

Collaboration

Double issue
Fall 2003 / Spring 2004

Journal of the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother

Vol. 29, no. 1



Matrimandir meditation. (Photo by Nilauro Markus)

AUM 2003 and AUM 2004 • Lakshman Sehgal: 'Exercise is my connection to the Mother'
Mother's transformation as recorded in the *Agenda* • Sri Aurobindo and Ramana Maharshi
The transformation of the body: A conversation with Mother recollected by Mona Sarkar
Darshan with Sri Aurobindo • Feeling the Presence • Radical ideas from *Life Divine*



From the Office of Collaboration

I remember the first time I saw a copy of *Collaboration*. It was September 1974 and I was on my circuitous way from LA to Pondicherry (via Fargo and New York) in the company of Madas, a dashing *cantador* who had been given his name—*Ma Das*, servant of the Mother—by the Mother herself.

The maples were turning red and a nip was in the air when Madas and I reached Matagiri. We pulled up in a small Fiat loaded with a cargo of suitcases (several lashed to the roof), guitars, golf clubs, tennis rackets, roller skates, tape recorders, a television, and the major works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

Sam Spanier and Eric Hughes welcomed us (as they welcomed all visitors) with warmth. They fed us, humored us, and handed us a four-page newsletter, stapled in one corner and printed single-sided in blue ink. Hot off the press, it was the first issue of *Collaboration*.

In his premiere editorial, Eric wrote: "Because of the growing interest in the thought of Sri Aurobindo, we feel that a more formalized link in the form of a regular publication would be welcome. In this spirit *Collaboration* is being issued. It will contain news of the Ashram, of Auroville and of other Sri Aurobindo centers . . . It will also contain information on events, articles, etc. relating to the vision of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, as well as extracts from their writings."

Madas and I took that first issue with us to the Ashram (a young fellow named Julian Lines drove us to the airport), and when we returned to the States, we signed up for the mailing list. (In those days, *Collaboration* was free.)

In 1980, I found myself back at Matagiri, on sabbatical from a too-dashing life with Madas. By then, *Collaboration* was a respectable 24-page subscription journal. In the Spring issue, Eric published a whimsical poem of mine ("Taventures in the Black Forest"), then offered me the chance to guest edit the next issue. I dug in, collect-

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ing passages from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother for a spread on gnostic consciousness and supramental transformation (and received a personal letter from Satprem granting permission to publish an excerpt from his *Divine Materialism*).

Eric, who founded *Collaboration*, edited it nobly through its first eight years; then in 1982, busy with translating the *Agenda* (see p. 29 in this issue), he turned *Collaboration* over to Gordon Korstange and a team of collaborators. Soon, though, the team dissolved, and Gordon (with steadfast assistance and support from Jean Korstange) shepherded *Collaboration* through the 1980s and early 1990s. At that time, long before the Internet, *Collaboration* was the sole voice of Integral Yoga in the U.S., connecting isolated, lonely sadhaks spread thinly across the country to a larger community and sense of meaning.

It was Gordon who began publishing articles I wrote on yoga (e.g., "Quitting Sex" and "Atheist Ways." Indeed, *Collaboration* has been the first break for many an aspiring new author.) For 12 long years, Gordon penned numerous thoughtful stories and thought-provoking editorials, and kept those issues coming.

In 1994, Will Moss from the Sri Aurobindo Association asked me if I would edit *NexUs*, a chatty, eight-page sadhak newsletter. I said yes, and with my first issue, changed it into a 32-page yoga review. At AUM that summer, Gordon pro-



posed that we merge *NexUs* and *Collaboration*—and in 1995, we did.

Soon thereafter, having served bravely and well,

Gordon turned over the editorship of *Collaboration* to me—and I've been at the post ever since. Dave Hutchinson, Vishnu Eschner, Lucy Patel, Marta Belén, and Larry Seidlitz have all stepped in at various points as guest editors, and to great appreciation by readers. Tom Parker has been our faithful and irreplaceable proofreader for 10 years.

Meanwhile, for some time now my sadhana has been moving me in new directions (and *Collaboration's* production schedule has suffered)—but lo! just when needed, Larry Seidlitz, formerly an editor of trade psychology journals, has consented to assume the editorial role. As of next issue, Larry will take over responsibility for *Collaboration* operations, and I will pursue other yogic paths.

