It is not very advisable to discuss either myself or the Ashram or spiritual things with hostile minds or unbelievers. These discussions usually bring on the Sadhak a stress of the opposing atmosphere and cannot be helpful to his progress. Reserve is the best attitude; one need not be concerned to dispel their bad will or their ignorance.

—13 September 1932

The Ashram's prestige

Queer idea all you fellows seem to have of "the prestige of the Ashram." The prestige of an institution claiming to be a centre of spirituality lies in its spirituality, not in newspaper columns or famous people.

—30 June 1938

Confusion of a good thinker

Q: One X has written a book in which he says that your "language" has been responsible for creating confusion etc. Y seems to have written to him about this and got a reply that he has not been satisfied with your philosophy nor with any of your disciples whom he has seen, but that he may change his views if he gets a quarter of an hour's talk with you. So far has he understood the *Arya* that some years back when I had asked him what was Supermind, he had replied that it was something like power of clairvoyance! I had laughed in my sleeves at his being considered a good thinker.

A: Well, there seems evidently to be a confusion in his ideas about my philosophy though what has been responsible for creating it—well, it is perhaps the goodness of his thinking! I fear the pleasure and honour of having a quarter of an hour's talk with the Yogi X is too high a thing for me to wish to attain to it in this life. I must try to obtain *punya* [good, virtue] first and strive to be born again in order to deserve it.

—13 April 1935

Ethics and sadhana

Q: I am thinking of writing a book on your teachings in a systematic Western form in three main sections: (1) Metaphysics (2) Psychology (3) Ethics. But to make it presentable in the academic fashion would require a large reading of some past and present Western philosophers and psychologists. And where is the time for it?

A: I am afraid it would be a rather too colossal affair. But why ethics? I don't think there is any ethics; because ethics depends upon fixed principles and rules of conduct, whereas here any such thing can only be for Sadhana purposes as conditions for getting the spiritual or higher consciousness and afterwards everything is freely determined by that consciousness and its movements and dictates.

—26 July 1936

Obvious thefts

Q: X in his lecture published in "The Hindu" has stolen not only most of your ideas but has actually lifted several sentences en masse. It seems he is well-known in this profession. But I wonder how such piracy in philosophical literature passes unchastised. I am thinking either of writing to him deploring the theft or of informing "The Hindu."

A: I don't think it is worth while doing anything. The thefts are obvious but if he wants to add some peacock plumes to his dun colours!

—23 July 1936

Pressure in the Ashram and outside happenings

Q: If the pressure here has an effect on the outside world in some way, have incidents happening here any connection with outside happenings? For example, I noted that on the day X and Y went from here the Italians finally conquered Abyssinia. There is a story of an occultist in Ahmedabad (in the 16th century or so) in which it is related that he was making and unmaking mats and accordingly the wall round the city which was built during the day fell down during the night—the time when he was taking away the chips of the mat.



A: The story of the occultist contains a truth, and it would be a mistake to suppose that there is no connection between the pressure here and outside happenings. But I don't know about particular coincidences. The departure of X and Y does not seem easily relatable to the event in Abyssinia.

—10 October 1936

Vivekananda

Q: I am thinking of reading Vivekananda. What he has said in his lectures—is it all truth, something directly inspired?

A: I cannot say that it is all truth—he had his own opinions about certain things (like everybody else) which can be questioned. But most of what he said was of great value.

—25 September 1935

Q: I wish to read books. Will you please give me some names?

A: I am not sure what books would interest you and am myself so far away from books that it is difficult to remember names. If you have not read Vivekananda's things you can read them or any books that would give you an idea of Vedanta schools and Sankhya. There is Mahendra Sircar's *Eastern Lights*. It is Indian philosophy you want, I suppose.

—25 September 1935

Aristotle's dry philosophy

Q: I tried to read Aristotle but found him very dry and abstract.

A: I always found him exceedingly dry. It is a purely mental philosophy, not like Plato's.

W. James

James' book (6) is certainly a very interesting one. I read it a long time ago and do not remember it very well except that it was very interesting and not at all an ordinary book in its kind, but full of valuable suggestions.

