

Collaboration

Fall/Winter 2002–2003

Journal of the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother

Vol. 28, no. 2



Life sketches of Devan Nair, Seyril Schochen, Haridas Chaudhuri, and Jyotipriya
Travels with Swami Ananta, part 2 • Karma yoga in *Essays on the Gita*
The Mother and Sri Aurobindo on love and sex



About the cover

The cover photo of Mother, taken in 1954, appeared in *Flame of White Light*, a book of photos and extracts from letters about the Mother by T.V. Kapali Sastry, first published in 1960 by the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. The Ashram kindly provided *Collaboration* with a digital version of the photo for our cover.

About the photographers and artwork in this issue

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From the office of Collaboration

This issue of *Collaboration* resumes the theme of recounting the lives and experiences of fellow disciples. In a previous issue we featured interviews with elder sadhaks in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry; this time we focus on several influential disciples of the yoga in North America.

Devan Nair is a wonderful speaker who has warmed our hearts and inspired our spirits at numerous All USA Meetings (AUMs) and other gatherings over many years. We have reprinted part of a talk he gave in 1991 in which he related his introduction to Sri Aurobindo's writings and his first personal meeting with Mother, and supplement this with a brief biography by Catherine Blackburn.

Seyril Schochen, a beloved beacon of light, spent many decades in Mother's service, first in Auroville, and later at the Sri Aurobindo Learning Center in Colorado. There she directs the center and has introduced many souls to the beauty and magic of *Savitri* and the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and Mother. Rod Hemsell, who has continued Seyril's emphasis on *Savitri* at the center with his annual *Savitri* intensives, sketches for us her life story.

The late Dr. Haridas Chauduri founded the first center in America on Sri Aurobindo's teaching in 1951, the Cultural Integration Fellowship in San Francisco. Joseph Kent, the author of this chronicle, was a student of the great scholar and lecturer, continues to be a stalwart member and supporter of the center, and is himself a wonderful writer and poet.

The late Jyotipriya founded the East-West Cultural Center in Los Angeles in 1953 and was a marvelous Sanskrit scholar and exponent of Sri Aurobindo's and Mother's yoga. Anie Nunnally, who wrote the piece on her, was an early member of the center who worked closely with Jyotipriya, and continues to be involved in the center.

In addition to these thematic articles, this issue features the second and final part of

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Staff for this issue: Larry Seidlitz, editor and layout; Lynda Lester, managing editor; Tom Parker, proofreader; Kalpana Patel and Chandresh Patel, mailing.

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About SAA: The primary purpose of the Sri Aurobindo Association is to distribute information about Sri Aurobindo, the Mother, and Auroville and to support various projects related to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Auroville, and Integral Yoga activities in America. Current officers: David Hutchinson, president; Vishnubhai Eschner, secretary; Kalpana Patel, treasurer; Lynda Lester, vice president, *Collaboration*; Chandresh Patel, vice president, Money-Power Project and Auroville liaison; Bhavana Nandakumar, vice president, *Collaboration* archives and nonprofit organization; Theresa Boschert, vice president, special projects.

Contributions: Donations for the work of the SAA, Auroville, and the Sri Aurobindo Ashram may be sent to SAA. Donations are tax exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code.



"Travels with Swami Ananta" (part 1 was in the Fall/Winter 2000–2001 issue). This fascinating saga recounts author Michael Miovic's travels in Greece and his encounters with the ancient Greek deities. Unfortunately, Swami Ananta, left behind at the airport (see part 1), was only in tenuous phone contact.

Also featured in this issue is a philosophical essay by Dr. Nadkarni on the karma yoga of the Gita. This essay, originally presented as a talk at Sri Aurobindo Sadhana Peetham in Lodi, California, is conversational in tone and peppered with anecdotes and illustrations.

Source material on love and sex, current affairs, interesting letters from the Internet, movie and book reviews, more poetry, and "Apropos" round out the issue. Enjoy!—Larry Seidlitz

Current Affairs

AVI meeting 2002 held near Santa Cruz, California

The Auroville International (AVI) Meeting 2002 was held 19–24 July at Sequoia Seminar near Santa Cruz, California. The AVI board, centers, liaisons, Aurovilians and friends of Auroville meet annually to discuss current events and trends in Auroville and how to interface in a timely manner with the community. The AVI board members also conduct their internal meeting during this time. These annual meetings are hosted by a different center each year, and are open to anyone who has an active interest in Auroville.

Topics planned for discussion included the following: Auroville land purchase, the role of the Tamil people and villages in the Auroville master plan, the Matrimandir, the International Zone and the cultural pavilions, water issues, coordinating AVI with Auroville's outreach efforts, the changing role of AVI in light of the Internet, sharing of successful practices of various AVI centers, and the influence of Integral Yoga on Western thought. Activities in-

cluded meditation, yoga, a six-hour excursion to a site in the area, and evening cultural programs.

Photos and summaries of the talks and events are posted on the AVI website: www.aviusa.org/avi2002_main.html.

AUM 2002 held in Greenville, South Carolina

The All USA Meeting (AUM) was held 31 July–4 August at Furman University in Greenville, South Carolina, hosted by the Sri Aurobindo Center Southeast. In addition to the scheduled talks there were daily meditations, experiential yoga sessions, physical activities, discussions, classical Indian music, sale of books and other items, and great meals. Featured presentations included:

Debashish Banerji: "Practice of integrality in the Integral Yoga"

Manoj Das: "The saga of the human quest"

Bhavana Dee: "Vipassana meditation as a tool for dealing with the biggest obstacle in the Integral Yoga"

Richard Hartz: "Making all life yoga: Glimpses of Sri Aurobindo's sadhana through the *Record Of Yoga*"

Tara Jauhar: "Physical awakening"

Lynda Lester: "Mother and Sri Aurobindo: a revolution in consciousness"

Julian Lines: "Best practices: how we attempt Integral Yoga"

Tom Mitchell: "Eliminating stress, improving health and wellness through yoga, pranayam, and meditation"

Mangesh Nadkarni: "The yoga and vision of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother"

Alok Pandey: "The search of soul (psychic being)"

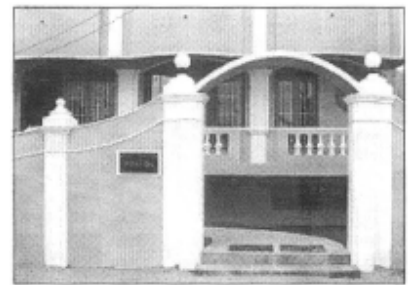
Guy Ryckaert: "Securing the land for Auroville for the manifestation of Mother's vision"

Don Salmon: "Effort and grace"

The AUM 2002 website is at www.collaboration.org/aum/2002. Photos are at <http://cyrilf.freewebsites.com>.

Mother's House opens in Pondicherry

Mother's House, a new guesthouse in Pondicherry, was inaugurated on 12 August 2002 with a short meditation program attended by the Sri Aurobindo Ashram trustees and other guests. It is the first guesthouse in Pondy to be built by devotees from another country; its construction was funded by the Sri Aurobindo Sadhana Peetham (SASP) of California.



Mother's House. (Photo by Noel Parent)

Located in the Vaithikuppam area of Pondicherry on the Beach Road going north, a 20-minute walk to the Ashram Samadhi, Mother's House is just around the corner from the Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced Research, which has ongoing classes in Sri Aurobindo's teachings.

The guesthouse has 12 rooms, each named after the 12 aspects of Mother's symbol. The rooms are for single occupancy only, each with an attached bathroom, most with a private balcony overlooking the magnificent sea. Rooms cost \$3.50 to \$4.00 per day, with a one-week minimum stay required, and visits up to six months allowed. There is a spacious meditation room, library, dining area, and roof terrace where hatha yoga classes are offered. Daily meditations and weekly bhajans (devotional songs and music) also are held. Guests can purchase meal tickets for the Ashram dining hall, but vegetarian meals also are offered at the guesthouse.

Mother's House aspires to be a place of peace, cleanliness, harmony, and a special atmosphere invoking Sri Aurobindo's and Mother's presence. For more information, contact SASP: 209-339-1342, sasp@lodinet.com.



Briefs

Several distinguished speakers have given talks around the U.S. in recent months. **Professor Mangesh Nadkarni** spoke this summer at the Boston Center, Matagiri, Sri Aurobindo Sadhana Peetham (SASP), the study group in Silicon Valley, and at the AUM 2002 conference in Greenville. Dr. Nadkarni's talk at SASP on the karma yoga of the Gita was transcribed and edited and is printed in this issue of *Collaboration*. **Tara Juahar** discussed her experiences growing up with Mother, and showed a video, and answered questions about the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Delhi Branch, at Matagiri and at SASP in July, and at the AUM conference in August. **Bhavana Dee** showed a video and discussed Auroville's Village Action Program, which she directs, at SASP in July, and at Matagiri and at the AUM conference in August. **Narad (Richard Eggenberger)** discussed his meetings with Mother concerning flowers and plants and the progress of Auroville, and gave a talk on the gardens of the Matrimandir at Matagiri on 20-23 June. **Matthijs Cornelissen** gave a presentation at the Cultural Integration Fellowship (CIF) in San Francisco on 6 April entitled "Integrality and its role in ongoing evolution of consciousness." Audiotapes of this presentation (as well as others) are available from CIF by calling 415- 626-2442.

The first edition of the *Sri Aurobindo Centers Guide and Newsletter* was mailed to approximately 5,000 recipients on various centers' mailing lists. The *Guide* has recent information on 42 centers and study groups in the U.S. and Canada, and includes photos of many of the centers. It was developed by members of SASP and was printed and distributed with funds from a grant from the Foundation for World Education (FWE). The *Guide* was distributed in connection with another project, dubbed the **Merge-Purge Project**, also funded by the FWE, which aims to update and consolidate the mailing lists of various centers. The Merge-Purge Project is being carried out by **Nilauro**

Markus of AVI-USA and **Dakshina** of SASP. If you received the *Guide* but have not yet returned its attached card-insert, please do so now to facilitate the project's success. If you have not received a *Guide*, you may obtain one by writing or calling SASP: 2621 W. Hwy 12, Lodi, CA 95242, 209-339-1342 ext. 5.

What is Enlightenment magazine recently featured an article on Sri Aurobindo, written by **Craig Hamilton**, titled "Why Sri Aurobindo is cool." As part of his research for this interesting introductory article on the Integral Yoga, Craig visited the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry and interviewed several knowledgeable disciples. The issue of the magazine, entitled "The future of God: Evolution and enlightenment for the 21st century," also contains other interesting articles and interviews. Visit the website: www.wie.org for further information or to purchase the issue.

Passings

Robert Dane

Robert Dane, the senior-most director of the Sri Aurobindo Center of Los Angeles, passed away on 3 May 2002 from a heart attack in his home in Palos Verdes Estates, California. He would have been 85 years old on 10 July. Robert will be remembered for his great enthusiasm and for shouldering the responsibility of the L.A. center and keeping its flame alive for many years after its founder, Dr. Judith Tyberg (Jyotipriya), passed away in 1980. His deep devotion to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and his high idealism will remain strongly in the atmosphere of Sri Aurobindo's reliquary and meditation room at the center, which he designed.—Anie Nunnally



Robert Dane. (Photo courtesy Anie Nunnally)

Mary Helen Eggenberger

Mary Helen Eggenberger, beloved friend and companion on the Way, disciple of Mother and Sri Aurobindo, left this beautiful and hallowed earth she so cherished at 7:30 a.m. on 7 February 2002, a day before her 58th birthday.

Mary Helen read about Mother and Sri Aurobindo when she was just out of her teens and, as a young woman at the age of 22, she sent her photo to Mother and received her blessings to come live in the Ashram. She traveled on her own to India, taking with her a few belongings and leaving everything else to meet Mother in August 1966. She returned to the Ashram in 1968 for the inauguration of Auroville and worked for some months in the Auroville Information and Design Office opposite the main Ashram complex.

After returning to the U.S. for a few years, she once again came to the Ashram in 1971, later moving to Auroville with Mother's blessings. She worked in the Matrimandir Gardens for 10 years, collecting and studying numerous plant species that she helped collect and propagate. She also began one of Auroville's first journals, *Progress*, chronicling the development of the pioneer communities in those early years.

She was diagnosed with late-stage ovarian cancer in 1998 and underwent extensive exploratory surgery. The cancer was so widespread, however, that no removal was surgically possible. She was given three weeks to live. Determined, as the Mother's child, to conquer this disease on the life plane or proceed as far as possible towards its elimination with her guru's ever-present help, she concentrated her work on the body's cells, calling in the Light while exploring both traditional therapies and a host of alternative protocols. She slept each night with blessings packets Mother gave her and a packet of



sand from the inner chamber of the Samadhi.

She knew the Ashram as her spiritual home and considered the Patels, Lilou, Maniben, Pushpa, and Jayantibhai her closest family—but cherished her friendships with many Ashramites and Aurovilians. Her calm and gentle demeanor, her sweet and warm disposition, her generosity and goodwill towards all masked a warrior soul on the path of the Integral Yoga.

Photographer, writer, horticulturist, and artist, she did many of the line drawings for the first major revision of *Flowers and Their Messages*, the compilation of the spiritual significance of flowers given by the Mother. She is lovingly remembered by botanists for her research on tropical plants, gained primarily from her years of work in the first stages of the Matrimandir Gardens. Together with her husband, she authored *The Handbook on Plumeria Culture* and *The Handbook on Oleanders*. In tribute she has been honored by having two flowers named for her, Bougainvillea “Mary Helen” by John Lucas, president of the Bougainvillea Society of America and Phlox “Mary Helen” by Richard Saul of Saul Nurseries, Atlanta, Georgia. In 2001 she was also extended the honor of being made a lifetime member of the Southern California Plumeria Society.

She devoted her last few years to an immersion in Sri Aurobindo’s epic poem, *Savitri*, working with Narad (Richard Eggenberger) intensively on a dictionary of words and terms in *Savitri*, entitled *Lexicon of an Infinite Mind*, and reading the poem aloud each night before sleep.

She is survived by her husband, Narad; her sister, Sue Bailey; and her daughter, Chali, an Aurovilian who helped found and now directs the Centre for Further Learning, preparing teenage students for entry-level accreditation into colleges and universities in Europe and the U.S., and two grandchildren, Aaron and Dylan.

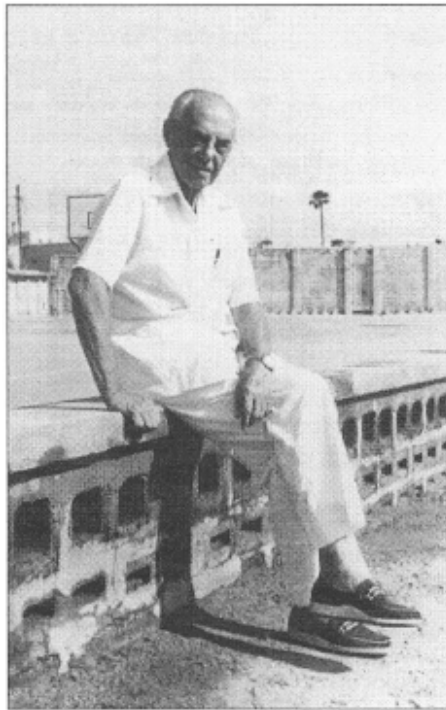
In 1972 Mother wrote to her: “I am with you, fear not.” —Narad

Narad (maryhele@alltel.net) lives in Cleveland, GA. A horticulturist, he helped establish the Matrimandir Nursery, and maintains a website dedicated to Savitri: www.savitribysriaurobindo.com.

Dimitri von Mohrenschildt

Dimitri von Mohrenschildt, beloved friend and fellow sadhak, passed away peacefully in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram nursing home on Sunday evening, 9 June 2002 at 5:55 p.m. Dimitri had miraculously come through the acute stages of a severe lung infection before quietly withdrawing from this earthly life at age 100.

Dimitri was born 11 April 1902 into an aristocratic family of German heritage, in the beautiful city of St. Petersburg, Russia, known during the communist regime as Leningrad. In 1917, when he was just a boy of 15 years, Dimitri’s life and that of his



Dimitri at the Sports Ground in Pondicherry, 1981. (Photo courtesy Anie Nunnally)

family, which was one of privilege, wealth and social standing, was abruptly interrupted by the Russian revolution. The Bolsheviks overthrew the Czarist rule, murdered Czar Nicholas II and his entire family, and quickly moved into power. Stories of the terrible tragedy are now a painful part of Russian history. Many families were slaughtered and others barely escaped with their lives across borders dressed as peasants, even carrying with them infants buried under clothing in laun-

dry hampers. Dimitri’s immediate family was spared, but some relatives were murdered.

He was separated from his brother and parents for quite some time. During this period he was captured, imprisoned, and named on a list of those to be murdered. However, his father was able to get him included in a group of Polish hostages to be exchanged with the Polish government, and he traveled by special train across the border to Minsk, where he was reunited with his parents. At each of these frightening junctures, he came to see that in all cases it was an intervention of the Divine Grace that had spared him. He later came to realize that it was indeed the hand of the Divine Mother guiding him throughout all these events.

Dimitri eventually joined the merchant marines and boarded a ship bound for the USA. Ultimately, he graduated from Yale University, married, and became a professor of Russian history and civilization at Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire. While there, he founded, edited, and published *The Russian Review*, an anticommunist and literary quarterly, which continued for many years.

His close friend, the late Rene Fuenoep-Miller—educator, author, and professor of sociology at Hunter College, New York, and later Dartmouth College—introduced him to the books of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in the late 1950s. Dimitri traveled to the Ashram in 1958 with Eleanor Montgomery, met the Mother, and had her darshan. He subsequently made other visits to the Ashram. He retired from Dartmouth in 1968 and moved to California, where he served as a consultant on Russian affairs for the Hoover Institution at Stanford University.

In 1976, at age 74, he left that post and his life in America and moved to the Ashram in India, where he spent the last 26 years of his life as a resident of Golconde. He began translating Sri Aurobindo’s writings into Russian and somehow managed to get these typed manuscripts into Russia, where they were circulated among the underground. For years there were many souls there who were spiritually inspired



by the words of Sri Aurobindo due to this daring act. Now, in these more lenient times since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Dimitri was visited at Golconde on a regular basis by visitors from Russia and those Russian citizens who had moved to Auroville and the Ashram. He had become something of a “living icon” for them as a representative of pre-revolutionary life in Russia.

Dimitri was the personification of the aristocratic, intellectual, and cultured European nobleman. He enjoyed fine cuisine, the best Belgian chocolates and Lindt Swiss chocolates (my standing gift to him), the arts, music, poetry, dance, and simple but elegant dress. He detested everything base, unrefined, insensitive, and uncouth. His inner life was private, but his devotion to Mother and Sri Aurobindo was most apparent.

His generosity and affection towards his friends was touching and heartwarming, as was his generosity towards Auroville and other aspects of the Mother’s work. On 26 February 2002, he laid the foundation stone for the Russian Pavilion in Auroville. For many years he made donations to the Matrimandir Gardens and more recently to the Russian Pavilion, the Unity Pavilion, and the Auroville Land Fund purchase.

He had enormous will and powerful vital and physical stamina. He so loved the sea, and for all those years that he lived in India, he swam daily in the Bay of Bengal. This continued up to his 89th year. A sudden attack of osteoporosis confined him to the Ashram nursing home for some months, after which he returned to Golconde but in a bedridden state. Gradually, with great personal determination, he began to walk again, and his caregiver, Susan Crothers, would then go with him to the beach daily. Occasionally, when the sea was calm, they would swim together in the area designated by the Mother years back as being safe. When he could no longer swim, Sue would wheel him down in his wheelchair so that he could imbibe the fresh salt air and watch the waves roll in and recede. He passed on in the manner in which he had lived his life—with quiet dig-

nity. He shall be greatly missed.