Please welcome Larry Seidlitz as new managing editor, and accept my heartfelt thanks for what has been a wonderful opportunity to evolve spiritually, experience the ananda of editing and publishing, and be in contact with many dear souls over the years.

—Lynda Lester

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About the photographers and artists in this issue: Wayne Bloomquist (waynebloomquist@sbcglobal.net) lives in Sparks, Nevada. A former president of the Sri Aurobindo Association, he is working on a book about experience, practice, and transformation in Integral Yoga. Chetana Deorah (chetanad@earthlink.net) is a graphic artist in Concord, California. She presented a visual slide show of her art at AUM 2003. Nilauro Markus (info@aviusa.org) lives in Santa Cruz, California, where he is executive director of Auroville International USA.



Source material

Mother on the power of conscious will over matter

The following selection is from a talk Mother gave on 17 July 1957 (Questions and Answers 1957–58).

Has no one any questions on the text? . . . I have nothing special to tell you this evening, and if you are not curious to know what the new perfections of the body could be . . .

Mother, in the physical education we practise here our aim is a greater and greater control over the body, isn't it? So, as Sri Aurobindo has said in what we read last time [see "Sri Aurobindo on physical transformation," below], that the Hatha-yoga and Tantric methods give a very great control over the body, why don't we introduce these methods into our system?

These are occult processes for acting on the body—the Tantric ones, at any rate—while the modern methods of development follow the ordinary physical process to give the body all the perfection it is capable of in its present state.

I don't quite grasp your question. The processes are completely different. The basis of all these methods is the power exercised by the conscious will over matter. Usually it is a method which someone has used fairly successfully and set up as a principle of action, which he has taught to others who in turn have continued and perfected it until it has taken a somewhat fixed form of one kind of discipline or another. But the whole basis is the action of the conscious will on the body.

The exact form of the method is not of primary importance. In various countries, at various times, one method or another has been used, but always behind it there is a canalised mental power which acts methodically.

Of course, some methods try to use a higher power which would in its turn trans-

mit its capacity to the mental power: if a power of a higher order is infused into the mental method, this method naturally becomes more effective and powerful. But essentially all these disciplines depend above all on the person who practises them and the way he uses them. One can, even in the most material, ordinary processes, make use of this altogether external basis to infuse into them powers of a higher order.

And all methods, whatever they may be, depend almost exclusively on the person who uses them, on what he puts into them.

You see, if the matter is considered in its most modern, most external form, how is it that the movements we make almost constantly in our everyday life, or which we have to make in our work if it is a physical work, do not help or help very little, almost negligibly, to develop the muscles and to create harmony in the body? These same movements, on the other hand, if they are made consciously, deliberately, with a definite aim, suddenly start helping you to form

your muscles and build up your body.

There are jobs, for instance, where people have to carry extremely heavy loads, like bags of cement or sacks of corn or coal, and they make a considerable effort; to a certain extent they do it with an acquired facility, but that doesn't give them harmony of the body, because they don't do it with the *idea* of developing their muscles, they do it just "like that." And someone who follows a method, either one he has learnt or one he has worked out for himself, and who makes these very movements with the will to develop this muscle or that, to create a general harmony in his body—he succeeds.

Therefore, in the conscious will, there is something which adds considerably to the movement itself. Those who really want to practise physical culture as it is conceived now, everything they do, they do consciously. They walk downstairs consciously, they make the movements of ordinary life consciously, not mechanically. An attentive eye will perhaps notice a little difference but the

Sri Aurobindo on physical transformation

Something there is in us or something has to be developed, perhaps a central and still occult part of our being containing forces whose powers in our actual and present make-up are only a fraction of what could be, but if they became complete and dominant would be truly able to bring about with the help of the light and force of the soul and the supramental truth-consciousness the necessary physical transformation and its consequences.

This might be found in the system of Chakras revealed by Tantric knowledge and accepted in the systems of Yoga, conscious centres and sources of all the dynamic powers of our being organising their action through the plexuses and arranged in an ascending series from the lowest physical to the highest mind centre and spiritual centre called the thousand-petalled lotus where ascending Nature, the Serpent Power of the Tantrics, meets the Brahman and is liberated into the Divine Being.