—1 July 1933

Materialistic science and mysticism

I am afraid I have lost all interest in these speculations; things are getting too serious for me to waste time on these inconclusive intellectualities. I do not at all mind your driving your point triumphantly home and replacing a dogmatism from materialistic science on its throne of half a century ago from which it could victoriously ban all thought surpassing its own narrow bounds as mere wordy metaphysics and mysticism and moonshine. Obviously, if material energies alone can exist in the material world, there can be no possibility of a life divine on the earth. A mere metaphysical "sleight of mind," as one might call it, could not justify it against the objections of scientific negation and concrete common sense. I had thought that even many scientific minds on the Continent had come to admit that science could no longer

claim to decide what was the real reality of things, that it had no means of deciding it and could only discover and describe the how and process of the operations of material Force in the physical front of things. That left the field open to higher thought and speculation, spiritual experience and even to mysticism, occultism and all those greater things which almost everyone had come to disbelieve as impossible nonsense.

That was the condition of things when I was in England. If that is to return or if Russia and her dialectical materialism are to lead the world, well, fate must be obeyed and life divine must remain content to wait perhaps for another millennium. But I do not like the idea of one of our periodicals being the arena for a wrestle of that kind. That is all. I am writing under the impression of your earlier article on this subject, as I have not gone carefully through the later ones; I dare say these later ones may be entirely convincing and I would find after reading them that my own position was wrong and that only an obstinate mystic could still believe in such a conquest of Matter by the Spirit as I had dared to think possible. But I am just such an obstinate mystic; so, if I allowed your exposition of the matter to be published in one of our own periodicals, I would be under the obligation of returning to the subject in which I have lost interest and therefore the inclination to write, so as to re-establish my position and would have to combat the claim of materialistic Science to pronounce anything on these matters on which it has no means of enquiry nor any possibility of arriving at a valid decision. Perhaps I would have practically to rewrite *The Life Divine* as an answer to the victorious "negation of the materialist"! This is the only explanation which I can give, apart from sheer want of time to tackle the subject, for my long and disappointing silence.

—17 May 1949

Russell, Eddington, Jeans (7)

I don't understand why X expects me to bow to the criticism of Bertrand Russell.

1. Russell's opinions are as much determined by his upbringing, temperament etc. as those of Jeans or Eddington. He was born in the heyday of the most uncompromising materialism; he is unwilling to change the ideas which have got embedded in his nature. It is this that determines his view of the result of the recent developments of science, it is not a clear infallible logic; logic can serve any turn proposed to it by the mind's preferences. Nor is it a dispassionate impersonal view of facts dictated by unbiased reason as opposed to Eddington's personal outlook, imaginative fancies and idealistic prejudices. This idea of pure mental impersonality in the human reason is an exploded superstition of the rationalist mind; psychology in its recent inquiries has shown that this supposed impersonal observation of pure objective facts and impartial conclusion from them, an automatic writing of truth on the blank paper of the pure mind is a myth; it has shown that the personal factor is inevitable; we think according to what we are.



2. Russell is not, I believe, a great scientist or pre-eminent in any field of science. Eddington is, I am told, one of the finest authorities in astrophysics. Jeans and Eddington, though not great discoverers, are otherwise in the front rank. Russell ranks as a great mathematician, but there too Eddington has one superiority over him; he is supposed to be the only one, so say some, one of the only five, say others, who have a complete understanding of Einstein's mathematical formulation; Russell is not counted among them and that perhaps disables him from understanding the full consequences of Relativity. Russell, however, is an eminent philosopher, though not one of the great ones. I would count him rather as a strong and acute thinker on philosophy and science. Here he has an advantage, for Jeans and Eddington are only amateur philosophers with a few general ideas for their stock in trade.

3. As for their general intellectual standing Russell is a clear and strong materialistic intellect with a wide and general play of its own kind and range; the others are strong in their own field, trained in scientific knowledge and judgment, outside that they do not count: Eddington's mind is more intuitive and original in its limits but often shooting beyond the mark. Russell, when he goes outside his limits, can flounder and blunder. Well, then where is there any foundation for exalting the authority of Russell at the expense of the other two? I disagree with the conclusions of all three; I am neither a mentalist nor a vitalist nor a materialist. Why then throw Russell at me? I am not likely to change my decision in the matter in deference to his materialistic bias.