Dimitri is survived by his stepdaughter, Ingrid Fuloep-Miller, and stepson, Chris Fuloep-Miller, of California, the children of his second wife, the late German-born poet, Erika Renon. Dimitri was cremated in the Ashram on Monday, 10 June, and his ashes cast into the Bay of Bengal at sunrise the next day.—Anie Nunnally

*Eternity drew close disguised as Love
And laid its hand upon the body of Time.
—Sri Aurobindo, from Savitri*

Anie Nunnally lives in Los Angeles. Her interviews with senior disciples of Sri Aurobindo and Mother have been published in Collaboration.

New letters on yoga

The secret life of consciousness

by Lynda Lester

This selection was posted 7 December 2001 to the Integral Yoga forum. For directions on how to subscribe, refer to <http://iy.collaboration.org>.

Karl brought up an interesting point when he wondered if it would be helpful for us to talk about inner experiences. This is an important question for the forum, especially this month, so it might be good to take a closer look at the question.

It’s true that there has long been a proscription against sharing spiritual experiences—for good reason. The normal human consciousness defaults to physical reality: if you can weigh it, measure it, prove it with algorithms, it’s real. If you can’t, it’s not. Steel, stocks and bonds, and sitcoms are real. God, who cannot be measured, is suspect. Mystics are quaint souls who belong in the forest feeding squirrels.

Because of this physical orientation, this “materialistic denial,” assertions of inner experience are met with derision, amusement, or dismissal—and this, naturally, is bad for spiritual development, as the seeker begins to doubt and devalue his or her experience. This is one basis for the traditional rule about keeping mum.

However, dismissive reactions are default not only in materialistic society but in spiritual circles as well, and in Integral Yoga circles specifically. Someone claiming to “see light” or “experience the Divine” often meets with one of three reactions: 1) you are pretending; 2) you are deceived; 3) you are egotistical and doomed for spiritual fall.

I recall an article that appeared eight years back in an Integral Yoga newsletter called *NexUs*. Some poor fellow said he experienced a supramental descent. Ah! The furor! The ruckus! The torches that were lit to be carried up the hill and burn him at the stake! “Who does he think he is,” an elderly disciple asked hotly, “Sri Aurobindo?”

The opinion here—reflective of an unexamined but widespread feeling among sadhaks—is that it is OK for Mother and Sri Aurobindo to have experiences, but not we lowly mortals. Sri Aurobindo, of course, wrote many letters trying to disabuse people of this belief.

On the other hand, it is quite all right, in IY company, to remain safely in the surface consciousness and mumble cozily about normal human things—tofu, Microsoft, the price of beans in China. It is also OK to talk about abstractions such as “Aurobindo’s philosophy”—or to give lip service to “bringing the psychic being forward,” as long as one doesn’t get too detailed about what it feels like.

The fact is, inner consciousness is taboo—not just in materialistic society, but in the yoga. Inner consciousness is off limits—don’t talk about *that*.

It’s like sex. 100 years ago Victorian women found out about sex on their wedding night, babies came from storks, and the “facts of life” had something to do with (wink, wink) birds and bees.

This is the stance on inner consciousness today. Nobody talks about it. It’s in *purdah* like Muslim women, veiled in black.



It's in the closet, chained and whispered about, never acknowledged.

Meanwhile, our surrounding environments have a huge influence on our psychological and physiological being, our thoughts and emotions—hence, our entire spiritual development. And in our surrounding environments, yogic and otherwise, we get plenty of support for the externalized, superficial world view, but none for the reality of inner consciousness.

At the office, for instance, we can't stand by the water cooler and say, "Hey, how about that illumined mind! Kind of reminds you of a mass of stable lightnings, doesn't it?" And it is considered gauche to say after a meditation, "Holy cow, that was an amazing power surge. Did you feel that?" One is expected to look deeply moved for one minute, then enter a chatty conversation about books and cookies.

Why must we be doomed, everywhere in the world, in the yoga and out of it, to talk about the weather? To sip tea and smile politely pretending there isn't an inner reality, assuming that the supermind has nothing to do with us?

When will we be free to blow the lid on spiritual experience? Is the transformation going to take so long that it's irrelevant to us—and by the way, pass the potatoes?

I don't think so. It is true that until recently, consensual reality has been a materialistic outlook heavier than an iron curtain, more oppressive than a blanket of coal and slag. But things have changed. The wheel of time turns, the ages come and pass . . . and we are entering a new era.

This is not your parents' overmental religion. The supermind has descended, the supermind has gone live. For spiritual beings, and especially those in the Integral Yoga, the dharma of this new age is not to be ascetics in the cave or retreat to the monastery and copy Bibles, but find out what consciousness is and how it works.

Keeping mum on consciousness is OK if you're in the kali yuga where light must be hidden and guarded—not when you're in a transitional age when your job is to become a gnostic being and find the way to the next species.

Our mission, should we chose to ac-

cept it, is to raise the new world. And we won't do that with our surface consciousness!

So it seems to me that if there's anything we *do* need to talk about, it's inner experience. Inner experience is tricky indeed, and takes time and discrimination to sort out. And not talking about it increases the likelihood that it will languish, immature and undeveloped, in the back room.

We know the facts of life, but we need to know the facts of yoga. And one of the facts is that consciousness is layered, it has multiple levels with different attributes—and if we're doing this sadhana, we need to know how to navigate those levels.

To gain that mastery, we can use the scientific approach. We can explore, experiment, fail, try new avenues, expand our working knowledge. We can cross-fertilize, compare notes, enhance the morphogenetic fields.

In the physical absence of Mother and Sri Aurobindo, we cannot go to them for help—so we're out of luck if we try to "share experiences only with our guru." But we can go to their works. We can use their writings as source material, our psychic beings as guides, and each other as co-investigators to bounce ideas off and deepen understandings.

The IY list is a collaboratory, a network for the collective pursuit of sadhana. And it is—as Karl so aptly put it—a warm little campfire gathering. Here, we can create a safe place to examine inner experience. Here we can punch some holes in that old materialistic world view.

This is an atmosphere in which, as yoga professionals, we can talk shop. In our daily work lives, we trade tips on upgrading servers and downloading bug fixes. Why, in our daily yogic lives, don't we trade tips on how to recognize inner from outer awareness, higher mind from intuition?

I envision conversations where, as in the Harry Potter books, we share what we've learned:

"Hey, there's a three-headed dog up on the fourth floor."

"The password to the attic is 'flum-

moxed.'"

For most of us, the inner consciousness is still like a pre-1492 map of the Atlantic Ocean that says, "Here There Be Dragons." But Sri Aurobindo and Mother have made better and infinitely detailed maps, and we can follow them. This is not heresy, it's what we're supposed to do.

Hadassah said, "Images and the nitty-gritty of experience (inner as well as outer) speak to me more powerfully than abstractions."

I agree. I don't think we need to sit around forever in boring metaphysical exchanges. I think we can go exploring, like innernauts—consciousnessnauts!—and report back on what we see. If we have only a peep of an experience, we can report that. And if we see nothing, we can report that! After all, there are quiet waters in the sea lanes, and, as Dave said, quoting Sri Aurobindo, "Much goes on behind the veil."

Of course, the usual disclaimers apply. We will acknowledge the possibility of error, be wary about presenting ourselves as experts, and guard against identifying an experience as definitive and pure when it might be temporary and mixed. We will not abandon discrimination, or post experiences to inflate our egos. We will communicate in the spirit of inquiry and curiosity. We will encourage each other and recognize that we're all at different points along the way, and all have our own parts to play. As Karl says, "Some may hear sounds, others none. Some may see deities, others none."

But it is certain that each of us has something the others lack, and can offer a unique contribution to this forum.

A major trend in software development these days is the "open source" movement—free exchange of source code among users. So I say: open source for consciousness!

Lynda Lester is a technical writer who lives in Boulder, Colorado. She holds a study group on the Integral Yoga at her home and is a moderator of the IY forum. She also is managing editor of Collaboration and was a keynote speaker at AUM 2002 and AUM 2001. She can be reached at lyndalester@earthlink.net



AV almanac

Aurovilians honor Sri Aurobindo's arrival in Pondicherry

by Mauna van der Vlugt

This message was posted on 4 April 2002 to the avi@aurobindo.org forum.

Following a recent call in the AVNews, some 60–70 Aurovilians came together today at the Amphitheater at 6 p.m. to listen to Sunil's music and generally be together at that precious site. The atmosphere was relaxed and homely, without glimmer or glamor—the decoration at the foot of the urn was a simple, large Auroville symbol built out of red, honest-to-goodness, well-packed dirt. Lovely.

When entering the quiet area (the daily throng of visitors had gone), folks received a fresh and fragrant sprig of young neem blossoms (“Spiritual atmosphere,” remember?) and a little red “Love-for-the-Divine” rose, and there we sat, peace.

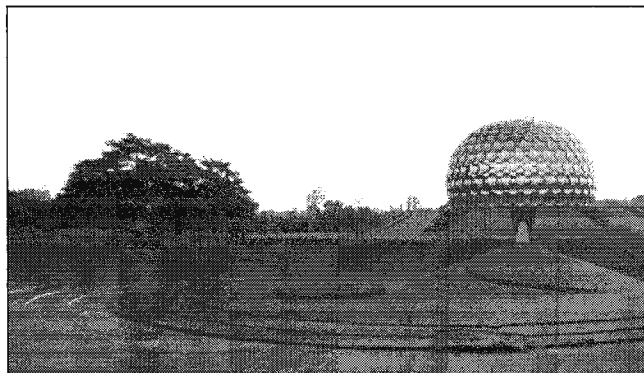
There was a sturdy fresh breeze, the service trees at the edge of the theater were in bright yellow bloom, the sky was blue with pinkish touches, and lo and behold, there even was the regular stray dog (which in olden days so blithely would bark throughout our bonfire sessions, but was later so strictly kept or shooed away)—who from the beginning till the end kept itself busy with its fleas and other little thingies it found good enough to snap at or play with. And of course there was the regular young mom quietly walking around with her babe, and the lungi-clad father with his young son.

Some of us sat in meditation, some laid back and felt the red stone warmly under their bodies, while others again relaxed against the stone steps, serenely absorbing the scene. Home. And as always, the

emptiness and silence of the space did its soothing, smoothing thing on us.

For some stretch of time the local daily hassles and challenges were thinned a bit and faded, and for a while more pressing matters would hang in the air—minds went out to that basic and ancient struggle presently being performed in the Middle East, and prayers took shape. And Mother kept reading, carrying us. The hours went by with slow contented tread: A wide and tranquil air remembered peace.

And of course, the magic of the hour did its thing as well: accompanied by the at-times pleasantly swinging music and Mother's reading, we went together through nature's motion and change from light to dark. When we started out, the



Amphitheatre with urn, site of Auroville's commemoration of Sri Aurobindo's arrival in Pondicherry, with Matrimandir behind.

(Photo courtesy www.auroville.org)

Matrimandir's gold surrounded by the pinkish evening sky still took predominance over the simple, brownish, ripple-in-the-pond curves of the Amphitheater—but as the evening fell it was the little urn, illumined by hidden spotlights, that surprisingly revealed itself, starkly golden, stealing the show. Eventually it just stood there in the dark, fierce and proud and, yes, erect, the symbol of human unity—may it prevail.

I want to thank initiative takers Sigrid and Soham for providing us with this blissful break on the day that Sri Aravinda arrived in Pondicherry, and I hope that many of these “togethernesses” may follow.

Mauna has lived in Auroville since 1977, been active in education, Matrimandir, Auroville International, and outreach. She maintains the Auroville website: www.auroville.org.

Chronicles

Travels with Swami Ananta, part 2

by Michael Miovic

Part 1 of this traveling tale was published in the Fall/Winter 2000–2001 issue (vol. 26, no. 3).

Back in Athens again, I called Ananta to report on the mission in Delphi. “Good for you, Michael, good for you. I knew you would get something, remember, you ARE a child of the great, great sun god, Apollo . . . Now then: have you gone to Lycosura? You must get to Lycosura, and of course Likion. They say *likion* means “wolf mountain,” but they’re wrong. It means Light, the mountain of Light. But beware, Mother said Zeus is VERY beautiful, but very dangerous!” There was a pregnant pause. I didn’t know what to say, faced with such a dramatic revelation, and that from a man who is usually so measured in his speech.

“Oh! And what do you think of the Greeks? The people are so damn good-looking, and affectionate, really warm. I mean, they practically adopted me. When they really love you they start to feed you, just like that, with their hands, they feed you like a baby. And the singing and the dancing, my God, I love it when they just jump up on the table and—”

“Uhh, listen,” I interrupted, trying to get back to my narrow vision of the point, “how am I going to find Lycosura? I don’t know where it is.”

“Aaahh,” he derailed for a moment, then refound Ariadne’s thread, “and the music! So joyful! So what if someone just grabs you and gives you a kiss? What’s wrong with that? You know, I do not believe in morality. The only thing that’s wrong is cruelty . . . And the Christians, with all that false piety, and what they did



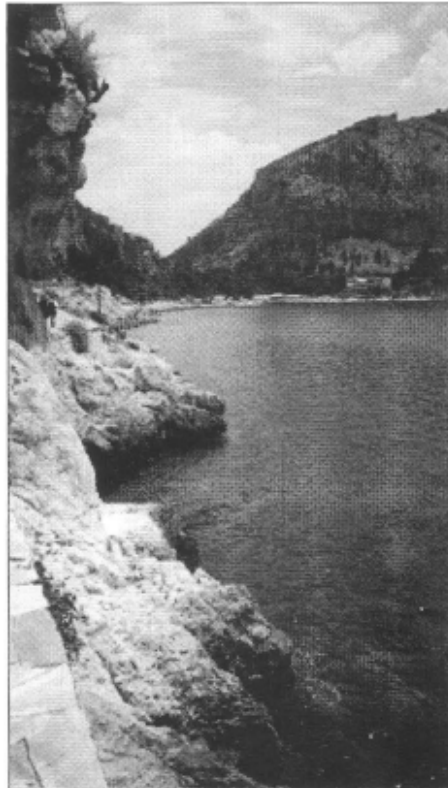
to Greece, horrible.”

I was becoming impatient. “Ananta, the card runs out in 20 seconds.”

“The director of the National Museum knows everything,” he rushed, “just tell him I sent you . . . or find Yanis, the police officer. And Michael, remember: we all have our faults, and we are ALL human, me more than most, I admit, but do you know what? Mother told me, she said, ‘Ananta: —.’”

The line was cut off, alas, or I might have heard more. As I lay in bed that night contemplating my next move, I continued the story I had heard so many times that it had a life of its own in my head. “Mother said: ‘Ananta, if you feel that strongly about Greece, then you must go there. But you will go where I send you.’ And then she just reached behind her, like that, and puff!, pulled out the map. Where did the map come from, where? There was no map there. And then she just laid it down on the table and pointed. ‘There! You will go there.’ How did she know about the temple at Lycosura? How? When I got there, the archaeologist said, ‘Yes, it’s true, it is the oldest temple in Greece, the oldest.’ But how did Mother know that? And in the middle of nowhere . . . And then she said, ‘Ananta, I cannot give you any money, but I will give you EVERY other kind of support you could need.’ And you know what? From the day I set foot in Greece, I didn’t spend a single drachma, not a single one. People gave me everything, absolutely everything. They fed me, they gave me clothes, they let me stay wherever I wanted. What would I have done with money? I didn’t need it, I could have cared less about money . . .”

So much for ancient myths. I was now faced with the present reality of how to find Lycosura without Mother’s guidance, and, hopefully, without Ananta’s either, for the latter might land me in Siberia or Antarctica by a whim of the gods. I laid out my tourist map on the bed in despair. Three by three feet square, thousands of little black dots and names I couldn’t pronounce, hundreds of tiny islands, and, behind all the black ink, faint blue labels marking historic sites of interest from the



Napoli – Near site where Michael saw the Light of Sri Aurobindo. (Photo by Michael Miovic)

past three millennia. I groaned out loud. There was no way I could walk into the National Museum of Archaeology and demand to speak with the director; that would be an Anantism beyond my ken.

I leaned forward to fold up the map, and as I did so my eyes came to rest on a little blue label in the middle of the Peloponnese: “Lycosura.” And next to that, “Likion.” Jai Sri Ma! Eureka!

I went to sleep deeply contented, but in the middle of the night had a terrible recrudescence of the lower vital pull. The pressure had been building since my arrival in Greece, and I tossed and turned all night trying rather unsuccessfully to reject those tormenting influences. When I arrived in Napoli by bus late the next afternoon, I was more than just exhausted, I was disgusted with myself, for in 15 years of yoga, I had not been able to surrender this defect in my nature.

Napoli is a beautiful little seaport in the Peloponnese; however, I felt anything but beautiful as I walked along the ancient

stone path of the quaint marina. I veered right, out onto the long quay that stretched into the bay, and walked slowly into the setting sun. Young couples were seated all along the way, their caresses whispering of human love. The scintillating sunset on the vermilion water would have given Monet no end of inspiration, but tonight there was none for me. At the end I came upon a couple of fisherman casting into the high tide, and I sat down by the huge rocks, with the Aegean splashing below my feet.

This was all so old and tired, this full-bodied beauty of setting suns and human love and the darkening blue waters of eventide. Since childhood I had dreamed of coming to Greece, to the home of Odysseus, to the fount of magic, mystery, and myth in the West . . . and now that I had finally arrived, it was only to realize that my sad attempt at yoga was a farce.

I slouched on the rocks in defeat, flooded with a great sense of failure—call it spiritual shame. As I reviewed inwardly all the grace that Sri Aurobindo had bestowed upon me, all the boons he had granted over the years, I felt unworthy, as if I were a blight on his unutterable beauty, an insult to his sublime yoga, a defective specimen of humanity that did not deserve to bear his sacred name upon my lips. I was pierced by pangs of a psychic sorrow, the tragic recognition that the only thing in me that was truly worthy was Sri Aurobindo’s presence, and that the rest of little “me” was not worthy of that presence now and perhaps never would be. Slowly, after much reflection, I decided that, out of respect for my guru, so as not to sully the one thing I truly loved, that it would be better if I gave up his yoga. Then, at the least, there would be one less hypocrite in the world.

Sighing, I looked out over the harbor one last time, and prepared to leave. I didn’t know where I would go, inwardly or outwardly. I couldn’t conceive of a life without Sri Aurobindo, but now it was time to go. Just as I was on the verge of rising, in my mind’s eye I saw a blinding white Light descend from some unfathomable height of consciousness and take up sta-



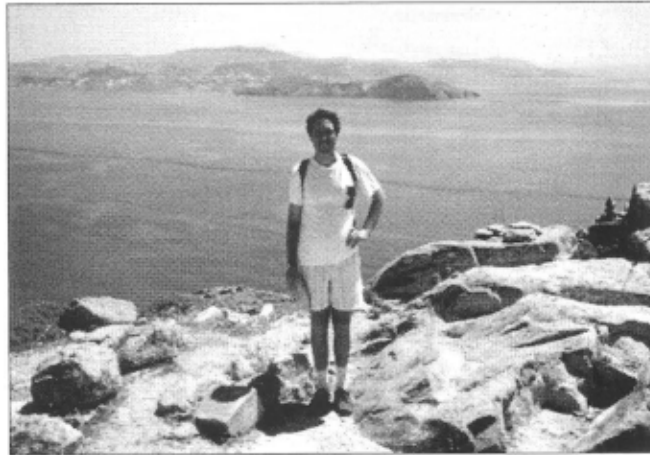
tion behind me. It was He, I knew very well that diamond light as bright as an acetylene torch, so intense that its aura glows blue. He said nothing, He just put up his hand as if to say, "Halt."

For the next hour or so that dazzling Light descended into me from above and plunged into the murky depths below my feet. When the Light went down there, down into those yawning chasms of blackness below, it turned an unearthly aqueous green, a phosphorescent beacon opening up strange nether worlds of unplumbed conscious being. Several times I had the urge to rise and walk away, yet every time He patiently held up his hand in that gesture, saying "Wait, just wait."

So I waited. Finally the immobilizing peace receded, and I was permitted to walk back down the quay and rejoin the human round.