These centres are closed or half closed within us and have to be opened before their full potentiality can be manifested in our physical nature: but once they are opened and completely active, no limit can easily be set to the development of their potencies and the total transformation to be possible.

But even these changes would still leave a residue of material processes keeping the old way and not amenable to the higher control and, if this could not be changed, the rest of the transformation might itself be checked and incomplete.

A total transformation of the body would demand a sufficient change of the most material part of the organism, its constitution, its processes and its set-up of nature.—*The Supramental Manifestation*, pp. 34–35



greatest difference lies in the will they put into it, the consciousness they put into it. Walking to go somewhere and walking as an exercise is not the same thing.

It is the conscious will in all these things which is important, it is that which brings about the progress and obtains the result. Therefore, what I mean is that the method one uses has only a relative importance in itself; it is the will to obtain a certain result that is important.

The yogi or aspiring yogi who does *asanas* to obtain a spiritual result or even simply a control over his body, obtains these results because it is with this aim that he does them, whereas I know some people who do exactly the same things but for all sorts of reasons unrelated to spiritual development, and who haven't even managed to acquire good health by it! And yet they do exactly the same thing, sometimes they even do it much better than the yogi, but it doesn't give them a stable health . . . because they haven't thought about it, haven't done it with this purpose in mind. I have asked them myself, I said, "But how can you be ill after doing all that?"—"Oh! but I never thought of it, that's not why I do it."

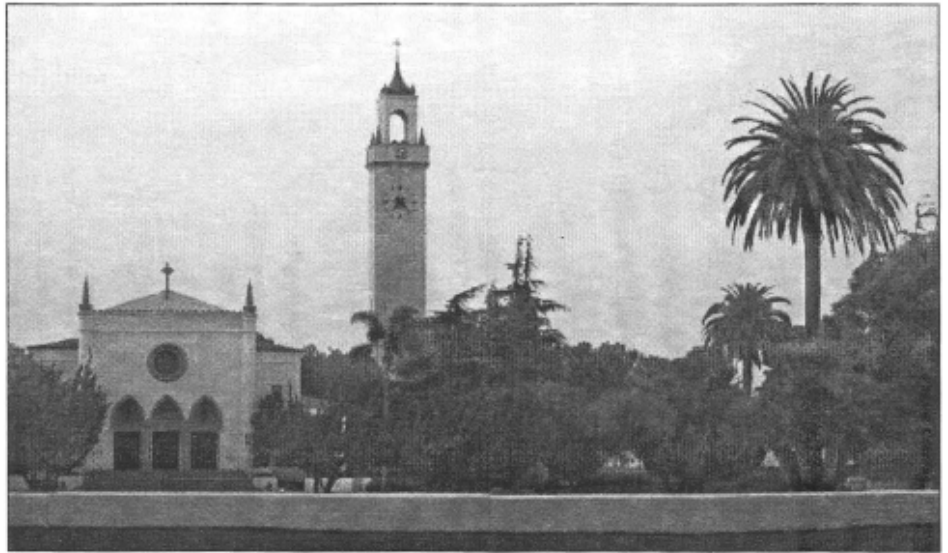
This amounts to saying that it is the conscious will which acts on matter, not the material fact.

Current affairs

Sri Aurobindo Center LA hosts AUM 2003

The Sri Aurobindo Center of Los Angeles (a.k.a. the East-West Cultural Center) hosted a spectacular All USA Meeting (AUM) from 22 to 26 May 2003 at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles.

The conference theme was "Integral Yoga: Contemporary Practice and the Divine Life." Numerous speakers, workshops, panel discussions, and cultural events, combined with participation by sincere seekers with a deep interest in the yoga, created a powerful experience.