And to what does his judgment or his argument amount to? He admits as against X that there has been a "revolution" in science; he admits that the old materialistic philosophy has no longer even half a rotten leg to stand upon; its dogmatic theory of Matter has been kicked out God knows where. But still, says Russell, Matter is there and everything in this world obeys the laws (? whatever they may be or become from time to time?) of physical science. This is merely a personal opinion on a now very doubtful matter: he is fighting a rearguard action against what he feels to be the advanced forces of the future; his gallant but tremulous asseveration is a defensive parade not an aggressive blow; it lacks altogether the old assured self-confidence.

As for Russell's logic, a dry and strong or even austere logic is not a key to Truth; an enthusiastic vision often reaches it more quickly. The business of logic is to give order to a thinker's ideas, to establish firm relations between them and firm distinctions from other people's ideas, but when that is done, we are no nearer to indisputable truth than we were before. It is vision that sees Truth, not logic—the outer vision that sees facts but not their inner sense, the inner vision that sees inner facts and can see the inner sense of them, the total vision (not belonging to mind) that sees the whole. A strong and clear and powerful intellect, Russell, but nothing more—not certainly an infallible authority whether in science or anything else. Jeans and Eddington have their own logical reasoning; I do not accept it any more than I accept Russell's.

Let us, however, leave the flinging of authorities, often the same authority for opposing conclusions, Russell quoted against Russell and Darwin against Darwin, and let us come to the point. . . .

Answer to Leonard Woolf (8)

The answer to Woolf was written long ago at the time Woolf's article appeared in the *New Statesman and Nation*—a London weekly. It was X who drew my notice to it and asked for an answer. Y this time wanted something of mine for the *Onward* August 15th number and chose this one.

—2 August 1934

Lenin

Q: Somebody told X that Sri Aurobindo brought about the Russian revolution through Lenin. X told Y that people here were over-credulous and believed such things. Y said that if it is possi-



ble to cure dangerous diseases of the body by Yogic power, why should it not be possible to act on the mind of another person and pour in him immense vital force which can bring about such results as the Russian revolution?

A: The statement made to X was not quite correct; it is putting things in too physical a form. A spiritual and occult working supplies forces and can watch over the members of the execution of a world event, but to put it like that makes the actual workers too much of automata which they are not.

—25 January 1937

Hitler—Goering—Goebbels

Hitler and his chief lieutenants Goering and Goebbels are certainly vital beings or possessed by vital beings, so you can't expect common sense from them. The Kaiser, though all-satanical, was a much more human person; these people are hardly human at all. The nineteenth century in Europe was a pre-eminently human era—now the vital world seems to be descending there.

—18 September 1936

Mother India

Q: When you wrote that you look upon India not as an inert, dead mass of matter, but as the very Mother, the living Mother, I believe you saw that Truth—or was it just the expression of a poetic or patriotic sentiment?

A: My dear Sir, I am not a materialist. If I had seen India as only a geographical area with a number of more or less interesting people in it, I would hardly have gone out of my way to do all that for the said area.

Merely a poetic or patriotic sentiment—just as in yourself only your flesh, skin, bones and other things . . . are real; but what you call your mind and soul do not self-exist, being merely psychological impressions created by the food you eat and the activity of the glands. Poetry and patriotism have of course the same origin and the things they speak of quite unreal.

The question for India after independence

Q: It is rather depressing to hear about the atrocities committed by some Mohamedans on Hindu families in Bengal.

With the coming of Independence I hope such things will stop. Now I would like to ask you something. In your scheme of things do you definitely see a free India? You have stated that for the spreading of spirituality in the world India must be free. I suppose you must be working for it! You are the only one who can do something really effective by the use of your spiritual Force.

A: That is all settled. It is a question of working out only. The question is what is India going to do with her Independence? The above kind of affair? Bolshevism? Goonda-raj? Things look ominous.

—16 September 1935

Rationality of politicians

Poor X! But he is a politician and the rationality of politicians has perforce to move within limits: if they were to allow themselves to be as clear-minded as that, their occupation would be gone! It is not everybody who can be as cynical as a Birkenhead or as philosophical as a C. R. Das and go on with political reason or political humbug in spite of knowing what it all came to from *arrivisme* in the one and patriotism in the other case.