Later that night I happened to read about some of Pericles's foibles, and then I understood viscerally a fundamental spiritual truth: Sri Aurobindo can lead us out of our darkness precisely because, through his many lives, he has walked our human paths and suffered with us, and known our errors. He has hoped and dreamed and fought and failed, and rejoined again the burdens of our fated days. The Gods in their glories know not the weight of our toils, but Sri Aurobindo does. This is his mystery and Grace—that he is at once divine and human, a descent from the Supreme and an ascent from below. And for this he remains to me, from whatever I have seen or known, the most beautiful being in existence, the most precious, the most sublime. So, I guess that means I haven't given up on his yoga yet—or at least He hasn't given up on me.

From Nafpoli, I proceeded to Megalopolis, spent the night there, and in the morning took a local bus high up into the hills outside town. There were a few locals on the bus, all men of at least seven decades, and we looked at each other curiously. All I could say was "Lycosura" and



Michael on top of Delos, the legendary island birthplace of Apollo, on the Aegean Sea. (Photo courtesy Michael Miovic)

"Lykio." Evidently it had been a long time since they had seen a foreigner.

The bus pattered up the mountain for about an hour, ascending through countless switchbacks, and then crested the ridge and coasted down into the little town of Lykio. The bus driver motioned for me to stay seated and pointed down the hill: "Lycosura." We coasted downhill another 15 minutes, crossed a small bridge, stopped to pick up a villager by a stand of houses, and then eased downhill another few minutes. Finally the driver pulled the bus over by a fork in the road, and pointed up the hill.

"Efharisto," I said as I descended, one of the few words of Greek I had picked up.

"Parakalo," he nodded.

Then I set out up a dirt road. As I wended my way slowly through the clean morning sunshine, the vegetation changed from dry Mediterranean flora to something a little more lush.

Little crops of yellow wildflowers sprung up, and the shrubs became more bushy and verdant. By the time I reached the end of the road 15 minutes later, the entire atmosphere had softened and become palpably feminine and flowering. I found myself standing next to a fairly new stone house labeled "Museum." It was flanked with beds of pink and red geraniums, very large and efflorescent. I learned later that the spot was dedicated to an ancient sanctuary of the "Divine Mistress."

To my left stood a wire fence that disappeared into tall grasses; it curved uphill

and down, apparently defining a large perimeter. Passing through a small gate, I followed a narrow footpath through chest-high grasses that were still soaked in morning dew and submerged in the shadows of nascent sunshine. Soon I came, on my right, to the ruins of an ancient house. The walls stood waist high, and in a few spots I could make out the ridges of tiny tiles on the floors. I took a few pictures and then wandered downhill to my left, where I found a large rectangular recess dug into the ground. In the center of this

structure were several broken pillars that had collapsed inwards.

As I explored the ruins, I realized that this was, of course, the ancient temple of which Ananta had spoken—but its design was quite different from anything I had seen or read about. Whereas the classic Greek temple is built atop a flat foundation that stands above the surrounding ground, this was a sort of semi-basement that had been built into the earth. Evidently the pillars at one time had stood above the four walls, raising the now-vanished roof into the air.

After taking a few more pictures for Ananta to review, I settled down to meditate. I had only to close my eyes for a moment, and quickly a heavy, gentle peace settled all around me, embracing all nature in its quiet bosom. Everything responded in one simple gesture of assent: the virgin sunlight, the rustle of leaves, the rolling hills sloping away to large valleys, the cricket's hum, and the incessant work of ants amid ever-renewed millennial grasses.

As I sank into this receptive repose, a pure and powerful radiation of diamond-hued tendrils of light spread throughout the atmosphere, undulating and weaving, encoiling and upholding, illuminating, nourishing deeply all that they touched. This was not my psychic being, but the Psychic, the soul of the Mother unveiled. I could feel her everywhere, all around, her celestial smile wafting like a fragrance through the succulent air. I might as well as



have been sitting in her room in Pondy on a darshan day, there was no difference. I could only marvel at the grace and protection she had bestowed upon Ananta—imagine, to come to this solitary spot in Greece, all but lost to the tread of time and ebb and flow of civilization, and still to be inundated in her presence.

When I had drunk my fill of the Mother's presence, I arose refreshed and fully energized for an arduous mission: to climb Mt. Likion. Ananta had insisted that I do so, for the mountain belonged to Zeus himself.

Retracing my steps to where I had descended from the bus, I set off at a brisk clip back towards Lycosura and, above that, Likion. The sun was bright already, but not at its peak. I calculated about two hours up, one to explore the summit, and one to come back down—enough to catch the 2 p.m. bus from Lycosura, the last bus of the day returning to Megalopolis.

Things went about as planned, except for the swarm of buzzing gnats that stuck to me in one of the pastures I passed through. They pestered me all the way up. Never mind: having arrived at the summit of Mt. Likion, I was greeted with a spectacular view of the Arcadian hills, arid ranges of mountains that stretched out to the north, while to the south I could see over the plains of Megalopolis. Just below the barren and rocky summit, nestled in a hollow about half the size of a soccer field, lay a flat meadow peopled with a luxurious carpet of wild grass. At one end of the meadow stood a gnarled oak tree, under which I took repose. Zeus's sanctuary, I presumed.

After resting to catch my breath, drink water, and take some photos, I decided to offer a meditation to Zeus, a deity beloved to Ananta but with whom I had no experience. I shut my eyes to concentrate, and soon Zeus was standing right in front of me, tall and of a well-muscled physique. His consciousness was literally a continuous bolt of lightning, a force that was in-



Lycosura, Sanctuary of Zeus on Mt. Likion. Michael experienced a visitation from Zeus while meditating under the tree at the front right. (Photo by Michael Miovic)

deed beautiful and dangerous. I could see why he was called the father of the gods, for here was an invincible strength, an imperious Will that one dare not oppose. Here was a weight and substance that could set sail to the ethereal sunshine of Apollo, a jolt that could strike to the darkest depths of Poseidon. Now I understood vividly why Sri Aurobindo called the overmind "a stable sea of lightnings." He could not have coined a more descriptive phrase. Curious, I inwardly asked Zeus where he wanted me to go next, what was his will for me in Greece? A reply came without hesitation: "Bassai." When? "Tomorrow."

I knew what he was referring to. In one of my books I had read about a temple to Apollo located in the Arcadian hills at Basses, about halfway between Megalopolis and Olympia. I had felt attracted, only I had thought it best to skip the spot so that I would have enough time in Olympia itself.

Taking leave of the imperial Father, I hiked back down the hill, now miraculously relieved of my swarm of buzzing companions; Zeus had evidently struck them down in his sanctuary. I returned to the temple in Lycosura in time to take a few more photos before catching the bus back to Megalopolis.

When I arrived at my hotel at about 5 p.m., I paid for the night and went straight to bed. The bus to Basses left at 8 p.m., but I didn't think I would have the energy to make it. Every muscle in my body ached from the climb; I wasn't in shape. The bed

felt so good! I awoke at 7:30 p.m. with a jolt, as though run through by a bolt of lightning. Without thinking, I grabbed my bags and raced out the front door, leaving the baffled manager with easy money in his hands. He shrugged and smiled—now he could rent the same room twice in one night. I made it to the bus station just in time for the 8 p.m. bus to Andritsenia, slept the night there in another hotel, and the next morning took the taxi to Apollo's temple at nearby Basses.

The temple was magnificent, one of the best preserved major temples in Greece, and it was in the process of a thorough renovation. The temple was covered with a huge tent to protect the workers from the sun, but this couldn't block the inner sun of Apollo. I met him again there, resplendent as ever, this time in his aspect of the illuminator of social order who upholds the progress of human civilization.

Here I was reminded of Sri Aurobindo's hexameters about Apollo and Athena in "The Book of the Gods" in the *Ilion*. Amal Kiran gives a lucid gloss of these verses by Sri Aurobindo about Greece, in which he explains that as Sri Aurobindo sees the event, the fall of Troy represented the transition from an early intuitive consciousness to the rule of reason. The former stage of evolution, subtended in part by Apollo, was in many ways swifter, brighter, and more generative of great flashes of inspiration such as we see in the poetry of Homer, but it ultimately lacked a stable base of intellectual and vital development in humanity at large, which remained prone to ignorant superstitions and primitive vital impulses. Thus an intervening age of reason was needed in order to prepare the path for a wider and more permanent operation of the suprarational consciousness that would not become deformed by defects of the lower nature.

Sri Aurobindo clarifies that it is not Apollo who is the god of reason and intellect (a misperception popularized by Nietzsche in his famous opposition of the

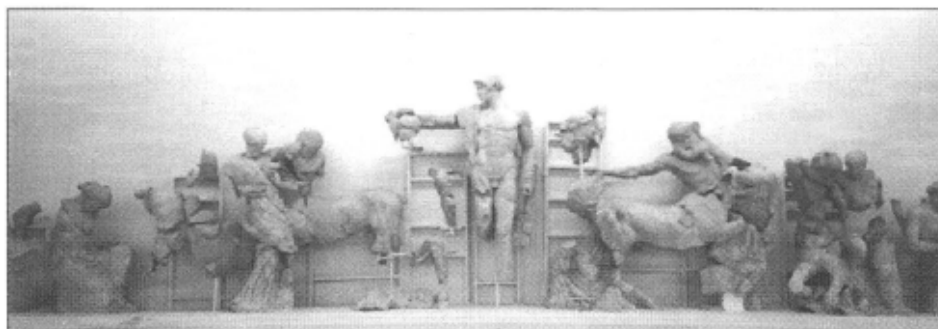


Dionysian and Apollonian temperaments), but rather Athena in her wisdom and clear light of the thinking mind who holds that office. Her influence produced its first and perhaps finest flower during the age of Pericles, but it continues to this

day. For really it is just in the last century that we are beginning to achieve on a world-wide scale that which was pioneered in Athens: a society in which democracy is the norm, legal systems are based on due process, the arts are widely diffused and available to all classes, and the thinking mind has taken its seat at the head of all science and philosophical inquiry. However, as Sri Aurobindo hints, this wide base now established, we are ready to return to the illuminations of Apollo, to an age of sheer spiritual vision and revelation.

From Basses I proceeded by bus to Olympia that same afternoon. Olympia is a little world unto itself that I will not describe for the sake of brevity, except for two details which, for me, captured the quintessence of the ancient Greek spirit. One was the track on which the sprints were held: it is broad and its two long sides bow out noticeably in the middle, so that it is a sort of rectangle with curved sides. I was intrigued by this design, for obviously it was intentional. Why not build a perfect rectangle? As I circumambulated the track, I realized that the ancient architects had done this because it gives a feeling of breadth and elevation. As you look down the long axis of the track, the very earth seems to push upward. One has the sense of walking in a heightened space, an arena on display not just for humans, but for the gods themselves. Such a vision of physical exercise—by comparison, our modern era has completely lost the sense of what sport is about, and who might be the real Witness.

The other sublimity was the larger-



Pediment from the Temple of Zeus, Olympia. Apollo descending to fight the forces of darkness and with his immortal gaze upholding the evolution of consciousness. (Photo by Michael Miovic)

than-life-sized sculpture of Apollo that once adorned the southern capital of the Temple of Zeus. In the center stands Apollo, striding forward and stepping down, as if descending into earth-space from a higher plane. His head is turned to the right, his right arm outstretched to fend off a tide of strife and struggle. All around him, on both sides, a writhing sea of bodies are encoiled in mortal combat. On the far extremes, monsters and titans surge forward, while heroes gathered around the feet of Apollo fight to repel them. In the center of the maelstrom, calm and untouched by the fray, the great god of Light stays the forces of darkness and, by his high presence, maintains the order of civilization. It is a revelatory composition, one that carries home a luminously visioned spiritual truth.

On the bus from Olympia back to Athens, I finally finished the reading Ananta had assigned me: three plays by Aristophanes and Plato's *Symposium*. The latter is a consummate description of a dinner party in which the guests, many of them luminaries of Athens, debate the nature of love. Aristophanes, the famous comedian, has the last laugh on the subject, but it is the great Socrates who has the last word.

Ananta thinks he may have been Aristophanes in a previous life, and after reading up on Aristophanes, I had no reason to doubt this. There is a definite similarity in character, a wit, a fabulous light-hearted inventiveness tinged with penetrating insight, at times outrageous entertainment, that I have come to know and love in this life, too. Also still a conservative at heart and a bit of the upper-class snob. But no one entertained the Mother

like Ananta, with his burlesque comedy routines on August 15th and his stints as Santa Claus on Christmas. "Ananta," she used to say, "no one can make me laugh like you."

From Athens I called Ananta to give him an up-

date. "Well, Mr. Aristophanes," I said jovially, "now I get it!"

"Good, it's about time!" he replied indignantly. "Sometimes your education does leave something to be desired. But never mind, never mind. The important thing is: have you met Zeus?"

"Absolutely, and my God, what power."

"And beauty, Michael, don't forget the beauty . . . And now? What's next?"

"Delos," I answered majestically, "the birthplace of Apollo."

"And Artemis," he corrected me with his broad Boston Brahmin *a's*, rectifying both my mythology and my pronunciation. "Artemis, I love her, she's the protector of children—and you know, I am a child. But she's a huntress, carries a great silver bow . . . oh, now where are you staying?"

I was half-way into an explanation when the phone card ran out; there hadn't been much time on it to begin with.

The following morning I caught a ferry to Mykonos, which lies right next to Delos, only half an hour away by water taxi. In antiquity Delos was a thriving city, for some time the seat of the treasury for the Aegean league organized by Pericles, while Mykonos was considered virtually uninhabitable. Today the situation is reversed: Mykonos is a perennial tourist spot (it has all those whitewashed houses with blue trim that one sees on post cards), while Delos is an uninhabited pile of rocks and ruins.

Just before sunset, I went to a nearly empty beach to immerse myself in Poseidon in preparation for the pilgrimage to Delos the next day. The water was crystal-



line and dyed all shades of purple and amber by the setting sun; the pebbles on the beach seemed imbued with an intricate and ornate consciousness of their own, an ancient feeling.

Later that night, when I lay down in my bed in my little rented room, I felt a blazing solar force hovering somewhere out there, across the channel, only a few miles away on darkened Delos. Suddenly it leaped across the murky waters and my whole body was afire with Apollo.



Bust of Apollo, the illuminator of social order, from the Temple of Zeus at Olympia. (Photo by Michael Miovic)

In the morning I caught the local ferry to Delos. It was an impressive place: low, angular, jagged, covered with extremely well-preserved ruins of an ancient city. Some of the houses had water wells that still held stagnant green water.

I hiked to the top of the island's rugged peak [see photo on p. 11], passing by the house of Cleopatra and a temple to Isis, both testaments to Egyptian influence. Several of the homes still had well preserved mosaics on the walls and floors. Eavesdropping on various groups of tourists on a guided tour, I learned that in the last two centuries B.C., the island was sacked twice, once by pirates and later by

Romans, and after that it was never again inhabited. What confused me about Delos, however, was Artemis. What did she have to do with the place? Apollo was evident, his energy abounded, burning, solar, masculine. There was no room for this elusive and reclusive moon goddess in the midst of such heat and light. My own intuition was that her birthplace was actually the island right across the strait from Delos, only a half mile away. That island was much softer, with rounded feminine hills, and untouched, which would be more in keeping with the spirit of the virgin huntress.

According to legend, Artemis lives in the company of wild animals and strikes dead any mortal man who looks upon her with desire. Ananta has often told me a magical story of how he once met Artemis and was protected from a hostile force by one of her guard dogs. I had no such blessing on this visit, but recently it came to me that she represents mastery over the desire-nature (the wild animals), which she rules by virtue of her complete chastity. My mission to Delos completed, that evening I took the ferry back to Athens, six hours' journey over the aquamarine-blue Aegean. The last thing I saw before I boarded the boat was a resplendent white swan gliding slowly past me over the mirror-still waters of Mykonos's small harbor. The bird was so brilliant in the blazing sunlight that it seemed an apparition from another world. I wanted to take a photograph of it, but decided instead to save my one remaining photo for later. Too bad, a missed inspiration, for I later learned that the swan is a symbol of Apollo.

On my last day in Greece, I made a quick trip to the National Museum in Athens to pay homage to Poseidon before proceeding to the airport. They have a marvelous bronze statue of him there, rather small—maybe four feet tall—and in a slightly preclassical style, but the work has a real consciousness to it. I offered a prayer and a promise to Poseidon, to him whose waters cleanse us of impurities and deliver us to the wideness of the gods. He heard.

At the airport, while waiting to board,

I gathered together all my experiences in Greece and inwardly held them up in gratitude before Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. My trip had been a trial at times, but in the end a treasure beyond my dreams. It would take me many months to unpack the full spiritual significance of all that had touched me and inwardly transpired, but I already knew that I had received a tremendous blessing. I was surprised at how much I had received in such a short time.

Yet the greatest surprise was the instant reply to my offering, for I had given it in thanks, not as a supplication: the entire imperial family came forth, all 12 of the mighty immortals. Each god in turn manifested in the sacred silent altar of my heart, and then all in unison rotating in a wheel of



Ananta expounding on Greek philosophy, i.e. Alexander tells Darius II to take a hike. (Photo by Michael Miovic)

light, as if they were petals of a divine flower, all together forming a living yantra of the Mother's symbol. In one harmony they revealed themselves inwardly in my being, a crowning consummation of my voyage to Greece—Zeus, Hera, Poseidon, Apollo, Dionysus, Artemis, Athena, Demeter, Hades, Hermes, Aphrodite, and Pan.

Thus it was that I went to Greece and Ananta's ardent prayers for me were fulfilled.

And what became of Ananta? He's still around, doing yoga; been to Palenque twice again, and of course he's always plotting his return to Pondy. The Indian government keeps denying his applications for an entry visa, for unclear reasons, and so he remains like the wanderer Odysseus, cast off from his beloved island home and tossed hither and yon by the will of the gods. What inner sacrifice shall it



take to win his return, and who is it who has decreed this fate? Only the gods know, only they with the sleepless eyes—they, and of course, their infinite Mother.

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Towards the great turning point

by Devan Nair

Devan was an invited speaker at AUM 2000 and at AUM 2001, but for the latter had to cancel due to illness. Below is reprinted part of a talk given by Devan at AUM 1991 that was published in whole in two parts in the Summer/Fall and the Winter 1991 issues of Collaboration.

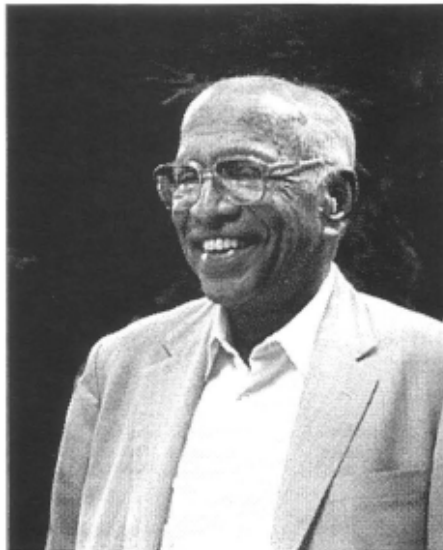
What were the turning points that led me to the discovery of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother? We proceed through contradictions, often very painful ones—contradictions that make us swing wildly between extremes, between exclusive sky or exclusive earth until, at last, we find ourselves suddenly placed before Something Else, which at once includes both sky and earth, height and abyss. What is up above also shines perfectly right down below.

The poetry and literature I read as a young man, in particular my readings in the great Eastern traditions, made me a fascinated votary of the utter Beyond. Heaven cancelled earth, which somehow we have to escape from. Life and the world were a disgusting hell. All the great religions were at least agreed on one thing: salvation was a post-mortem affair.

Then came the Second World War, and the Japanese military occupation of Malaya and Singapore. And the whole picture changed.

Incredible tortures and massacres, severed human heads stuck on poles at

street corners; arson, rapine, and carnage everywhere. For instance, with several others I was forced, at bayonet-point, to watch as Japanese soldiers covered the head and trunk of a man with a jute rice sack soaked in kerosene, set him aflame, and watch him writhe to death on the ground in terrible, voiceless agony. Believers and unbelievers, sinners and saints, men, women, children, and suckling babes, were all alike grist for the satanic mills of torture and death. Where was God then? Where the All-Merciful and Compassionate One, the Friend of Creatures? And



Devan Nair at AUM 1998. (Photo by Dave Hutchinson)

where the blissful Beyond? Only the communists in the anti-Japanese Resistance Army were fighting back.