Loyola Marymount University was the site of AUM 2003. (Photo by Nilauro Markus)

Mornings were devoted to talks, while afternoons featured participatory workshops and plenary sessions. Presenters included:

- Debashish Banerji (Los Angeles): "Living Laboratories of the Life Divine"
- Ramesh Bijlani (Delhi): "Integral Health"
- Matthijs Cornelissen (Pondicherry): "Integral Yoga and Integral Philosophy"; "Integral Education"
- R.Y. Deshpande (Pondicherry): "The Integral Yoga of the Future"
- Sonia Dyne (UK): "The Mother as Integrating Power in Sri Aurobindo's Yoga"
- Neeltje Huppes (Pondicherry): "The Psychic Being and the Evolution of Consciousness"; "The Inward and Upward Way"
- Ron Jorgensen (Seattle, formerly Pondicherry): "Life in the Ashram of the World"
- Lynda Lester (Boulder, Colorado): "Golden Bridge, Wonderful Fire: The Mother in Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga"
- Aster Patel (Auroville): "Growing up in the Ashram"; "A World in the Becoming: An Integral Yoga Perspective"; "Power of Beauty"

- Savitra (Alan Lithman) (Ashland, Oregon, formerly Auroville): "The Evolutionary Passage toward a Divine Life"
- Jerry Schwartz (Hawaii): "Spirituality and Money"
- Jagdish Vyas (Morganville, New Jersey): "Sri Aurobindo and the Flowering of a Divine Life"

Evenings were given to musical and cultural presentations, including a performance by well-known Indian artists Pandits Rajan and Sajan Misra (vocal), Sanatan Goswami (harmonium), and Subhen Chatterjee (tabla). Also performing were Amrita Banerji, who sang poems by Ashram poets; Pragy Khare and Ellen Davis, who did beautiful dance invocations; Arya Santonastaso (violin), Anie Nunnally (piano), playing classical instrumental pieces; and Chetana Deorah, offering a multimedia presentation on art and yoga.

Nilauro Markus, executive director of Auroville International USA, took photos at the conference, providing a visual record of special moments at AUM 2003.

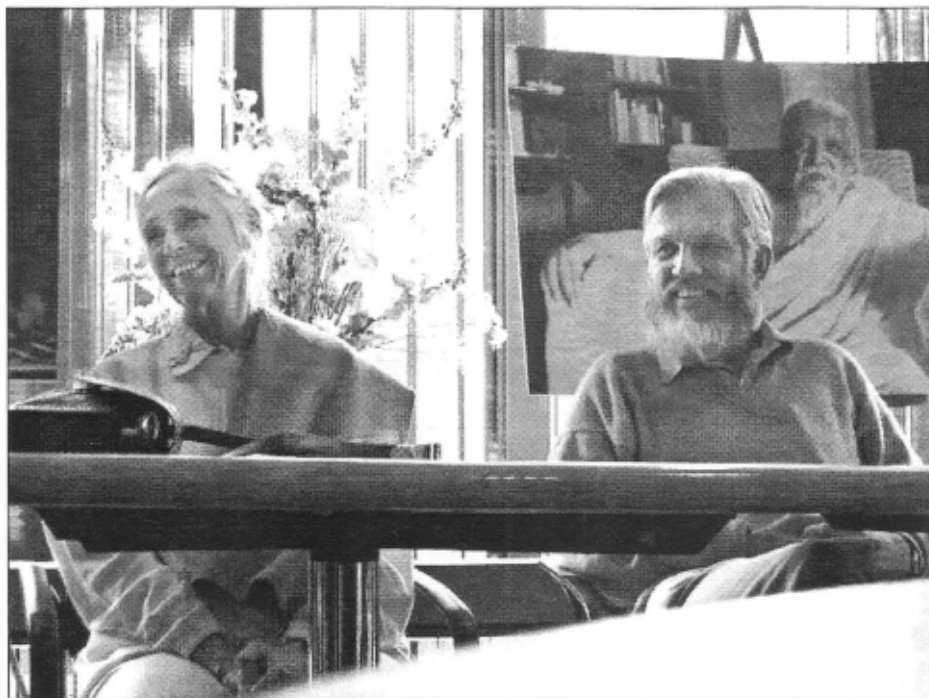
Sincere thanks to Debashish Banerji and the organizing team at the Sri Aurobindo Center of Los Angeles for putting on an AUM to remember!