A message on C. R. Das (9)

Chittaranjan's death is a supreme loss. Consummately endowed with political intelligence, constructive imagination, magnetism, a driving force combining a strong will and an uncommon plasticity of mind for vision and tact of the hour, he was the one man after Tilak who could have led India to Swaraj.

An early prediction (10)

Since 1907, we are living in a new era which is full of hope for India. Not only India, but the whole world will see sudden upheavals and revolutionary changes. The high will become low and the low high. The oppressed and the depressed shall be elevated. The nation and humanity will be animated by a new consciousness, new thought and new efforts will be made to reach new ends. Amidst these revolutionary changes, India will become free.

—January, 1910

1. 14.1.1761
2. See July 1971 Edition, p. 103.
3. "The Yoga of Self-Perfection," *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Part Four.
4. *Lights on Yoga, Bases of Yoga, The Riddle of This World*.
5. Special issues of some daily or weekly periodicals on Sri Aurobindo.
6. *Psychology*, by William James.
7. These are unfinished notes written by Sri Aurobindo around 1942. They were meant to be part of a letter which was never sent. One passage, though meant to be included in the letter, was written separately. It has now been put at its most appropriate place in the letter—as the penultimate paragraph.
8. See *Letters on Yoga* (Centenary Edition, 1972) Vol. 22, pp. 185-189.
9. Given in response to a request from the Bombay Chronicle on the occasion of C.R. Das's death and published in its issue of 22.6.1925.
10. In January 1910, Sri Aurobindo gave this prediction to the correspondent of the Tamil Nationalist weekly *India*, who met him in Krishnakumar's house at Calcutta. It was published with Sri Aurobindo's authorisation.

Sanskrit translations and explanations from the Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, vol. 30, Index and Glossary.



APROPOS

Be careful while reading health books, you might die of a misprint.—Mark Twain

If all economists were laid end to end, they would not reach a conclusion.—George Bernard Shaw

Give a man a mask, and he'll tell you the truth.—Oscar Wilde

The primary political and philosophical issue of the next century will be the definition of who we are.—Ray Kurzweil, *The Age of Spiritual Machines*

The universe is made of stories, not of atoms.—Muriel Rukeyser

A man with a watch knows what time it is.
A man with two watches isn't so sure.—Anon

I can predict the future by assuming that money and male hormones are the driving forces for new technology. Therefore, when virtual reality gets cheaper than dating, society is doomed.—Dogbert

Body and soul are twins. God only knows which is which.—Charles A. Swinburne

We're all lying in the gutter; but some of us are gazing at the stars.—Oscar Wilde

Yoga is as yoga does.—Elvis Presley

My plan is to live forever. So far so good.—Steven Wright

Nunc scripsi toun pro Christo da mihi potum. (*Now I have written so much for Christ, give me a drink!*)—With this inscription, monk-copyists marked the end of a day's work.

A great truth is a statement whose opposite is also a great truth.—Neils Bohr

I hate and I love, I don't know why, and I am in agony.—Catullus

The most difficult realization about the future is that it can be qualitatively different than the present and past.—Gregory Be

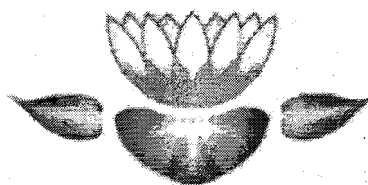
The strength of her mind lay in intuition. She was often right, by this means alone, in matters of mere speculation. Yet though perhaps in the strict sense of the term, she reasoned little, it is surprising what a degree of soundness is to be found in her determination.—William Godwin, on his wife Mary Wollstonecraft

I find ecstasy in living—the mere sense of living is joy enough.—Emily Dickinson

Our beliefs are not a result of what we see but the light by which we see.—Flannery O'Connor

Work as if you don't need the money
Love as if you have never been hurt,
And dance as if no one is looking.—Anon

When the human being puts forth a force in himself which is considerable but acts normally, we call it talent: when it is abnormal in its working we call it genius. It would seem, therefore, that genius is in reality some imperfect step in evolution by which mankind in its most vigorous and forward individuals is attempting to develop a faculty which the race as a whole is not strong enough as yet to command or to acclimatize.—Sri Aurobindo



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