A cold, ferocious anger gripped my entire being, down to my very cells, which began to throb with an unrelenting hatred of tyranny and oppression. To blazing, bloody Hell with God and the Great Beyond! My revolutionary years began, and continued into the British reoccupation after the Allied victory over the fascist powers. This time the slogan was "Down with imperialism and colonialism." I became a member of a clandestine organization called "The Anti-British League." Once the hated colonialists were driven out, my fellow revolutionaries and I would set up a new Jerusalem in our free and independent

nation. Alas, all the new Jerusalems in all the continents continue to remain like the old Jerusalem, still marked by strife, division, bigotry, and cruelty.

Naturally, when the British discovered what I and my kind were up to, they locked us up. Thus began a total of five years, in two separate spells, as a political prisoner. When I was arrested the second time, in October 1956, I had become painfully aware that revolutionary ideals can also be betrayed by the revolutionaries themselves—for every man-made revolution is ultimately betrayed. But the most terrifying discovery was that the Devil was not only without. He was also very comfortably housed within oneself. In fact, not just one Devil, but several devils. For there are mental devils, vital devils, and physical devils right down to the cells of one's body.

How often do we not wallow in self-pity, lamenting our current misfortunes, only to realize tomorrow or the day after that these mishaps had been rudely knocking at the doors of new opportunities and startling awakenings? There are blessed moments when we become aware that a divine prankster has all along been at work, for all the circumstances of life seem to link up in a silent conspiracy, as it were, to lead us to a seminal turning point which compels us up the ladder of consciousness, an up that sometimes takes the form of a plunge deep within, to find there what was missing all along in the noisy welter of confusion in which we live—a living, burning flame.

That second imprisonment, over a period of 31 months, was a dreadful psychological ordeal, made bearable only by an undreamed-of prison visitor, one I had never heard of before. Sri Aurobindo visited me in my cell, in the shape of an edition of *The Life Divine*. I had come across his name in the footnote of a book I was allowed to read. A family friend obliged by procuring a copy of the book from the university library. It was a mind-blowing experience, and God knows that the human mind can certainly do with a great deal of blowing. As I once said elsewhere, invisible to my prison warders, magical doors



and windows flew wide open in that narrow prison cell, and something in me soared out and up on wings of fire. Walls were toppled, gulfs were bridged, and heights and abysses became one in the incredibly calm, flaming immensity that was Sri Aurobindo. And all this in language of unparalleled magnificence, in sentences that breathe royalty in every word.

At last I began to ask the right questions, which we seldom do. "Is it not possible," Sri Aurobindo gently suggested, "that the soul itself—not the outward mind, but the spirit within—has accepted and chosen these things as part of its development in order to get through the necessary experience at a rapid rate, to hew through even at the risk or the cost of much damage to the outward life and the body? To the growing soul, to the spirit within us, may not difficulties, obstacles, attacks be a means of growth, added strength, enlarged experience, training for spiritual victory?" And he calmly asserted: "God's negations are as useful to us as His affirmations."

Sri Aurobindo does not furnish us with a road map of yoga showing escape routes from life. On the contrary, he introduces one to the greatest revolution in earth-history—a sweeping, radical sedition against the entire existing natural order of things. His own words were: "It is not a revolt against the British government, which anyone can easily do. It is, in fact, a revolt against the whole universal Nature."

What happened in that prison cell was a crucial personal turning point, one that I am still negotiating today. *The Life Divine* provided lightning flashes of an incredible illumination. But there remained a stubborn egoism of the intellect, which refused to disappear. The arrogant intellectual in me prided himself on his intellectual prowess. My intellect failed to see the book was, fundamentally, much more than a massive intellectual feat, which it also was. For it is possible to train the mind to be a limpid instrument of the Spirit. Above all, I failed to see, at that stage, that *The Life Divine* was a recordation, in terms intelligible to the human intellect of a Great

Experience. "I wrote *The Life Divine*," said Sri Aurobindo, "to help people silence their minds."

However, at my absurdly superficial intellectual level, it was still largely a case of one great intellectual appreciating another. But the time would come when the Mother would, in her infallible way, knock the great intellect silly. Oh, that incident must have been occasion for huge laughter in Heaven, for it was high comedy.

In 1964, I visited the Sri Aurobindo Ashram for the first time. I had little patience in those days with absurd Hindus falling over each other to touch the feet of some holy man. I remember that once in Calcutta I went to call on an illustrious swami of the Ramakrishna Mission, the late Swami Nikhilananda, whose writings I admired. Hundreds of Indians were waiting in line for his darshan, as they call it, and to reverently touch his feet. Not the great Devan Nair, who had strutted to the place in a three-piece suit, and was allowed to jump the queue. If I may stretch a simile, it was rather like His Holiness the Pope making a courtesy call on His Holiness the Dalai Lama. The swami received me, took my proffered hand, and shook it. I congratulated him on his latest book, one on Vivekananda. But I was slightly discomfited by his smile of greeting. It was a mysterious smile. I wasn't quite sure whether he was smiling with me, or at me.

Arriving in Pondicherry, they arranged for me to meet the Mother. I inquired about the formalities, and was told that I could, if I liked, offer her some flowers. That struck me as a very gentlemanly thing to do. So I asked for some flowers to offer.

It was about ten in the morning when I found myself part of a line of about 20-odd people waiting in front of the Mother's room. I was slightly irritated because nobody this time thought of inviting the Pope to jump the queue. However, I had already rehearsed in my mind what I would do when introduced to the Mother. I would present her the flowers, shake her hand, and say: "Good work, Mother. Congratulations!" Or something to that effect.

To this day I cannot explain what real-

ly happened when I stood in front of that frail old woman, seated humped in her chair. "Poor old lady," was my first gentlemanly thought. Then my eyes fell on an extraordinarily radiant face, with a vibrant, golden glow. Words are totally, hopelessly inadequate, to describe what happened next. I will only say this. I presented the flowers, which she took, and suddenly found myself looking into a pair of the most incredible eyes I had ever seen. There followed a convulsive inner and outer movement. And suddenly, inexplicably, I found myself on my knees, with my head on her lap. I felt a soft and gentle hand on the crown of my head. I got to my feet in a daze. Not a word was exchanged. She gave me a red rose, which I took, and left the room. Somehow, I walked back to the guest house, and lay on my bed. I don't remember anything else, for I woke up only at about seven in the evening.

It was a formidable inner turning point. The intellect was humbled. The emperor realized that he was quite naked. He had no clothes, and he occupied a quaking, collapsible throne. For the first time, I began to appreciate what the poet Shelley was driving at in his powerful poem, "Ozymandias of Egypt." You may like to hear it.

Ozymandias of Egypt

I met a traveller from an antique land
Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of
stone
Stand in the desert, Near them on the
sand,
Half sunk, a shatter'd visage lies, whose
frown
And wrinkled lip and sneer of cold
command
Tell that its sculptor well those passions
read
Which yet survive, stamp'd on these
lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them and the heart
that fed;
And on the pedestal these words appear:
"My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and
despair!"



Nothing beside remains. Round the
decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and
bare,
The lone and level sands stretch far
away.

Today, an even more colossal wreck is in the making—the modern world of science and technology. The Ozymandias of the mind are already, visibly, beginning to reel on shaky pedestals.

There were other turning points, of which it would be even more difficult to speak. Perhaps it is wrong to speak at all. For words are often counterfeit coins, unacceptable as legal tender in the super-market of the Spirit. But the Mother's power continued to work in me.

Devan Nair was born on 5 August 1923 on a rubber plantation in Malaysia. His father was an accounts clerk in the plantation. Devan completed his schooling in the former British colony of Singapore and became a trained teacher. He then joined the revolutionary Anti-British League. His anticolonial activities led to his arrest and detention without trial by the British colonial government. Devan said, "They regarded me as a dangerous person. They were not wrong." He spent a total of five years in British prisons, in two separate spells. After his release, he married and had children. He became president of several union groups, and later the president of Singapore for four years. What has remained constant in his life is that he always has been a fighter for independence and freedom. Now he is working for a New Creation on earth.—Catherine Blackburn



Seyril Schochen flashes her heavenly smile at AUM 1998. (Photo by Lynda Lester)

Seyril Schochen: Matrimandir worker, playwright, global networker

by Rod Hemsell

Seyril Schochen, though timeless and ageless in a mysterious way, is certainly an "elder sadhaka," and the name recently bestowed on her—White Flower—by a Native American shaman during a healing ceremony in the Baca seems most appropriate. These days it is not unusual for her to reminisce about the past, when chatting with visitors and friends at Savitri House in the Baca, Crestone, Colorado, where she has lived since establishing the Sri Aurobindo Learning Center here in 1986. From such occasions, from her writings, and from several investigative attempts to (painfully but persistently) extract the tale, we can begin to piece together the "facts."

Seyril likes to tell the story of her first venture from New York City to visit the Ashram and meet the Mother, which she tells with particular emphasis on its ironic denouement for her personal life. She says that it was not easy to convince her husband that he should allow her to make the trip and fulfill her longing to meet

Mother. One event that helped, however, was a visit to their Sri Aurobindo Circle by Norman Dowsett, who had come to New York for a conference on Sri Aurobindo. Her husband and Norman discovered an affinity from WWII Air Force days and developed a trust. But when Seyril eventually left for Pondicherry, it was with a three-month visa, a return ticket, and the understanding that she would be returning in three months.

When she met the Mother shortly after her arrival at Golconde, she was told by Mother that "she would be there for a long while." Seyril tells this anecdote with a childlike gleam of wonder and surprise, as if her fate had been sealed at that moment in spite of everything.

After living at Golconde for nearly three years, Seyril moved to Auroville, where she lived and worked at the Matrimandir and gathered the "morning watch" stories that she also loves to recount. A nice autobiographical piece that she wrote for an early issue of *Collaboration* after returning to the USA provides a glimpse into that richly magical, most fondly remembered period of her life:

"We were building our Mother's 'House of the Spirit and the New Creation' and it was truly the Eternal's wonder-dance. Awaking at dawn of a concreting day in Matrimandir Workers Camp, we would hurry to dress in our canvas dancing shoes and shorts—or better, cement-stained jeans—gulp porridge in Unity Kitchen, and pirouette hastily to the dancing ground in answer to the call of our dance-master, the already grinding cement mixer. No mistaking it. There was a rhythm of beauty to the most menial movements of the dance."

But nothing could be menial in our service to the Divine as we joined his dance of wonders. The passing from hand to hand of chetties containing heavy cement mix had to be rhythmic, received with grace and tossed on as gracefully or we'd be tossed out of the ascending line . . . to wait like wallflowers huddling against a bit of scaffolding for our next chance to rejoin the dance. Before our smarting eyes and under our cement-stiffened hands, the



House of the New Creation was slowly rising. In the process of our joyous service, the Eternal Thaumaturge was transforming our own sand and pebble mix nature into a 'matter lit by spirit's glow . . .'"

In answer to the question that inspired her article, "Is there life after Auroville?", she concluded: "I look out of my Savitri House study window at the light dancing on the snow-capped Sangre de Cristo mountains. In the eternal's wonder-dance of splendors sparkles the answer. I feel sure, as a sudden rush of gratitude fills my heart."

After seven years in Auroville ("A crossing of thresholds, a passing of their guardians' challenges in order to enter a new life in a newer world"), including helping Eleanor Lovett and Bill Sullivan start to build the Verite community, Seyril returned to New York in 1979. Living in Manhattan for awhile, she renewed connections with Glenn Olds and Hanne and Maurice Strong of the United Nations, and with other old friends at Matagiri, and soon moved to Boulder, along with Joe and Muriel Spanier.

During this period of "re-entry," Seyril resumed research on Margaret Woodrow Wilson, begun long before when living as a playwright and drama professor with her husband in New York, and wrote the play *Nishta*. It was first performed in a reading workshop with the film maker William Greaves at the University of World Peace in Portland in 1985, then by the Baca community at Colorado College in Crestone in 1988, and again recently in Auroville's Sri Aurobindo Memorial Auditorium. Seyril moved to the Baca—a "refuge for the wisdom traditions of the world and for experiments in sustainable living"—initiated by Hanne and Maurice Strong in southern Colorado, and founded the Sri Aurobindo Learning Center (SALC) there in 1986.

At Savitri House, Seyril maintains a library and book distribution center for the works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. She has sponsored the annual Global Village Networking Conference for more than 10 years, bringing together members of the Mother's family year after



The altar in the Savitri Solar Dome. (Photo courtesy Sri Aurobindo Learning Center)

year, along with a host of inspiring speakers and performers, to fulfill the mission of the SALC : to be "an Indo-American collaborative center for educational, scientific, cultural, and spiritual researches for 'a living embodiment of an actual human unity' and a liaison for Auroville in America." This conference is generally held during the week of 15 August and includes a darshan celebration.

Devan Nair was a featured speaker for several years in the early nineties, where some of his most eloquent and luminous talks were given. John Robert Cornell was also a frequent visitor to the conference, and there were many others from areas such as education, healing, architecture, the environment, and economics (for the future of course), as well as performers, dancers, and musicians who made offerings to the annual gathering and became dear friends in the process.

One of Seyril's first projects at SALC was the production of the 30-minute documentary art video, *Matrimandir: House of the New Creation Rising in Auroville, India*. With visiting Aurovilians and other workshop participants, Seyril's other primary goal of creating "new consciousness theater" based on *Savitri* has resulted in several productions of her plays, often in conjunction with the Global Village Conferences, such as *The Immortal Fire*, *Our Mother of Radiances*, and *Savitri: Woman of the Future*, as well as numerous dramatic adaptations of *Savitri*.

With the construction of Savitri Solar Dome next to Savitri House in 1990, the

center has hosted regular Savitri Immersion workshops, which began in 1994 with an intensive study of *Savitri* and *Mother's Agenda* by Rod Hemsell and Luc Venet. These workshops have continued annually, and a number of inspiring dance-drama productions based directly on *Savitri* have emerged from these workshops, bringing this transformational poetry to a larger audience of local community members and visitors from around the world. In 1999 the AUM conference was co-sponsored by SALC and Auroville International and focused on *Savitri*, with performances by Paolo Perela, and a drama troupe from Toronto led by Renu Ray.

Seyril's work at Savitri House, in the beautiful and majestic environment of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, has helped to ground the Mother's work in America in a profoundly inspiring way, and it has indeed provided a rejuvenating refuge for many visiting Aurovilians, for many who are ex-Aurovilians, and occasionally for Aurovilians to be—looking for home. The current focus of the center continues to be the annual summer programs and also the on-going construction of a dormitory/conference center next to the Savitri Solar Dome.

Rod Hemsell is an educator in Crestone, Colorado. He organized the AUM 1999, and for many years was a resident of Auroville. He may be reached at rodhemsell@yahoo.com.

Dr. Haridas Chaudhuri and divine existence

by Joseph Kent

"It is the Divine Love that has come down into this world to help and save—the Love flowing out from the Divine to all beings here who are ready to receive it."

—Sri Aurobindo

Fifty years ago in the spring of 1951, a light arrived in San Francisco: Dr. Haridas Chaudhuri. He had come to America from India at the invitation of the esteemed scholar Profes-



sor Frederic Spiegelberg and on the nomination of the great “seer of Pondicherry,” Sri Aurobindo.

Dr. Spiegelberg had been professor of Indian thought at Stanford University, and because of his reputation in the field was selected by Mr. Louis Gainsborough of the Login Corporation to head the new American Academy of Asian Studies. Mr. Gainsborough began the graduate institution because he felt the need to bridge the gulf between East and West—to enhance intercultural communication and to stimulate trade with the East.

Dr. Chaudhuri accepted Dr. Spiegelberg’s invitation to join the academy’s distinguished faculty as professor of comparative philosophy and religion: “I immediately felt it was the call of destiny. My entire life appeared to me in a flash and revealed its meaning.”

Just two months after his recommendation of Dr. Chaudhuri, Sri Aurobindo passed on in December 1950.

“Aurobindo is the guiding spirit of this earth and the prophet of our age,” Dr. Spiegelberg wrote in a letter to Dr. Chaudhuri. “I believe that the last most important contribution that Sri Aurobindo made before passing was to send you here.”

Dr. Chaudhuri was probably the foremost Aurobindonian scholar in America, and one of the greatest exponents of Integral Yoga. During his career he worked toward the emergence of a new consciousness and spiritual energy on earth for the eventual manifestation of a more evolved and enlightened existence—a divine existence and integrated lifestyle. With the assistance of his wife Bina, and friends, he founded two flourishing institutions in San Francisco: the Cultural Integration Fellowship in 1951 and the California Institute of Integral Studies (formerly the California Institute of Asian Studies) in 1968.

In 2001 the Cultural Integration Fellowship celebrated its 50th anniversary while looking forward to a new century and pondering the spiritual future. And the California Institute of Integral Studies is now in its 34th year as a world-renowned graduate school.



Dr. Haridas Chaudhuri founded two flourishing institutions. (Photo courtesy Bina Chaudhuri)

The Cultural Integration Fellowship holds the distinction of being the first such ashram of its kind in America. It was founded to stimulate intercultural friendship and understanding, and to dispel any false notions or misunderstandings between the cultures of America and Asia. The three fundamental tenets of the Fellowship are nonsectarian: “Universal Religion, Creative Freedom, and Cultural Harmony.” In a stately building at the corner of Fulton Street and 3rd Avenue just across from beautiful Golden Gate Park, Cultural Integration Fellowship, a non-profit cultural and educational organization, flourished all through the 1950s and 1960s and into the 1970s under the leadership of Dr. and Mrs. Chaudhuri.

After Dr. Chaudhuri’s untimely passing in 1975, Mrs. Chaudhuri assumed the presidency of Cultural Integration Fellowship, then focused on the work and process of gaining full accreditation at the California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS). Today CIIS is an accredited institution of higher learning and research that strives to embody spirit, intellect, and wisdom in service to individuals, communities, and the earth.

Early influences and aspiration

Haridas Chaudhuri was born in Shyamagram, East Bengal, in May 1913. He was orphaned at an early age, but was reared by his relatives in a pleasant and nurturing environment. Hari was a sensitive and precocious child and an earnest student who excelled in his studies.

It is interesting to note that his initial inspiration came from the writings of Vivekananda and Sri Ramakrishna, both Bengali—as was Hari. Bengal is known for its brilliant scholars. Later, he discovered Sri Aurobindo.

As a child and adolescent, Hari had a series of psychic and spiritual experiences that impelled him inward. He started to tune into his inner states and became interested in his interior life.

At age 14 when he was in high school, he began having some spiritual aspiration. And on reading Swami Vivekananda’s *Jnana Yoga*, he was deeply moved and inspired. He had an exhilarating revelatory experience of “oneness with Being” that changed his whole perspective.

Encounter in Pondicherry

Then a friend gave him a little book from the library. It was titled *The Mother* by Sri Aurobindo. On reading this book, Haridas had another significant experience. He felt in touch with a great spiritual mind—a master mind. Sri Aurobindo instantly became his guru and teacher.

During his college years, it was rational thinking that took the foreground. But through all this Haridas felt an inward sense of purpose, an unwavering sense of destiny. He felt he would come to the West, and he designed his course of studies with that in mind, focusing on subjects useful for this purpose—both Eastern and Western philosophy.

Haridas was a brilliant scholar, and on receiving his master’s degree in 1936 from the University of Calcutta (standing first in Class I), he was awarded the gold and silver medals for highest scholastic achievement. He was awarded his doctorate from the same university for his brilliant doctoral dissertation, “Integral Idealism”—



which was, in his own words, “an interpretation and evaluation of the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo in the light of dominant thought systems of India and the West.”

Later, as a professor at a college in Bengal, Haridas wrote to Sri Aurobindo in Pondicherry and told him about his long-time interest in integral philosophy. But he also wrote that he lacked faith in both religion and mysticism.