*Conference Theme: 'Integral Yoga—
Contemporary Practice and the Divine Life'*

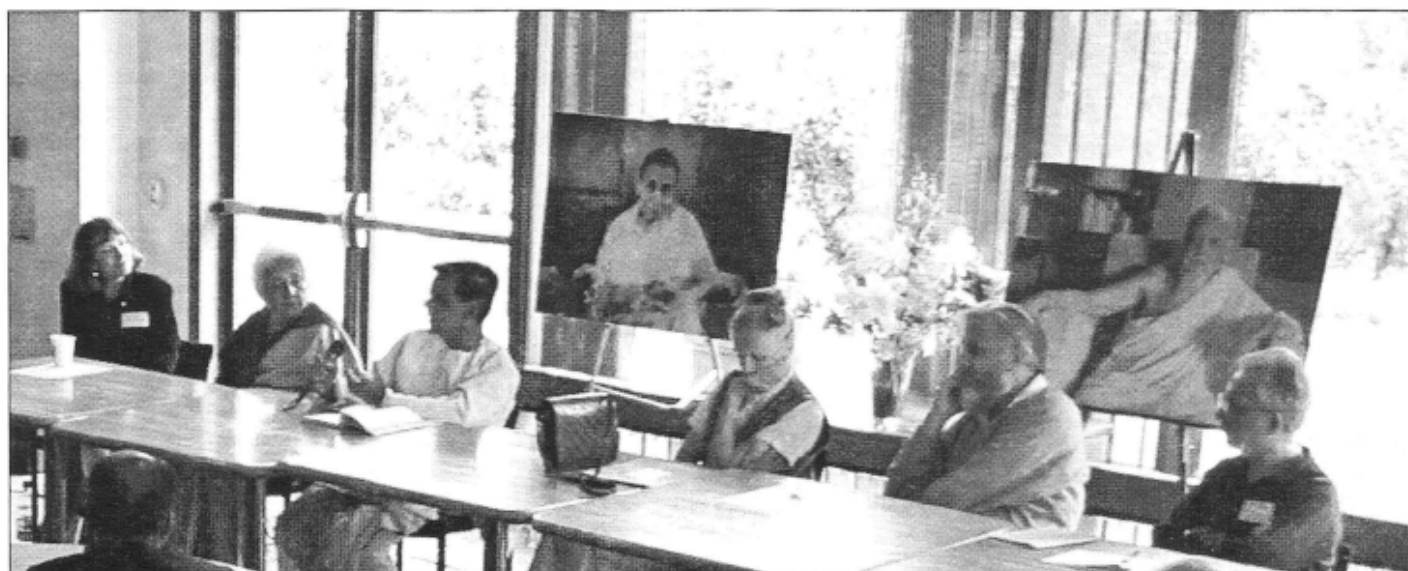
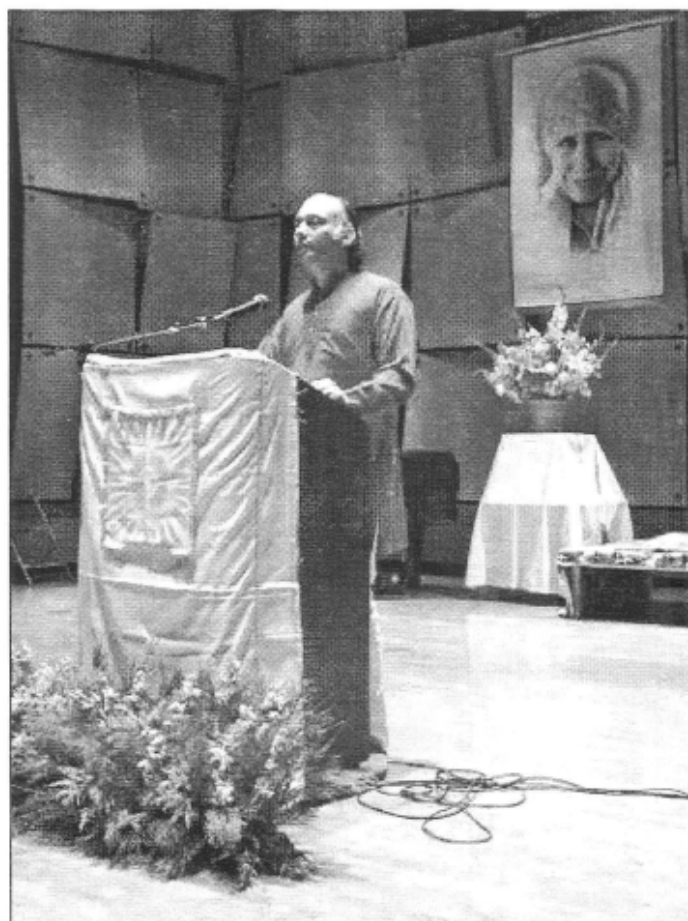
AUM 2003 photos: This page, clockwise from top: Participants gather for a group photo; Neeltje Huppkes and Matthijs Cornelissen answer questions under the watchful gaze of Sri Aurobindo; R.Y. Deshpande enjoys an afternoon plenary session.