“I don’t believe in *that* [religion and mysticism]. I believe in two things. One is free independent, critical thinking—thinking things through. The other is self-discipline and creativity.”

Sri Aurobindo wrote back inviting Haridas to come to Pondicherry.

At the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Haridas attended silent meditation conducted by the Mother. He bathed in the charged silence. (At this time Sri Aurobindo resided in his quarters on the upper level of the Ashram.) This experience brought into Haridas’s life a new spiritual light, a true glimpse into the meaning of meditation. From then on, he was the first to arrive at meditation and the last to leave. And as a professor with tenure at leading colleges of India, he would take his vacations in Pondicherry.

Haridas visited the Ashram several times. He met Sri Aurobindo only once, at a darshan, since Sri Aurobindo was then in seclusion. But Haridas communed with Sri Aurobindo through letters, and this contributed to Haridas’s development and spiritual growth.

Haridas now had a definite sense of his role in the evolutionary spiritual work to be done. From 1937 to March 1951, he taught philosophy, religion, and psychology at different colleges in Bengal.

Call of destiny

Dr. Spiegelberg had visited Pondicherry and experienced Sri Aurobindo’s

darshan, which changed his life. He had also been so deeply impressed with the writings of Sri Aurobindo that he wrote, asking Sri Aurobindo to suggest a reliable and authoritative exponent of the integral perspective and someone also conversant with Western philosophy.

When Haridas was suggested, Sri Aurobindo said “Yes, of course.” Sri Aurobindo saw Haridas Chaudhuri, who was then chairman of the Department of Philosophy at Krishnagar College in West Bengal, as the best man in India for the post.

Thus, Haridas was with the American Academy of Asian Studies almost from its inception. He was later joined by other

studies. People like Gary Snyder, Michael McClure, Michael Murphy, Philip Whalen, and Allen Ginsberg were uplifted and inspired by the discussions and spiritual contagion of vision and events. They also attended the academy’s classes.

Haridas Chaudhuri was instrumental in planting the seeds for the eventual manifestation of a new holistic vision of integral consciousness and global awareness. With skilled simplicity, he gave a spiritual perspective to discussions. His integral evolutionary dimension and Indian influence had profound resonances, and lasting repercussions.

Later, at the newly founded California

Institute of Asian Studies, Haridas served as a spiritual educator as well as administrator. He was a luminous and inspiring teacher, a skilled clarifier and crystallizer of the deepest profundities. He and his resourceful and congenial wife Bina were pioneers in the integral spiritual work of this evolutionary stream in America.

Herald of Integralism

Dr. Haridas Chaudhuri was a true seer, grounded in authentic spiritual experience. He excelled as a powerfully independent thinker in his own right. He was a professional philosopher of original creativity, and one of the front-ranking mystics of the world.

Haridas’s classes sparkled with great ideas, epiphanies, and mini-satiries. Those attending would hear him say things like: “Reason in its highest form is the sworn enemy of all fixed ideas and frozen dogmas . . . The secret of creativity is to have a holistic vision of reality . . . Spirit or soul is superconscious energy . . . Vast erudition empty of spiritual illumination is not the goal of meditation . . . Transformation is the essence of the supramental manifestation.”

Haridas’s classes quickened with such creative expressions, along with col-



Dr. Haridas Chaudhuri, lecturing at the Cultural Integration Fellowship, with bust of Sri Aurobindo behind him. (Photo courtesy Bina Chaudhuri)

Eastern scholars, most notably Professor Alan Watts, who became Dean Alan Watts, and scholars from Tibet, Japan, and India. Dr. Judith Tyberg, an integral scholar and author of *The Language of the Gods*, who later founded the East-West Cultural Center in Los Angeles, had joined Spiegelberg earlier at the Academy.

Creative career in America

During the early years (1950s) of the American Academy of Asian Studies, it attracted people who were inspired by the stimulating colloquium every Friday evening, conducted by Haridas Chaudhuri, Frederic Spiegelberg, and Alan Watts, and the appeal of Eastern interests and



orful and humorous parables and fascinating anecdotes. He was a rare combination of capacities and gifts in the service of the Divine.

Divine existence

Haridas Chaudhuri's mission was to make possible the manifestation of psychospiritual potentialities during a time of emerging global awareness—to help usher in an integral consciousness that is struggling to be born. He worked for the eventual manifestation of a more evolved existence in the material world.

Haridas Chaudhuri's seminal influence is known not only in the Bay Area and California, but also internationally through his articles and scholarship, books, and taped talks, which clarify concepts of Integral Yoga and Integral Philosophy and shed light on psychological quandaries and the problems of living.

Haridas saw the supermind not just as the profoundest spiritual potential of humanity, but also as the dynamis of the "evolutionary impetus of Nature," which is moving and being guided to a "new breakthrough in terrestrial evolution." As he put it, "Just as the fragmentary self-consciousness of the human mind one day evolved out of the matrix of animal consciousness, so the integral consciousness of the supermind looms large in the offing as the next emergent value in store for human evolution."

Haridas always stressed the ever-present potential for the secret awakening of the Spirit in aspiring individuals through grace, which can happen at anytime under ripe conditions. We can advance spiritually as human beings into integral human beings and divine beings by realizing this potential.

Haridas embraced the world as the joyous expression of a divine outpouring. Despite appearances and the problems of living, he affirmed that "evolution is a spontaneous unfoldment of the creative urge of Being." He had the insight into the divine ontology and ultimate purpose or *telos* of the cosmos—the life divine.

Dr. Haridas Chaudhuri assured us that life in the world can be the joyous delight

or ananda of an evolutionary unfoldment of a divine existence.

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Remembering Jyotipriya

by Anie Nunnally



Jyotipriya, "Lover of Light," in 1981. (Photo courtesy East-West Cultural Center)

Dr. Judith M. Tyberg, named Jyotipriya, "Lover of Light," by Sri Aurobindo, was born at the Theosophical Society in Point Loma, California on 16 May 1902, 100 years ago. Her parents were members and residents of the society. Young Judith was given over to the spiritual life of the community from infancy and was trained and schooled there. She showed a scholarly bent and an opening to Eastern thought quite early on. At the tender age of 13 she was known as "the little philosopher," as she was already holding classes in meta-

physics.

Jyotipriya set out on a journey to India in 1947 to discover and unlock the secret of the Vedas. She felt that there was more to be known about the Vedas than was being taught, and understood that if this secret could be discovered it would lead humanity to the knowledge of the next step in its spiritual evolution. She intuited this without ever having read Sri Aurobindo, though she had read and absorbed the great literature on religious and metaphysical practices both Eastern and Western.

While studying at Benares Hindu University on a three-year scholarship, she met Professor Arabinda Basu. Professor Basu gave her a copy of Sri Aurobindo's book, *The Secret of the Veda*, and after that reading she knew she had to meet Him.

After writing to Sri Aurobindo for permission to come to the ashram, she waited and waited to receive an answer. Suddenly one night outside the window of her room she began to experience the intense, intoxicating fragrance of the jasmine flower where there was no jasmine in sight. She mentioned this experience to Professor Basu and his response was, "There! You have already heard from him!" Within a day of this experience she received the letter from Sri Aurobindo giving permission to visit the Ashram. This is but one example of how she lived her life: led and guided completely from the psychic being.

Founding and directing the East-West Cultural Center

Jyotipriya founded the East-West Cultural Center in Los Angeles (the Sri Aurobindo Center) on 1 May 1953, and directed all its activities until her passing on 3 October 1980. During her stay in the Ashram, in the presence of both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, the Mother had told her to return to America and start a center. Jyotipriya had told the Mother that she had no money, but the Mother had encouraged her not to worry—that it would come. This was certainly so, as many donors and supporters were there through the years to help in the development and maintenance of the center, in-



cluding her friend and mentor, the philosopher, Manly Hall.

For many years, Jyotipriya, with her deep aspiration to serve the truth, kept alive the flame and light of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in the Los Angeles area with her center's activities of guest speakers, study groups on Sri Aurobindo's books, Sanskrit classes, chanting, and concerts.

My first meeting with Jyotipriya was a visit from her to my home in New York City in the mid-1960s. She was on her way to the Ashram for a visit. I was most impressed by her highly intuitive assessment of my state of being at that time and how she so accurately read and analyzed my palm prints. During her visit, she spoke to me in such enlightened speech about spiritual and mystical matters that I was instantly drawn to her in a way in which no other spiritual teacher had affected me up to that point. How blessed I was. Here was this powerful spiritual presence in my home, virtually a stranger to me, who was pouring out her love and help in unending streams of eternal truth. She urged me to make a pilgrimage to the Ashram to physically meet the Mother, and I ultimately fulfilled this urging.

A few years after meeting Jyotipriya, I moved to Los Angeles at the Mother's behest, and had the great privilege of working with Jyotipriya in her "one room schoolhouse" from 1967 to 1969. This was located at the center, then on West 9th Street.

What a joy it was to be in her presence! Not only was she a Sanskrit scholar (two published books: *First Lessons in Sanskrit Grammar* and *The Language of the Gods*), but also she was an accomplished pianist and violinist. So high was her spiritual will that her speaking voice, soft and lyrical, sounded like music. Her Thursday-night readings of *Savitri* and Sanskrit chanting created an atmosphere that could transport one to another realm of being. Her answers to questions were as if the Mother herself had spoken.

Jyotipriya opened the center and her heart to all seekers during those days with-

out a shred of discrimination. A steady, egoless, guileless calm guided her being. She maintained equanimity, poise, strength, and courage in the face of many challenges and difficulties at the center, particularly during the turbulent 1960s and 1970s. She was truly and completely surrendered in her being to Sri Aurobindo and Mother.

In her private one-room school, she taught students from ages 6 to 17 years old. She could move easily from desk to desk, where she would deal with a simple addition problem with one student and on to another grappling with geometry and algebraic equations. She brought a love of study to these fortunate children and a thirst for knowledge. All her students were special, and their love for her was palpable. She never raised her voice to them, never lost patience. She produced plays, pageants, music recitals and recitations.

Her annual spring "Flowers and Their Messages" presentation at the center was a breathtaking event. On display in a large meeting room were beautifully arranged vases of exquisite flowers of every variety and color. Jyotipriya's descriptions and comments on Mother's spiritual names for the flowers were offered in this uplifting tribute to springtime and the renaissance of life.

Later life and legacy

Jyotipriya's tireless giving, despite her suffering from painful arthritis, was touching and inspiring. As her life drew to a close, one cannot erase from the mind the image of that frail form, clad in light blue sari, being carried up the stairway to hold her *Savitri* classes. In those last years the arthritis had become so crippling that she could barely walk, yet beaming with the light of the Mother's consciousness and with an iron-clad will, she persevered supported and surrounded by her loving students and caregivers. In her unassuming way, she always felt she was "one of us," despite the fact that she was so highly evolved spiritually. This caused one to love her all the more.

In remembering Jyotipriya, there are

enough stories and anecdotes to write a book, but I shall bring this brief recollection to a close by saying that all of us who knew, loved, honored, and revered her remember her in our hearts in this year of her 100th birthday. Through the offerings of apt successors, her legacy lives on at the center with programs of study and activities, her vast library of books with carefully annotated margins, and her living presence, active and vibrant in the atmosphere.

Our love and blessings to you Jyotipriya, "Lover of Light." Om shanti.

Anie Nunnally (anie@earthlink.net) is a music teacher living in Los Angeles. She worked for many years with the Foundation for World Education, and is an active member of the Sri Aurobindo Center of Los Angeles.

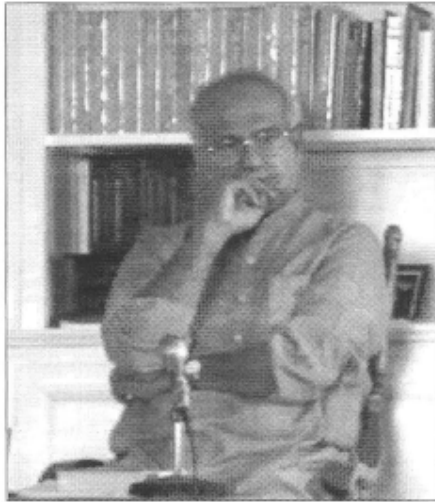
Essay

Karma yoga in Sri Aurobindo's *Essays on the Gita*

by Mangesh Nadkarni

This essay originally was given as a talk at Sri Aurobindo Sadhana Peetham in Lodi, California on 15 June 2002.

There is an impression that Sri Aurobindo's *Essays on the Gita* is an easy book to read, but I do not hold this opinion. It is one of the toughest books to understand and the misunderstandings of the book are apparent everywhere. Most people who have written about it have made it look like one of the usual manuals of yoga, which it is not. Sri Aurobindo himself used the *Gita* a great deal in his earlier sadhana. When he was in Alipore jail, I am sure, you remember, he practiced the sadhana of the *Gita*. Before the year was out he had the experience of *vasudevah sarvam iti*. Everywhere he saw the Lord, the immanent Lord was everywhere —behind the prisoner and the



Dr. Nadkarni pauses to take a question during his presentation on karma yoga. (Photo by Bhavi Saklecha)

policeman and the cook in the prison kitchen—everybody was for him a manifestation of the Lord.

So *Essays on the Gita* is a book written not by a mere scholar; it was written by somebody who had reached the *siddhi* (the realization) that the Gita aims at giving us. If you read other books on the Gita, you will not find what you find here—practical guidance and inspiration from someone who has walked the walk. Normally if you want to do a study of the Gita, you go to amazon.com or some other place and try to read as many books on the Gita as you can lay your hands on. That is not the way to study or practice the yoga of the Gita. All that you need is the seven hundred verses and a will consecrated to live its teachings.

Sri Aurobindo's *Essays on the Gita* is a tough book, partly because all spiritual life is tough after a point. You think that with the mind we can understand everything. With the mind alone you can't go very far. But the practice of yoga—that is a totally different kind of thing. That alone makes everything crystal clear. In yoga, it is said, you have to walk the path. But all that you are given is a little lamp which sheds light on the next ten feet. But our mind says, "I won't venture into this wilderness until I have a complete map of the entire terrain." That, nobody is going to

give you. Even if they gave it, you wouldn't understand most of it.

So the thing to do is, if you have a lamp in your hand and the next 10 feet are lighted up, walk those 10 feet. When you reach the tenth foot, then you have another 10 feet lighted up. This is the way of yoga. The intellect is a good starting point, but if you remain at that level, you will be lost in a wilderness of dilettantism. Intellectual dilettantism may have its uses, but in spiritual life after a while it begins to give you diminishing returns.

Therefore to return to my main point: it may take a long time for us to study and understand *Essays on the Gita* in its entirety, some of the concepts are difficult—but in this book you have the testimony and the guiding voice of somebody who has walked this path and who has reached the goal. So start walking the path as you take up the study of the Gita.

If you want to do some preparatory reading, before you begin a study of Sri Aurobindo's *Essays on the Gita*, I think the Mother's writings on works are very helpful. I remember one most insightful thing that the Mother has said: we are all born here on earth to manifest the Divine in some unique way. We are born to do some work which nobody else can do, only we can do it. That's the purpose why we are here on earth.

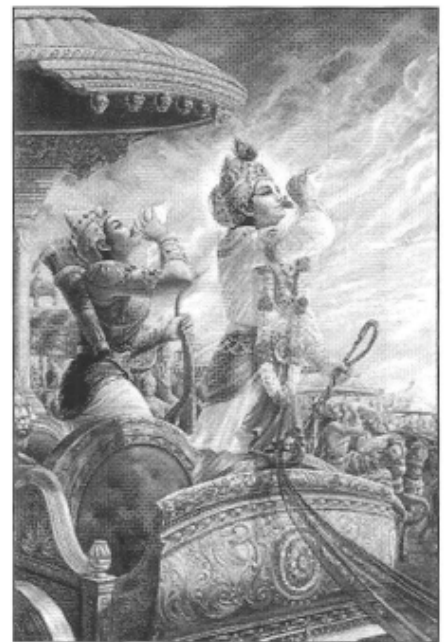
But nobody, no document can tell you exactly what manifestation it is that you have to accomplish, or what work it is that you are supposed to do here on earth in your life. If you wish to find that out, she says, the only way is the yoga of works.

So you do the yoga of works, which may mean cleaning up the garden, or running a business, or fighting a war. All these can constitute the yoga of works, provided that you take it up as a discipline and do it with the right attitude; this is something that will some day reveal to you exactly what your work is in life. The discipline of the yoga of works is an essential prerequisite to this self-finding. In this sense, therefore, in one's spiritual development, the yoga of works is very important, very essential.

On the battlefield

One of the interesting things about the Gita is that it was given on the battlefield. Krishna and Arjun were close friends and must have had a number of occasions to meet formally and informally. They probably had nice meetings and good fun and feasts and merriment on many an occasion. They had plenty of time, they probably played chess or whatever they used to play in those days. On one of those afternoons, Arjun could have asked Krishna, "Tell me something about the yoga of works and knowledge and devotion." But this was never done.

The occasion that was actually chosen for revealing the yoga is the most unspiritual situation one can imagine. Two armies were confronting each other, and in both the armies Arjun had his kith and kin, brothers, uncles, teachers, gurus separated into two groups, and they were all there determined to fight and kill. In fact, the commencement of the war had already been announced, the conches had been blown, the archers had put their hands on the arrows, the bows were in their hands, and the actual business of war was about to begin.



Arjun and Krishna sound their conches. (Artwork from the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust International © 2003)



This is the moment chosen to reveal the spiritual wisdom that the Gita contains. Couldn't they have chosen some other, better time when people had more peace and quiet and were ready with notebooks and pencils to make notes? The Gita happens at this terrible moment.

There is more to life than the puja room and agarbathis and nice devotional music, with a fan whirring—the world you live in is not always a nice and peaceful place in which you can do your yoga in peace and quiet. Very often life takes on the appearance of a battlefield. That is what Arjun had to face. He found himself in a position in which he must either kill his own teachers and his own cousins, or be killed by them. This was by no means the first war he was fighting. He had fought in his life many battles, battles against even Siva, and he had until now never worried about the consequences or their outcome. He fought the good fight because he was a kshatriya and it was his *dharma* (moral obligation) to fight.

But a time comes when you reach a point of crisis on the path of morality. You reach a moment of crisis. It is at that point that the Gita is given. This makes it most valuable. If a spiritual teaching has real value, it should be able to guide you when you are faced in life with the *ghora karma*, the terrible work. If during such moments any teaching can show you a way of acting spiritually, can turn around even this nonspiritual occasion by suggesting a way of acting spiritually in it, then that is a great teaching. Otherwise, if a teaching guides you only when you have no exasperating problems, when life around you is pleasant, that spiritual teaching is superficial.

The central point of the yoga of the Gita is converting, changing life in all its aspects into a yoga. The importance of this is not generally realized. When I go round and visit various centers, I meet people who come and say to me, "Sir, I have decided to take up yoga. I want to go and settle down in Pondicherry." Why Pondicherry? Yoga can be done, as Arjun was instructed, even on a battlefield. You

can do yoga exactly where you are. What those who are looking for an ideal environment are saying is, "I find life too challenging, too difficult, so I would rather go to Pondicherry where everything is taken care of and I can just sit there without the oppressive burden of life and close my eyes and meditate."

There may be a need for that kind of yoga as well. But the point is that the best place for starting your yoga is exactly where you are. The occult truth about us is that we are given the circumstances, we are put in a position which is the best for our growth. Once that position, that work has exhausted its possibilities for us, we will find that we will be removed from that



Between opposing armies, Arjun confers with Krishna. (Artwork from Bhaktivedanta Book Trust Int'l. © 2003)

place and thrown somewhere else. That is the arrangement behind this world, and therefore, you don't have to look for the ideal place for doing yoga. Wherever you are is the ideal place and whatever work comes to you is the ideal work for you, provided your inner attitude to that work is of a certain kind. This is the most important thing. The point is that wherever you are, whatever work you are doing, whether you are a university professor or a butcher or a barber or whoever, all these are ideal conditions for starting your yoga.

I will give you another example. There are Sri Aurobindo centers all over India, and I find them in one sense ideal situations for doing yoga. Because when a few people come together and form a collectivity, you soon find quite a few subgroups

begin to form. It is often said about Indians that when four of them come together, they eventually end up forming five parties or subgroups. This is because there are always ego clashes. Many people complain about these clashes and make that a reason for not coming to these centers.

I would regard this as an ideal situation for the practice of yoga. Your yoga should aim at creating harmony there. Create a situation there where everybody understands each other. If you can create harmony in that group, you can create harmony elsewhere too. It is futile to try to want to create harmony elsewhere if there is no harmony within ourselves or within our own center. Yoga begins with where you are, what you are, with your immediate group. The first thing to realise from *Essays on the Gita* is that life is the best place or the best field for yoga.

The ego versus the Divine

In one way yoga can be defined, the entire process can be defined very simply. Right now everything that we do, everything that we receive, everything that we give, everything we love, everything we adore, is sanctified at the shrine of our ego. Over all activities of our life, inner or outward, the ego is the presiding deity. Now, if you can gradually and slowly remove this deity and in that place install the Divine, your work is done, your yoga has reached one of its principal *siddhis* (realizations). This looks simple. Dislodge ego and replace it by God. "Ego" is only a three-letter word. So is "God," and these two words have two letters in common. But ego and God are mutually exclusive terms; where one exists the other cannot.

I was saying to our friends the other day in a meeting that at one time, in Pondicherry Ashram, the discipline for the inmates was so strict that people were not allowed to accept invitations even for a cup of tea from a neighbor without obtaining the Mother's permission. The Mother would often say "yes," but sometimes she would say "no." For everything you had to consult the Mother.



Now, many people, people like us who had had some education, would regard this as a kind of despotism of the Mother, a dictatorship of the Mother, and they would protest since spirituality, they would point out, is basically freedom. "Where is freedom here? There is no freedom here," this is what people used to say. Then, slowly and gradually, they realized that there was some great truth that the Mother was trying to make them aware of at considerable inconvenience to herself.

This is best illustrated by a little story of a sadhak who lived in the Ashram during that period. A friend of his was living in Rangoon and wanted to come and visit him. Of course this Ashram inmate had to ask Mother's permission, the permission was given, and the Mother made arrangements for his friend to stay in the Ashram.

When this man was about to leave the Ashram and go back to Rangoon, he offered to the sadhak a little present, a little gift brought from Rangoon. And what was it? It was not an electric guitar, or a typewriter, or anything expensive. It was just the frame of an easy chair, made of the famous Rangoon teakwood. It was without even the cloth, the cloth he had to get in Pondicherry.

When he mentioned this to his sadhak friend, the latter said, "No, I can't just accept this gift just like that. I will have to ask the Mother and take her permission." So he wrote to the Mother and said, "This friend of mine is offering me this, do I have your permission to accept it?" And the reply that the Mother gave was wonderful. She said, "You can accept it, provided you can sincerely believe that this gift comes to you from the Divine and not from your friend. Your friend may be an agent who is giving it to you, but it is the Divine that is really giving it to you."

Here you have a great spiritual teaching. In all matters big and small, if you can cultivate the habit of first touching base with the Divine, and of acting with that inner attitude, then you are on the path of yoga. Anything you receive must first be offered to the Divine, must be sanctified by this inner consecration, and everything that goes out of you too must first be of-

fered to the Divine and be sanctified by this inner offering. If you can do this all the time, and no transaction of yours becomes possible without reference to the Divine in this manner, you have almost reached the culmination of yoga. That's what the Gita is teaching.

But it is difficult to achieve this because of the ego. At one time during our evolution ego was much needed, our very survival depended on it, and so its tentacles have gone deep into our being, and to take them out one by one is difficult. The ego is the cleverest part of our being. When you say, "I have no ego," you will find the ego sitting on your head and laughing at you. This is the basic problem of spiritual life.

The spiritual truth we have to realize is this: the world that we see around us contains so many discrete entities, discrete individuals, but these are all manifestations of the one supreme Reality. All spiritual adepts have told us that there is one supreme Reality. There are not two, only one, but it manifests here as discrete entities and this is how you experience the world of the many.

In the world of the many, each one of us wants for ourselves a special place as coveted by our ego. Our entire life is devoted to this task of making sure that we have our special place, we have a special bank balance, we have a special house, we have special days, we have a special name and people will recognize it; we want our name to go down in history. All this has gotten deep into us. Our ego is constantly clamouring for this exclusive space for ourselves. This is the reason why we are so stressful, why life is so stressful. Everybody is competing with everybody else.

What is the real truth? What is the spiritual truth? It is that nobody can take your place on earth, because what you can do, from the spiritual perspective, nobody else can do. So, the first thing to realize is: I am not in competition with anyone else. I have a unique destiny, I am a unique spark of the Divine; and I am here to manifest what is unique to it. Therefore, why should I worry about X or Y or Z, what they have, what talents they have, what opportuni-

ties they have? It doesn't really matter.

Ego is something that keeps you separated from the world, that keeps you in this cocoon of ignorance, where you get more and more restless, more and more impatient, more and more stressful. Yoga is a process by which you gradually open up and realize that this is not really necessary, and discard this ignorance.

Your uniqueness is of a special kind. The psychic is your real individuality. The ego is an individuality which nature produced because at some time it was necessary. Therefore, Sri Aurobindo had this wonderful statement: "Ego was the helper, ego is the bar." As I was saying the other day to our friends: all saints and spiritual masters have said, "Give up desires, give up ego, give up sex, give up attachment, give up anger, greed, lust." But nobody has explained why in the first place God created these. Now we are all being asked to give them up, but why were they created? I didn't ask God, "Please create me with ego in me." Sex is very difficult for most people to get over. Why was it implanted so profoundly in the first place?

Sri Aurobindo is the only philosopher who explains how and why at some stage in our evolution all these things, which are now becoming an impediment for our spiritual growth, were absolutely essential, otherwise we would not have reached our present state. Evolution is this constant growth of consciousness. At some stage desire was the driving force of evolution. If there were no desire we would not have grown at all. Hunger is what drives the animals; animals evolve through hunger. Now we find hunger and desire bad, but at one time they were necessary. Now we have come to a stage where we find that they are throttling us and we have to go beyond them.

Ego is that which has held us together, but there is another binding force, another reality in us, and that is what is called the psychic being. My own understanding of what the psychic being is this, and I will once again make use of an anecdote to explain this point.

Many of you must have heard the name Udar Pinto, a sadhak who lived for



many years in the Ashram in Pondicherry. Recently, Anie did an interview with him and it has come out in *Collaboration*. He was very fond of telling stories. Unfortunately he died recently, otherwise you could have gone to him and listened to this story in his own voice. He was one of the trusted lieutenants of the Mother. If any carpentry work was to be done for the Mother, it was given to Udar Pinto. If any engineering work had to be done, again it was given to Udar Pinto. Because he had this training; he was an engineer by profession. Thus, he belonged to the select band of sadhaks who were close to the Mother.

One day he quietly asked her, “Mother, what do you think about my spiritual progress?” She said, “Your spiritual progress? You have made no progress.” He said, “Mother I have been reading every word that you say or Sri Aurobindo has said or written. I am moving in this group, in this circle. This is my entire life, and you say I have made no spiritual progress?” “No. Of course, you are trying, but doing it all wrong.” “Doing it all wrong? How so?” he said. “The whole problem is that your job is not to do sadhana. The doing of sadhana is my job,” the Mother clarified. “Your job is to allow me to do sadhana in you. That’s all. You don’t have to do the sadhana, you allow me to do the sadhana.”

Now, what was it the Mother was saying? Was she being facetious, or was she revealing a profound truth? She was in fact revealing a great truth. What she was saying, and this is also part of the Gita’s yoga, is this: there is a spark of the Divine Mother (*Para Prakriti* in the language of the Gita) in each one of us, and that is called the psychic being. Why is the psychic being so important? The psychic being is so important because it is a little representative of herself that the supreme Divine Mother has deposited in each one of us, and it is this that is capable of doing yoga. If this psychic being in us takes up our yoga, we walk the sunlit path of yoga, which is a triumphal march from one success to another.

That’s why Sri Aurobindo has said in

a number of places: “Look, we have tried all different ways, we have tried all the yogic paths. We don’t want you to take all that trouble, to learn through trial and error. We have discovered that the psychic method is the best and the easiest, and you should take it.”

And the Mother told Udar, “You don’t have to do the sadhana, let me do the sadhana.” He asked, “What does that mean? How am I to do that?” Then she said, “OK. When you get up in the morning, what is the first thing you do?” Udar said, “Well, I wash my face, brush my teeth and have my breakfast.” “You brush your teeth; how do you brush your teeth?” the Mother asked, going into detail. “I brush my teeth very simply. I take my toothbrush and squeeze some paste out of a tube like this and then there is toothpaste on the brush and I brush my teeth. I then start brushing the teeth . . .” “When you are doing this,” she asked him, “what is your mind doing?” Udar said, “I don’t know what my mind is doing.” Then she said, “Can your brush your teeth with me?”

This is what she was suggesting: “You are doing the brushing, but can you brush your teeth without losing your contact with me?” What she was saying is, in all small and big matters, don’t let anything cut yourself off from me; keep yourself open to me all the time. When you eat your food, when you gossip with your friends, while doing anything and everything that you do, can you keep this channel to me open?

Keeping this channel open and remaining all the time in the consciousness of the Mother is the secret of yoga, and this has to be worked out in detail.

The path of surrender

Everybody says, “I am following the yoga of the Gita. It’s very easy.” How so? “The Gita says that surrender is the easiest way. I am surrendered to the Mother. Mother does everything for me.” I often tell people that the master verse of the Gita, namely, *sarva dharman partyajya mamekam sharanam vraja* (abandon all dharmas and be surrendered only to me) comes in its final chapter 18. It is the 66th verse in

that chapter, which means: when you have done the yoga described in all the verses leading up to this verse, you get surrender as a result of your yoga. Surrender is the beginning of yoga, surrender is the middle of yoga, and surrender is the siddhi of yoga. This is what surrender is—easy to profess but difficult to practice in all the transactions of our lives.

Often when we say we have decided to surrender ourselves to the Divine, what we mean is: “I am surrendered to the Mother, and I have already sent my little agenda of requirements to her. This is what she has to do, because I have no more any responsibility for their fulfilment, the Mother will take care of it.” This is what we expect out of surrender—that we don’t have to do any more work, we have given our shopping list to the Mother and she will see to it that everything is done properly. The interesting thing about this is that often the Divine doesn’t object to this either. The Divine has such abundance of patience. The Mother does take up your shopping list, and she does help you do all the shopping until, slowly and gradually, you begin to realize that you have been giving the Divine the wrong shopping list. The Divine does often give you the things you crave for, but they don’t satisfy you.

And so, finally, a point comes when you tell the Divine, “Sorry, I don’t know what I need, you decide what is good for me, and then organize my life accordingly.” What is best for me is what the Divine chooses for me—success or failure, happiness or misery. This total submission to the Divine’s will, which says, “Let Thy Will be done”—this change has to take place. This is a long, long path, the path of surrender.

Then there is the aspect called jnana yoga. What does jnana yoga teach you? Jnana yoga teaches that all that we seem to be doing on our own steam is in fact done by nature. Nature does things in you. You don’t do anything. It’s the Divine in you who does it, or nature does it under Divine’s guidance and control. You put your signature to it, that’s all. Or ego comes and appropriates the work done by nature and claims, “I did it.” You didn’t do it; it was



done by nature. This is what happens.

What does bhakti teach you? Through surrender and dedication and devotion, you begin to feel the presence of the Divine all around you. The Divine is doing everything and you are being carried in his arms. This is what bhakti teaches you.

All these different yogas, no matter what yoga it is, ultimately its main purpose is what the Gita is talking about. That is, break the shell of the ego, this wall of separation between you and the Divine, and realize that there is the Divine and you are a part of the Divine, that you are a manifestation of the Divine. The Divine has an agenda. You don't have to have an agenda. Your job simply is to participate in the fulfilment of the Divine's agenda in a spirit of offering, of sacrifice.

The attitude of sacrifice

Sacrifice is a crucial concept in the Gita, and let me explain this concept briefly and simply. You buy an apple from a shop and you think you have paid a decent price for it. From what you have paid, the shop owner gets a little profit, the people who shipped it from wherever it has come get their profit, the man who grows it gets the reward for his labor.

But have you discharged all your debts and obligations? Hasn't the sun helped the apple to grow, and the rain helped the apple to grow? Have you paid their debt? The whole of nature seems to be all the time engaged in offering itself to the Divine, it offers all its energies towards the fulfilment that the Divine intends. The sunrise and the sunset, the succession of the seasons—all these are acts in a gigantic sacrifice nature is engaged in.

Regard yourself as one of those who have been invited to this big sacrifice. In a sacrifice, people bring their offerings. They offer what they bring to the Divine, and when the puja is done they take the *prasad* (the sanctified and consecrated food). But instead of that, if you begin to pill for the apples and the coconuts and the money . . . this is what we seem to be doing in this world, this is what the ego prompts us to do. The Gita says our atti-

tude then is that of a thief.

We have come here for a sacrifice. Our entire attitude to work and life has to change. Nothing need change necessarily from outside. There has to be an inner change, a change in your attitude. You must tell yourself: "I have come here to offer my little bit in this sacrifice and I will do my best, but ultimately, what result it will have depends on the Divine. If the Divine thinks my defeat is good for the divine manifestation of this earth, let me accept my defeat. If my success is convenient to the Divine's plan, I will accept success."



Arjun loses his confidence (Artwork from Bhaktivedanta Book Trust Int'l. © 2003)

There is no guarantee that for everything you do the Divine has to give you success all the time. He is not working for you and me alone.

I often give this example. In India most of the weddings are held in summer, because children have vacation, good mangoes are available, and so on. If you are a rich father of a girl, you hire a big hall or halls, and invite eight hundred to a thousand people to the wedding feast. Suddenly you find that the sky is overcast. Rain is imminent anytime. We don't yet have in India hourly weather forecasts that you have here. So if you are the father of this girl about to be married, you pray to God, "Oh God, I have made all these prepara-

tions. So many people are coming and all this food has been cooked. Please make sure it doesn't rain at least for a couple of days."

On the other hand, just outside the city there are hundreds of farmers who are waiting for the rain to come. They are all praying, "Oh Lord, let the rain come now. Our crops will otherwise dry up and be destroyed."

Who does God listen to—the father or the farmers? I have given you a small example. If you really look at the world at large, you will find that there is a logic behind the events, but you may not always understand the logic or find it to your liking.

So this is the attitude one cultivates by regarding the whole of life as an offering to the Divine. Strangely enough, the only country where the attitude of sacrifice is sadly missing today is India. You in this country are better than us in this respect. If you go to an office and a work is assigned to you, you don't fret about that work. You do it in the best manner possible, because ultimately you are a cog in the whole system, but you have to do your best so that the whole system works properly.

In India this is not happening. Therefore, all our public enterprises failed. "What do I get out of this for myself? What profit do I get here?" Everybody is asking these questions instead of saying, "We are all together here and the purpose is to bring prosperity for the enterprise and thus for the country. Let me do the best I can." This attitude isn't there and therefore, all public sector undertakings in India are in the red, they aren't making profits and they are being sold off. For public sector undertakings to work, the employees need to take a spiritual attitude. You do whatever you do as service to the country. Where selfishness abounds, and such a spiritual attitude is missing, all such enterprises are bound to fail.

The enemy desire

There is another important concept in the Gita, the concept of discarding all desires and of growing desireless. Normally



we do nothing unless it is initiated by our ego. That is why there is desire, which is the vehicle that our ego controls. Ego manifests itself mainly through desire. What is wrong with desire? What is wrong with desire is that it binds you. Desire binds you and limits you. Any fulfilment of desire brings pleasure, right? But if you really look at it, you will see that every desire limits you. In other words, if it opens for us one channel for seeking happiness or fulfilment, at the same time it instantly closes all the other doors. A desireless man has increased his capacity to enjoy his life in infinite ways. We find this a little baffling, because we don't know what it is to be desireless.

Desire is like being limited to certain kinds of foods because of one's strong likes and dislikes. Any kind of food that is given to a man who is desireless is nectar to him. I know: I am very limited with regard to my tastes, I know how miserable it is to be like that. There are friends of mine who can enjoy a much vaster variety of foods because they are less limited in their tastes.

I was telling the other day a little story of a friend of mine who had juvenile diabetes. Right from his early childhood he had diabetes, so he was taught to cook his own food, to which he neither added salt nor spices nor sugar. I was pitying him, "How can you do this, food must be all tasteless for you." He said, "No uncle, not tasteless. Anything I eat, I get its natural taste. Do you know what the natural taste of mung (green pulses) is?" I said, "I don't know." "Do you know what the natural taste of such and such a thing is?" "I don't know because I have always added various *masalas* (spices) before I ate it." He said, "I am completely free as far as food is concerned, because right from the early days I have not conditioned myself." This is something like that which happens if the hold of desire in you becomes weaker and weaker.

Desire is the chief enemy of spirituality. In Sri Aurobindo's *Essays on the Gita* there is a beautiful sentence: "Slay then

desire." Arjun is asked to slay his desires. Often people have the feeling, "If I don't have desires, if desires don't activate my action, won't I be a vegetable?" This is a fear people have. People feel, "Retaining my individuality means that I hold fast to my desires, because desires define me. If I give up desires one by one I will be amorphous, I will not have any definition." That's what people fear.



Krishna bids Arjun to fight, but as a sacrifice to the Supreme Divine. (Artwork from Bhaktivedanta Book Trust International © 2003)

They don't realize, as Sri Aurobindo says, we have a double soul. We have a desire soul, and if the desire soul slowly becomes less noisy, less insistent, less dominant, then there is a chance for the other soul, the psychic being, to come to the front. When it does so, there is no dearth of motivation. It is not that we will not have any motivation in life, or life will be quiet and dull and so on. When the psychic being comes to the front, it will tell you exactly what you are supposed to do.

Therefore, they say, give up desire for the fruit of work. That's what the famous Gita sentence says, *karmanjeva dhikaraste ma phaleshu kadachana* ("You have a right to action, not to the fruit of that action"). Do not hanker after the fruit. Because if you really look at it even in a commonsense way, the fruit of any work that you perform is hardly in your hands.

There is a world play of forces, and that determines whether you profit or whether you lose. What's the point in your being insistent? You make an investment, let us say, and the best people have been consulted before you made your investment. There is no guarantee this investment will give you profits because there are economic forces operating in this world, they control them, and you don't know whether you get this result or that result. We control very little of this world, and this world is controlled by forces beyond our comprehension. Therefore, it is common sense to say, "Let us not worry too much about this. Let us do our part." This is the first stage, so that the hold of the ego on you gradually gets released.

The Doer of work

Now, after that, slowly as the desire, the force of the desire, pressure of the desire becomes less and less, you realize something else. That is: you are not the doer of your works. "How is it? I am not the doer of works? I was the one who perspired, and you say 'I' didn't do anything?"

Once you start doing work without hankering after the fruit thereof, you gradually begin to realize within yourself that there is universal energy, universal nature that is doing the work, and you have simply been the location for the performance of this work. It comes from somewhere else and the attachment to the work, to the sense of the doer, gradually disappears.

People are attached, so much attached to their work. It's a subtle kind of attachment. Sri Aurobindo talks about it in his *Tales of Prison Life*. Sri Aurobindo was



put in Alipore jail for a year. During the first few days he kept complaining to God: “As a freedom fighter, I was working for the whole nation, I was doing something important for a whole country, my country. Then why was I taken out of the public life, away from this work that I was doing and put in a prison?” Sri Aurobindo adds: “Before that, I had received two or three inner intimations from the inner being that I was now being prepared for another kind of work. But I was so attached to this work, I just didn’t want to leave it.”

When you don’t want to leave it and if you are a Sri Aurobindo, what happens? The Divine makes sure, you are just lifted like that and put into a prison. This is what happens. So even for someone like Sri Aurobindo, giving up attachment to the work he was doing was not easy. He realized that this was what was happening. He was too attached to the role he was playing as the national leader. This relinquishing the sense of “doership” is the second step of the yoga.

Divine works versus duty

There are two or three paragraphs in the *Essays* in which Sri Aurobindo neatly summarizes the main teachings of the Gita. This is in a chapter called “The Core of the Teaching.” What Sri Aurobindo is saying is, there is a tendency to interpret the Gita according to the ruling paradigms of the time. Look at Shankaracharya’s Gita, for example. In Shankaracharya’s hand the Gita looks like a Buddhist document, because Shankaracharya at that time was facing the challenge of Buddhism. The modern commentators of the Gita, right from Bankim Chandra Chatterjee to Mahatma Gandhi, emphasize doing one’s duty as the principal teaching of the Gita. Sri Aurobindo once again dismisses this as an attempt to read the Gita in the light of the Time-Spirit.

What, for example, was Gautam Buddha’s principal duty at the moment he abandoned everything and became an ascetic? He was the father of an infant child, he was the husband of a young woman, he was the son of a princely father who was the head of a state. So he had responsibil-

ities towards his father, he had responsibilities towards his wife, responsibilities towards the child and towards the people of his state. And yet the Buddha in the prime of life gives up everything and goes away to the jungle. Is that performance of duty? What duty did he perform? So if performance of duty is the most important thing, would you bring Buddha back and put him back where he was? The great realization of Buddha, the great contribution of Buddha to human history would then have to be wiped out.

Then Sri Aurobindo also gives the example of Ramakrishna. Ramakrishna married Sharada Devi, but he didn’t live the life of a married man. What should he have done according to our definition of duty? He should have been a primary school teacher and probably raised half a dozen kids, and lived a normal life; he didn’t do any of these things. What duty are we talking about? And Arjun also is saying, “What is my duty? Is it my duty to kill my uncle? I have so far done my duty. What do I do now, on what do I base my action now that the concept of duty has failed me to resolve my crisis?”

This notion of duty—and of philanthropy, doing good, social service— young people today understand all these things. Social service they understand, Oxfam they understand. Spirituality, they don’t understand, because to the present age God and God-experience are totally alien. They think that God and God-experience are some kind of old wives’ tales. They would like the Gita to be interpreted as a kind of a document that asks you to do social service, altruistic works, philanthropy.

What the Gita teaches is how to grow in your consciousness and identify yourself with the Divine. And the Divine is not without work. What is the Divine’s work? Running this big show, this wide, wonderful world that he has started. You will have plenty of work here, and you will do it as commanded by him, because your will becomes one with his will. Your energies come from him in this consciousness. When we do this, in our inner being there is nothing but a fountain of bliss and joy

instead of what we now have working as the handmaidens of our ego, driven by our ego—miserable and anxious and stressful all the time about what results of our work will bring us.

When you are doing some work, three-fourths of your mind is concentrated on what result you will get, only one-fourth goes to this work. Often, therefore, your work is half done or incompletely done. If you give that up, if there is in the inner being this identification with the Divine, you begin to feel that you are an instrument of the Divine, and you have to do the Divine’s bidding. You say, “I have offered myself to the Divine and the Divine wants me to play this particular role, and I will play it gladly.”

Total impersonality, total dedication to the Divine, total identification with the will of the Divine, then, all the joy that comes from it is yours. All this calls for utter sincerity. Total and complete sincerity is the key to spiritual success. All the time you are working, you have the joy of doing the work that you are supposed to be doing. This is the transformation that the Gita is talking about.

The core of the teaching

Sri Aurobindo summarizes this core of the Gita’s teaching in two paragraphs. He says, “The argument of the Gita resolves itself into three great steps. There are three stages by which action rises out of the human into the Divine plane leaving the bondage of the lower for the liberty of a higher law. The human action becomes Divine action.” I haven’t said anything here to explain the third stage. That will take too long for it involves discussing some difficult metaphysical concepts involving the three purushas.

If you become spiritual, you will still wash the same vessels, you will still clean the same house. The nature of the work doesn’t change, the attitude to it changes. Everything you do becomes an offering to the Divine, and there is that great joy of offering because the work you do is all directed to the Divine. What the Gita teaches is lifting your work from the human plane to the divine plane. How do you do it?



“First, by the renunciation of desire and a perfect equality works have to be done as a sacrifice by man as the doer, a sacrifice to a deity who is the supreme and only Self though by him not yet realised in his own being.” (*Essays on the Gita*, p. 34) We have not in the first stage realized the Supreme in our own being, but with this conviction we do this work. This is the initial step.

“Secondly, not only the desire of the fruit, but the claim to be the doer of works has to be renounced.” (*Essays on the Gita*, p. 34) The claim to be the doer of works has to be renounced. “Not only the desire of the fruit but the claim to be the doer of works has to be renounced in the realization of the Self as the equal, the inactive, the immutable principle and of all works as simply the operation of universal Force, of the Nature-Soul, Prakriti, the unequal, active, mutable power.

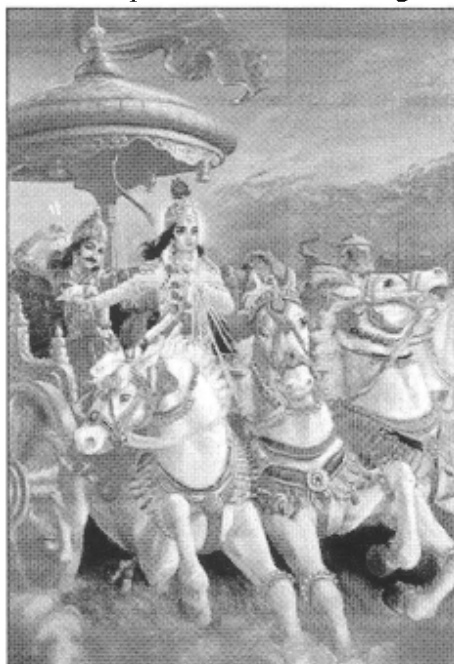
Lastly, the supreme Self has to be seen as the supreme Purusha governing this Prakriti, of whom the soul in Nature is a partial manifestation, by whom all works are directed, in a perfect transcendence, through Nature.” (*Essays on the Gita*, p. 38)

Then he summarizes. He says: “The first step is Karmayoga, the selfless sacrifice of works, and here the Gita’s insistence is on action. The second is Jnanayoga, the self-realisation and knowledge of the true nature of the self and the world, and here the insistence is on knowledge; but the sacrifice of works continues and the path of Works becomes one with but does not disappear into the path of Knowledge. The last step is Bhaktiyoga, adoration and seeking of the supreme Self as the Divine Being, and here the insistence is on devotion; but the knowledge is not subordinated, only raised, vitalised and fulfilled, and still the sacrifice of works continues.” (*Essays on the Gita*, p. 38)

Now before I conclude, just a word about the last chapter of this book. I don’t know whether you have read it. If you read it, you will find that it’s mantric, the words are so mantric. I know a great spiritual practitioner who was asked to do spiritual practices in a retreat in the Himalayas. This

was a long time ago. He subsequently came and joined the Ashram. In those days very few of Sri Aurobindo’s books were in print. One of the earliest books that ever got printed was the *Essays on the Gita*. *Essays on the Gita* is believed to be very mantric.

This spiritual aspirant was somewhere in a retreat in the Himalayas. A friend used to visit him once in three weeks with rations so that he had no other disturbance. The one book he brought to him on one occasion was *Essays on the Gita*. This man opened and started reading the



Arjun and his Divine Charioteer go to work.
(Artwork from Bhaktivedanta Book Trust Int’l.
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book, and as soon as he finished a few paragraphs he felt a descent of Light on him. He said, “This is an experience I never had before, what is happening?” Then he realized that this descent of Light came from *Essays on the Gita*. Soon after that he wrapped up his camp and went and joined the Ashram in Pondicherry, seeking for the source of this Light.

What I am saying is, it’s a mantric kind of book. I don’t know whether it will sound mantric in my voice to you. But I will try to read a little bit and see how it sounds:

“This is the solution, this the salva-

tion, this the perfection that I offer to all those who can listen to a divine voice within them and are capable of this faith and knowledge. But to climb to this pre-eminent condition the first necessity, the original radical step is to turn away from all that belongs to your lower Nature and fix yourself by concentration of the will and intelligence on that which is higher than either will or intelligence, higher than mind and heart and sense and body. And first of all you must turn to your own eternal and immutable self, impersonal and the same in all creatures. So long as you live in ego and mental personality, you will always spin endlessly in the same rounds and there can be no real issue. Turn your will inward beyond the heart and its desires and the sense and its attractions; lift it upward beyond the mind and its associations and attachments and its bounded wish and thought and impulse. Arrive at something within you that is eternal, ever unchanged, calm, unperturbed, equal, impartial to all things and persons and happenings, not affected by any action, not altered by the figures of Nature. Be that, be the eternal self, be the Brahman. If you can become that by a permanent spiritual experience, you will have an assured basis on which you can stand delivered from the limitations of your mind-created personality, secure against any fall from peace and knowledge, free from ego.” (*Essays on the Gita*, p. 581)

This is just one paragraph from this book. I have myself recorded it on a cassette and then I go walking and listen to it. By the time I have finished my walk, I am full of energy. It’s a wonderful passage. Even if you don’t have time to read the whole of the *Essays on the Gita*, read this chapter; it is called “The Message of the Gita,” the very last chapter. Familiarize yourself with it, and then slowly, when you have more time, read the whole book.

Dr. Nadkarni is a gifted speaker on Sri Aurobindo’s and Mother’s works in India and abroad, and was a keynote speaker at AUM 2002. He is a retired professor of linguistics, and lives in Hyderabad, India.



Source material

Mother on the transformation of love and sex

Know how to love

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

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

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

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

want to love well.

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

through you more or less finely, but which in its essence is something divine.

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

As for yoga we may add something else: it is as I said in the beginning, the will to pierce through this limited and human form of love and discover the principle of divine Love which is behind it. Then one is sure to get a result. This is better than drying up one's heart. It is perhaps a little more difficult but it is better in every way, for like this, instead of egoistically making others suffer, well, one may leave them in their own movement and only make an effort to transform oneself without imposing one's will on others, which even in ordinary life is a step towards something higher and a little more harmonious.—*The Sunlit Path*, pp. 140–142



The Mother writing in her room. (Photo courtesy Sri Aurobindo Ashram)

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

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

Divine Love is there always in all its intensity, a formidable power. But most people—ninety-nine per cent—do not feel anything at all! What they feel of it is exclusively in proportion to what they are, to their capacity of receiving. Imagine, for instance, that you are bathing in an atmosphere all vibrant with divine Love—you are not at all aware of it. Sometimes, very rarely, for a few seconds there is suddenly the feeling of "something." Then you say, "Oh, divine Love came to me!" What a joke! It is just that you were simply, for some reason or other, a wee bit open, so you felt it. But it is there, always, like the divine Consciousness. It is the same thing, it is there, all the time, in its full intensity; but one is not even aware of it; or else in

Divine Love is there



this way, spasmodically: suddenly one is in a good state, so one feels something and says, "Oh, the divine Consciousness, divine Love have turned to me, have come to me!" It is not at all like that. One has just a tiny little opening, very tiny, at times like a pin-head, and naturally that force rushes in. For it's like an active atmosphere; as soon as there is a possibility of being received, it is received.

But this is so for all divine things. They are there, only one does not receive them, for one is closed up, blocked, one is busy with other things most of the time. Most of the time one is full of oneself. So, as one is full of oneself, there is no place for anything else. One is very actively (laughing) busy with other things. One is filled with things, there is no place for the Divine. But he is there. —*The Sunlit Path*, pp. 143–144

The sexual impulse

Humanity has the sexual impulse in a way altogether natural, spontaneous and, I would say, legitimate. This impulse will naturally and spontaneously disappear with animality. Many other things will disappear, as for example the need to eat and perhaps also the need to sleep in the way we sleep now. But the most conscious impulse in a superior humanity, which has continued as a source of . . . bliss is a big word, but joy, delight—is certainly the sexual activity, and that will have absolutely no reason for existence in the functions of Nature when the need to create in that way will no longer exist. Therefore, the capacity of entering into relation with the joy of life will rise by one step or will be oriented differently.

But what the ancient spiritual aspirants had sought on principle—sexual negation—is an absurd thing, because this must be only for those who have gone beyond this stage and no longer have animality in them. And it must drop off naturally, without effort and without struggle. To make of it a centre of conflict and struggle is ridiculous. It is only when the consciousness ceases to be human that it drops off quite naturally.

Here also there is a transition which may be somewhat difficult, because the beings of transition are always in an unstable equilibrium; but within oneself there is a kind of flame and a need which makes it not painful—it is not a painful effort, it is something that one can do with a smile. But to seek to impose it upon those who are not ready for this transition is absurd. It is common sense. They are human, but they must not pretend that they are not.

It is only when spontaneously the impulse becomes impossible for you, when you feel that it is something painful and contrary to your deeper need that it becomes easy; then, well, externally you cut these bonds and it is finished.—*The Sunlit Path*, pp. 139–140

Sex and yoga

There is another danger; it is in connection with the sex impulses. Yoga in its process of purification will lay bare and throw up all hidden impulses and desires in you. And you must learn not to hide things nor leave them aside, you have to face them and conquer and remould them. The first effect of Yoga, however, is to take away the mental control, and the hungers that lie dormant are suddenly set free, they rush up and invade the being. So long as this mental control has not been replaced by the Divine control, there is a period of transition when your sincerity and surrender will be put to the test.

The strength of such impulses as those of sex lies usually in the fact that people take too much notice of them; they protest too vehemently and endeavour to control them by coercion, hold them within and sit upon them. But the more you think of a thing and say, "I don't want it, I don't want it", the more you are bound to it. What you should do is to keep the thing away from you, to dissociate from it, take as little notice of it as possible and, even if you happen to think of it, remain indifferent and unconcerned.

The impulses and desires that come up by the pressure of Yoga should be faced in a spirit of detachment and serenity, as something foreign to yourself or be-

longing to the outside world. They should be offered to the Divine, so that the Divine may take them up and transmute them.

If you have once opened yourself to the Divine, if the power of the Divine has once come down into you and yet you try to keep to the old forces, you prepare troubles and difficulties and dangers for yourself. You must be vigilant and see that you do not use the Divine as a cloak for the satisfaction of your desires.—*The Sunlit Path*, p. 139

Sri Aurobindo on relationships in yoga

Human relations in yoga

The ideal of the yoga is that all should be centred in and around the Divine and the life of the sadhaks must be founded on that firm foundation, their personal relations also should have the Divine for their center. Moreover, all relations should pass from the vital to the spiritual—this means that, from whatever relations they have with each other, all jealousy, strife, hatred, aversion, rancour and other evil vital feelings should be abandoned, for they can be no part of the spiritual life.

So, also, all egoistic love and attachment will have to disappear—the love that loves only for the ego's sake and, as soon as the ego is hurt and dissatisfied, cease to love or even cherishes rancour and hate. There must be real living and lasting unity behind the love. It is understood of course that such things as sexual impurity must disappear also.

That is the ideal, but as for the way of attainment, it may differ for different people. One way is that in which one leaves everything else to follow the Divine alone. This does not mean an aversion for anybody any more than it means aversion for the world and life. It only means an absorption in one's central aim, with the idea that once that is attained it will be easy to found all relations on the true basis, to become truly united with others in the heart and the spirit and the life, united in the spiritual truth and in the Divine.



The other way is to go forward from where one is, seeking the Divine centrally and subordinating all else to that, but not putting everything else aside, rather seeking to transform gradually and progressively whatever is capable of such transformation. All the things that are not wanted in the relation—sex impurity, jealousy, anger, egoistic demand—drop away as the inner being grows purer and is replaced by the unity of soul with soul and the binding together of the social life in the hoop of the Divine.

It is not that one cannot have relations with people outside the circle of the sadhaks, but there too if the spiritual life grows within, it must necessarily affect the relation and spiritualize it on the sadhak's side. And there must be no such attachment as would make the relation an obstacle or a rival to the Divine. Attachment to family etc. often is like that and, if so, it falls away from the sadhak. That is an exigence which, I think, should not be considered excessive. All that, however, can be progressively done; a severing of existing relations is necessary for some, it is not so for all. A transformation, however gradual, is indispensable,—severance where severance is the right thing to do.

P.S. I must repeat also that each case differs—one rule for all is not practical or practicable. What is needed by each for his spiritual progress is the one desideratum to be held in view.—*Letters on Yoga*, pp. 804–805

Human affections and the psychic

Human affection is obviously unreliable because it is so much based upon selfishness and desire; it is a flame of the ego sometimes turbid and misty, sometimes more clear and brightly coloured—sometimes tamasic based on instinct and habit, sometimes rajasic and fed by passion or the cry for vital interchange, sometimes more sattwic and trying to be or look

to itself disinterested.

But fundamentally it depends on a personal need or a return of some kind inward or outward and when the need is not satisfied or the return ceases or is not given, it most often diminishes or dies or exists only as a tepid or troubled remnant of habit from the past or else turns for satisfaction elsewhere. The more intense it is, the more it is apt to be troubled by tumults, clashes, quarrels, egoistic disturbances of



Sri Aurobindo writing at his desk. (Photo courtesy of Sri Aurobindo Ashram)

all kinds, selfishness, exactions, lapses even to rage and hatred, ruptures.

It is not that these affections cannot last—tamasic instinctive affections last because of habit in spite of everything dividing the persons, e.g. certain family affections; rajasic affections can last sometimes in spite of all disturbances and incompatibilities and furious ruptures because one has a vital need of the other and clings because of that or because both have that need and are constantly separating to return and returning to separate or proceeding from quarrel to reconciliation and from reconciliation to quarrel; sattwic

affections last very often from duty to the ideal or with some other support though they may lose their keenness or intensity or brightness.

But the true reliability is there only when the psychic element in human affections becomes strong enough to colour or dominate the rest. For that reason friendship is or rather can oftenest be the most durable of the human affections because there there is less interference of the vital

and even though a flame of the ego it can be a quiet and pure fire giving always its warmth and light. Nevertheless reliable friendship is almost always with a very few; to have a horde of loving, unselfishly faithful friends is a phenomenon so rare that it can be safely taken as an illusion...

In any case human affection whatever its value has its place, because through it the psychic being gets the emotional experiences it needs until it is ready to prefer the true to the apparent, the perfect to the imperfect, the divine to the human. As the consciousness has to rise to the higher level so the activities of the heart also have to rise to that higher level and change their basis and character.

Yoga is the founding of all life and consciousness in the Divine, so also love and affection

must be rooted in the Divine and a spiritual and psychic oneness in the Divine must be their foundation—to reach the Divine first leaving other things aside or to seek the Divine alone is the straight road towards that change. That means no attachment—it need not mean turning affection into disaffection or chill indifference. But X seems to want to take his vital emotions just as they are—*tels quels*—into the Divine—let him try and don't bother him with criticisms and lectures; if it can't be done he will have to find it out for himself. —*Letters on Yoga*, pp. 808-809



Elimination of sex impulses

As to sexual impulse. Regard it not as something sinful and horrible and attractive at the same time, but as a mistake and wrong movement of the lower nature. Reject it entirely, not by struggling with it, but by drawing back from it, detaching yourself and refusing your consent; look at it as something not your own, but imposed on you by a force of Nature outside you. Refuse all consent to the imposition. If anything in your vital consents, insist on that part of you withdrawing its consent. Call in the Divine force to help you in your withdrawal and refusal. If you can do this quietly and resolutely and patiently, in the end your inner will will prevail against the habit of the outer Nature.—*Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on Love, Part I*, pp. 20-21

By giving up contact it (sex) can be reduced to two forms—dream and imagination. Dream is not of much importance unless it affects the waking mind which it need not at all do; it can besides be discouraged and, if not fed, fades out in the end. Imaginations can only be got rid of by a tapasya of the will not allowing them to run their course, but breaking them off as soon as they begin. They come most easily when lying in bed after waking from sleep in a tamasic condition. One has to break them off either by shaking off the tamas or by emptying the mind and going to sleep again. At other times one ought to be able to stop it by turning the mind elsewhere.—*Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on Love, Part I*, pp. 21-22

The right attitude is neither to worry always about the sex-weakness and be obsessed by its importance so as to be in constant struggle and depression over it, nor to be too careless so as to allow it to grow. It is perhaps the most difficult of all to get rid of entirely; one has to recognize quietly its importance and its difficulty and go quietly and steadily about the control of it. If some reactions of a slight character remain, it is not a thing to get disturbed about . . .—*Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on Love, Part I*, p. 20

Reviews

Movie: *Waking Life*

Review by Nora Archambeau

Waking Life by writer and director Richard Linklater is an ideal movie for anyone who enjoys mental discourse and exploring dream states. Created with an updated filmmaking technique called interpolation, all the characters are actors who have been animated. Interpolation, a type of animation software developed by art director Bob Sabiston, takes a video frame of a face, for example, traces a nose, then moves ahead a few frames, and traces the nose again. At times, we don't know if we are looking at an animated form or a real person, kind of like the characters that show up in a dream. The fluidity of the movie takes us from one situation to the next with a likeness to everyday waking life situations. Then, as the movie progresses, the scenes change in a more abrupt fashion and become more and more like dream situations.

At the outset, a boy and a girl are playing a paper puzzle game. The game ends with the answer the boy receives: "Dream is destiny." This animated main character (or dream character, if you like) turns into a young man in college who has a thirst to know and understand the answers to life's most sublime and complex questions. He is an average, laid-back, yet deep-thinking dude. So while the scenes are set in the external world, filmed primarily in the director's native Austin, Texas, with excursions to San Antonio and New York, we feel that we are traversing the landscapes of the mind and internal realms of existence.

There is an expansive range of eclectic characters. The story starts with a college professor speaking about Jean-Paul Sartre's theory of existentialism and proceeds to a discussion with a woman on the importance of language. From there, it progresses to a physicist discussing the

evolution of a human to a neo-human (does the transitional being come to mind?), inserts a jailed prisoner's intense hate toward his accusers, and meanders to a bedroom talk between actors Julie Delpy and Ethan Hawke on how we telepathically share our experiences with everyone all the time.

What makes this movie especially attractive for dreamers is the inclusion of characters who speak specifically on the topic of dreams. Solid research has been applied in this movie to the authenticity of a few dream states we experience. There is much said on lucid dreaming. There is also a well-articulated monolog on the difference between dream and waking realities, and how we should merge waking reality with our dreams. The best line from this movie just might be, "[We are often] sleep-walking through the waking state and wake-walking through dreaming." I will refrain from giving away the most exquisite part, which occurs with a turn of dream events towards the closing.

One criticism I have of the film is that my eyes sometimes went cross-eyed due to the constant change of visuals found in interpolation animation. A second criticism is the sometimes annoying verbiage that creates a sense of intellectual superiority.

Waking Life is thoroughly enjoyable if you are drawn to absorb some highly mental discourses on the dilemma of human existence, and to consider that waking and nonwaking dreams interface with our everyday lives. You are invited to view, ponder, and delight in an incredible endeavor from an independent movie artist.

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If one person dreams of another, it means that both have met at night, most often in the vital region, but it can also happen elsewhere, in the subtle physical or the mental. There are any number of different possibilities in dreams.—*The Mother*



Book: *Psychic Education: A Workbook*, by Neeltje Huppes. Sri Aurobindo Education Society: New Delhi.

Review by H. Kapoor

This article is reprinted from the SABDA Newsletter, Number 20, June 2002, with permission.

The purpose of this book is to develop the concept of psychic education on the lines suggested by the Mother and Sri Aurobindo in their writings. The book is meant primarily for teachers, but is bound to have an influence beyond its intended audience.

In the Ashram, yoga is the way of life. But this does not hold good for the world at large. The author attempts to suggest a methodized approach to rescue the spiritual component of the being of adult and child and prevent it from being buried under the weight of the vicissitudes of modern life. The book is a workbook. Interspersed with the text are several worksheets, which help to focus on detailed implementation of the numerous creative ideas suggested.

The first part of the book, titled "Self-Preparation," has 11 chapters and aims to introduce the aspiring teacher to a psychology other than the conventional. A prior familiarity with the teachings of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo will be found helpful for making the best use of this part. The author is a sadhika and brings to her writings her insights on the spiritual path. The level of discourse varies from elementary to intermediate. The intermediate zone through which most aspirants have to pass before reaching the psychic being has not been touched upon.

The author commences by introducing the psychic being in a simple way. No attempt is made to be philosophically rigorous, yet sensitive readers will find in the concept of the psychic being an epitome of that towards which their deepest instincts have always pointed. She proceeds to talk about the great discovery, suggests methods such as self-observation to heal

the divisions in one's being, and brings readers to the threshold where they can commence their journey. A word of caution is thrown in; the complete discovery of the psychic may take years.

The next two chapters deal with self-purification. A distinction is drawn between purification from without and from within. The author does not introduce the idea of reversal of consciousness at this stage, which one feels is necessary for greater clarity.

So long as we are not surrendered to the inner Divine, the need for effort must remain. This is the next thing to be discussed. A major form of this effort is rejection of all that impedes our progress. The author distinguishes between true rejection, which leads to spiritual purification, and suppression, which is often done out of fear.

Human beings are different from animals in that they have a measure of free will in their actions. When this freedom of choice is used to put us deliberately on the side of the Divine, a change in consciousness occurs that finally culminates in our will being aligned with the Divine will. These and allied movements of consciousness are explored in the chapter "Choice and Change."

Surrender is the master movement of the progressive psychic change by which we transform personal effort into "a movement of the Divine force." The author uses quotations from the Mother and Sri Aurobindo to drive the point home. The psychic change draws to its culmination when being organized around the psyche unifies all the divergent parts of our nature. This is discussed in the chapter "Unification," which brings us to the close of the first part.

The second half of the book deals with the education of children. It bears the rather unsuggestive title, "The Integral Classroom." The contents, however, are full of a wealth of pedagogic detail that are based no doubt on the author's considerable experience in this field.

"India is a country where the psychic law can and must rule and the time has

come for that here." Basing herself on this message of the Mother, the author seeks to introduce integral education in the classroom. The three principles of true teaching enunciated by Sri Aurobindo form the kernel of the idea of psychic education in the classroom. They are:

1) The first principle of true education is that nothing can be taught . . . The teacher's business is to help and suggest . . .

2) The second principle is that the mind has to be consulted in its own growth . . .

3) The third principle of education is to work from the near to the far—from that which is, to that which shall be.

The practical consequences of these three cardinal principles are explored in the next chapter, "The Learning Process." The important issue of deciding the contents of children's education follows this. Several criteria are suggested for this purpose: variety, range, and assortment of material; diversity of learning processes; perfection of the faculties and skills; uplifting material; and lastly, material that caters specifically to the psychic needs and that which explores psychic concepts. The last three chapters deal with evaluation and attitude (of the teacher).

Practically all the essential ideas necessary to implement the concept of integral education have been dealt with in this book. The one conspicuous absence is lack of stress of moral education, which has been dealt with by Sri Aurobindo in his writings.

The book is a happy compromise between the divine ideal and the present conditions of progress. It is indispensable reading for teachers with a sense of higher values and a willingness to go beyond the narrow utilitarian aims of present day education. The book is well produced and moderately priced. The significance of the flower on the cover as given by the Mother, "Supramental invocation," sums up the author's idealism and commitment.

H. Kapoor is a disciple working at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram printing press; he has interests in poetry and philosophy.



The poetry room

Sri Aurobindo

A greater consciousness surpassing mind,
A wider sight outreaching mortal ken
Appeared in the silent universe of his soul.
A larger feeling came, a higher flight.
The shining wings of glory broadened above;
Into the still bright emptiness of his being
The Light poured down of the unreachable founts,
The power that bears the burden of the world,
The Silence that thrills with the eternal Word,
The Being immortal, the Bliss ineffable.
A flame of revelation filled his heart.
Awakened from his mysterious timeless sleep
The soul's great seer peered out from his deep cave
On the transient world's ambiguous miracle,
Embracing the universe with his single sight,
And met Infinity's gaze in each finite frame.
His soul soared up to uncharted continents,
The unknown domains of happiness and peace,
Aspiring to the nameless Goal of all.
In the azure ocean of calm infinite Mind
The flame-eyed thought-birds swam like dreaming stars
Glistening with the wide golden wings of prayer,
To the blessed viewless shores of the Unknown.
Celestial syllables swayed on his mortal lips;
Bridging the gulf twixt God-light and man's dusk,
The swift word-lightnings leaped from the Truth-skies,
Like flaming eagles of the Ineffable,
The messengers from the high-peaked Beyond,
Bringing the deathless Wisdom on their wings.
Beneath the infinite flame-white heavens of Bliss
The golden phalanxes of the eternal Truth,
Innumerable rays of a single Sun,
Bore the Supreme's irresistible decree.

—Dimitry Melgunov

And one day

And one day
you receive the consolation

You are not making something special
Just the usual things:
Kneeling in diamond

Breathing with the rhythm of the universe
Maybe repeating within a few words
or maybe not

And it comes
From above
Like a bright beam of light
Very slowly
Truly as if the skies were opening

And it comes into your head
and you have new eyes:
the world is suddenly really three dimensional

And it comes into your heart
and you are profoundly consoled
like a baby after the crying anew in mother's arms

And it comes into your body
into the limbs and into the organs
and you have now peaceful cells and bones wanting nothing
more

And everything is well in a perfect world

And you smile in the dark light around you

And now you know:
your soul has found the way
your soul has been guided onto the way

there is nothing else to do
you are no longer alone

And now you know:
it will be good to remember all this
later
when the contact will be broken

In despair's hours
the memory will say:
it has been
it can be again

It will never be forgotten

—Bernard Sage
Pentecost Day 2002



Aspiration

I want to delve deep
Into my dreams
Till the end of time it seems.
In the march of a dynamic universe
My infinite Love is stored
For mankind, with that shall I
Anoint knowledge, for I
Desire to synthesize
For I aspire to have
In my clasp the earth
And the heavens above
And the pangs of striving.
I aspire moment by moment
To consecrate myself in
Such desire maddening
To behold God in creation.
Insatiable is my desire
And it seems that
In pain shall it show and
In fire shall it burn.

—Susmita Chatterjee

Brahmavidya

Life wears the masks of multiplicity
And so appears to be what it is not;
For underneath all things are one, and we
Are secretly this oneness self-forgot.

The world that lies before our outward sight
Is but the phantom of God's playful scheming—
An unsubstantial ghost of his delight,
Unreal except in Maya's cosmic dreaming.

In truth this universe is him alone:
The sense of "you" or "I" is a delusion,
And keeps us bound until it's overthrown
And we surpass our petty self's illusion.

When this is done we learn life's hidden aim
And know ourselves and God to be the same.

—Rich Catalano

Moebius morning

the birds are screaming
and we call it morning song
the day begins
although the sun's rays do not yet shine
heralded by those feathery callers.
what lies in store
from this loud beginning?
before my eyes the cyber world carries on
defying mornings as the globe turns
its green face into the sunshine
morning serially everywhere
or no where.
here's a message
here's the worship of usha
darting like an electric arrow
across the oceans
may we awake
may we awake.

—Bhavana Dee

When the evening settles softly

When the evening settles softly upon you
And you retire to the lamp-lit night
In quiet repose, in a space of time,
Gently call above God's peace to descend.

Listen to the sounds outside your mind,
The treefrog, cricket, or sweet-singing wren,
The movement of air, the rustle of leaves,
Listen for the footsteps of the Lord.

In the delightful deepening of calm,
The mystical stillness and pureness of being,
Open wide your heart with gratitude and love,
Surrender all in His sovereign embrace.

Then, with your soul laid bare, repeat this prayer:
May I always be open to Thy Truth.
May I ever be ready to serve Thee.
May I see Thee in every person and thing.

—Larry Seidlitz



Soul— the divine psychic individual

The Soul is the key
As told by you, Sri Aurobindo, O Master
She, the reverend Mother
Of delight and beauty
Was striving hard to achieve it.

Body, matter, cells, consciousness,
Played important role
In the evolutionary process
Without recognizing the Soul's presence,
The mastermind behind the veil.

What is this Psychic Being?
Is it not the Divine Love in essence
Confirming the psychic divinity and its presence,
Which exists in the Divine?

The psyche has come forth from the Whole
Carries Him intimately in the name of Soul
In the evolutionary journey,
And then goes back to the Supreme
To experience the joy of discovering itself as Divine
In the Divine.

As a manifesting part of the Divine
The Soul appears to be simple
But becomes complex in concept and theme
At the time of materialization as the evolving Psychic
Being.

It comes to each life with a specific plan
To assimilate the same for the next journey's preparation
To enjoy everything as Ananda,
And nothing else but Ananda and Ananda
Before becoming the Divine again in manifestation.

Taking into consideration
The crescendo of evolution
The Soul becomes the main key
With its awakening spree;
By overcoming the complication of vital and mental
The Psychic Being becomes Supramental.

The material energy
Which aggregates, forms and disaggregates,
Comes back with the same power
In the life energy with birth, growth and death.

The Psychic Being forms an Adhara (a receptacle)



Pink roses—"psychic love." (Photo by Anonymous)

In the complex body of mental, vital and physical
To continue the evolution, in a way spiritual.

If and when in the process
The Supramental substance is available on earth
The Psychic Being in readiness accepts its birth.
With the transformation of gross matter in its trail
Brings the Supramental manifestation
In superconscious light veridical.

The Supramental is nothing but consciousness in divinity
Known as "Unity-Consciousness" as a matter of reality.
The law of Supermind thus prevails in unity fulfilled in diversity
With the presence of God in all and all in God in entirety.

Mother's new perception of body consciousness
Leads us to think of her growth of aspiration
By making the Divine presence felt in every cell
With the multicolored kaleidoscopic luminous tale.

In an incredible vibration
That moves and also does not move—
Or is it a diamond with trillions of dots in motion?
The One unmoving is swifter than thought
Even beyond the reach of God.

The mind is not the Soul by any imagination;
Instead, the Soul is known as "Functional Illusion."
When we experience our psyche as immaterial
Like love, creativity, or the Divine, which are on the same
pedestal,
Science then steps into the picture
Describing the effect as brain's matter.

Mother never subscribed to scientists' such view
Repeating the evolution of consciousness, souls and cells in lieu.

—Durga Charan Mukhurjea



The hummingbird and the drone

*Two birds are perched upon a branch of the same tree,
ageless companions, one eats from the bittersweet
fruit of the tree, while one sits, eats not but watches—
Mundaka Upanishad*

Hummingbird of the solarwind
pilgrim to Vrandavan Forest
partake of honeysuckle and champak
hovering above times whirling gyres
spying the drone
who; suddenly appears inside blossom of wild kronda
buzzing times first causality
the laws of production
the conscription of the worker
in blind bondage to his queen
expiring in the black striped pleats
of his hidden mistress
but you winged witness
transcend this simple destiny
peering out from some saffron robed divinity
hidden in the occult jeweled chambers
of the lotus cathedral
bearing the pollen-song of your lords stamen flute
into the tulsi covered caverns of the Bhakta's nest
humming the songs of Vyasa
through the choirs of epiphanies
thrusting forth
in golden splash orbit
a yarn spun whisper
aureate glow rising
in the Lila's sky theater

—Richard Carlson

Cross-legged I sit

Cross-legged I sit
On this intersection of Time,
Hands outstretched.

Mother, let me be Your instrument,
Perfect yet plastic,
Strong yet supple.

Let me be a strand
Of the strong rope
We hope to weave,
To build Your bridge
That must definitely be.

—Chandresh Patel

Illusion to Reality

There is no separation, change, beginning or end.
What exists is unity, stillness, ever-present peace.
How do I get from what *seems* to be to what is?
In a paradox I accept the appearance of limitation;
Yet I hold on to no identity that makes another
Necessarily apart from who I now am.
I desire no particular action above the
Myriad possibilities that could be presented.
I do not suffer through the pain of life,
Reach for omniscience in death or
Wish to be born again. What results is—
A perception, beyond sensation, of continuity.
While my eyes see the rise and fall of
Finite physical fragments and
My ears hear the shouts of joy and
The screams of agony of sentient emotion,
Even my instinct feels the struggles of
Personalities; and I participate through this
Thin layer of body and mind, this self.
But I can watch, see it from outside and in,
Knowing that this differentiated universe
Goes on forever—there will always be more!
But what I truly am is beyond all that,
Produces, permeates and surrounds all that;
Because the creator and the created are one.

—Abram Sapphire

About the poets

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Richard Carlson watches hummingbirds on the Olympic Peninsula in Washington State, where he resides with his family.

Abram Sapphire writes poetry and lives in southern Illinois.



Apropos

When the heart weeps for what it has lost, the spirit laughs for what it has found.—Arabian saying

Suffering is a broom that sweeps away all our negative karma.—Tibetan saying

There is a return for all the trials and ordeals of the spiritual life.—Sri Aurobindo

And though I understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, and have not love, I am nothing! — St. Paul

What does it profit you if you gain the whole world and lose the glory of your soul? Or what can you give in exchange for it?—Jesus

Hatred does not cease by hatred, but by love alone. This is the law eternal.—The Buddha

The foolishness of God is wiser than the wisdom of people.—The Old Testament

Do not expect any satisfaction from physical life and you will no more be tied to it.—The Mother

Who is the wise one? Whosoever is constantly learning something from one person or another. Who is the rich one? Whosoever is contented with his lot. Who is the strong one? Whosoever is capable of self-mastery.—Talmud

Be master of thyself by taming thy heart, thy mind and thy senses; for each person is his own friend and his own enemy.—Mahabharata

Nobleness and generosity are the soul's ethereal firmament; without them, one looks at an insect in a dungeon.—Sri Aurobindo

To be enlightened is to know that which is eternal.—Lao Tse

A truly religious man ought to think that the other religions are also paths leading towards the Reality. We should always maintain an attitude of respect towards other religions.—Ramakrishna

Give yourself entirely to the Divine and you will see the end of all your troubles.—The Mother

The present is the most precious moment. Use all the forces of thy spirit not to let that moment escape thee.—Tolstoy

God is our wise and perfect friend, because he knows when to smite as well as when to fondle, when to slay us no less than when to save and to succour.—Sri Aurobindo

Always circumstances come to reveal the hidden weakness that have to be overcome.—The Mother

Empty for the fool are all the points of space.—Hindu saying

In each thing there is a door to knowledge and in each atom is seen the trace of the sun.—Baha-ullah

There is no greater joy than to serve the Divine.—The Mother

It is only if you belong entirely to the Divine that you can become free.—Sri Aurobindo

So long as the mentality is inconstant and inconsequent, it is worthless, though one have a good teacher and the company of holy men.—Ramakrishna

On his mind vacillating, mobile, difficult to hold in, difficult to master, the intelligent person should impose the same straightness as an arrowmaker gives to an arrow.—Dhammapada

Within, without, O yearning heart, you love and worship God with form; but don't forget that He is present as all things everywhere.—Ramana Maharshi

Bow down and adore where others bend the knee; for where so great a number of men pay the tribute of their adoration, the Impersonal must needs manifest Himself, for He is all compassion.—Ramakrishna

The principal work of life is love. And one cannot love in the past or in the future: one can only love in the present, at this hour, at this minute.—Tolstoy

The value of our actions lies not so much in their apparent nature and outward result as in their help towards the growth of the Divine within us.—Sri Aurobindo

It is impossible to arrive at the summit of the mountain without passing through rough and difficult paths.—Confucius

Be grateful for all ordeals, they are the shortest way to the Divine.—The Mother

The knowledge of the Eternal and the love of the Eternal are in the end one and the same thing. There is no difference between pure knowledge and pure love.—Ramakrishna

Regard your life as given you only for the divine work and help in the divine manifestation.—Sri Aurobindo

The boat moves in the water, but Water should not enter it. Though we live in the world, the world should not occupy our mind.—Ramana Maharshi

True strength is to have power over oneself.—Tolstoy

To put into practice the little you know is the best way to learn more; it is the most powerful means of advancing on the way . . . —The Mother