Opposite page, clockwise from top left: Aster Patel talks about "A World in the Becoming"; Debashish Banerji speaks on "Living Laboratories of the Life Divine"; Lynda Lester, Aster Patel, R.Y. Deshpande, Neeltje Huppkes, Matthijs Cornelissen, and Ramesh Bijlani participate in a panel discussion; Anie Nunnally and Amrita Banerji sing some heavenly bhajans. (Photos by Nilauro Markus)





AUM 2003 — Los Angeles





AUM '04: Carolina

AUM 2004 will take place from 28 July to 1 August at Furman University in Greenville, South Carolina. The conference theme is "Integral Yoga in Daily Life, A Practice and Approach: Teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother."

The Sri Aurobindo Center Southeast, which is sponsoring the conference, hopes to create an AUM where attendees will be rewarded with a better understanding of the teachings of Mother and Sri Aurobindo, taking home insights on the practical application of yoga in daily life. Presenters will include:

- Charles Flores (San Francisco), "Expanding Awareness of Parts and Planes of Being"
- M. Lal Goel (Pensacola, Florida), "Spiritual Unity in Daily Life"
- Hariharan Gopalan (Cary, North Carolina): "Art of Living: Yoga and Pranayama"
- Lynda Lester (Boulder, Colorado), "Connecting to the Inner Consciousness"



Above: AUM accommodations in Greenville, South Carolina. (Photo by Lynda Lester)

- Mangesh Nadkarni (Hyderabad), "All Life is Yoga"
- Alok Pandey (Pondicherry), "Foundations of Integral Yoga"
- Priyanka (San Francisco), "Ayurveda for You"
- Sraddhalu Ranade (Pondicherry), "Conscious Evolution: A Practical Approach"
- Shubhra Upadhyay (San Jose): "Impediments to Practical Yoga"

The conference will also include interactive discussions, physical fitness activities, meditation sessions, video presentations, light evening programs, a bookstore, a relaxing atmosphere, great vegetarian meals, and leisure time.

AUM '04 will be held on the wooded campus of Furman University in Greenville, South Carolina, among the serene foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The campus provides an ideal atmosphere where participants will be able to meditate, read, practice yoga, and enjoy both indoor and outdoor activities.

Daily rate for the conference including lodging is \$95 per day (\$120 after June 30); daily rate without lodging is \$60 per day (\$85 after June 30).

For more information, see <http://www.collaboration.org> or contact the Sri Aurobindo Center Southeast, P. O. Box 8375, Greenville, SC 29604 USA; phone: 864-232-9944, ext. 201; email: aum2004@jhmhotels.com.

This is the second AUM to be held at Furman University. AUM 2002, a moving experience for those who attended, was also held there.

2004 marks the tenth anniversary of the Sri Aurobindo Center Southeast.

News

Psych conference held in San Francisco

The Third International Conference on Integral Psychology was held from 30 May to 1 June 2003 in San Francisco. Co-sponsored by the Cultural Integration Fellow-



At AUM '03, H.P. Rama starts planning for AUM '04. (Photo by Nilaurio Markus)

ship and the California Institute of Integral Studies, the conference featured talks by scholars and practitioners in the fields of Integral Psychology, Integral Psychotherapy, and related areas. Conference coordinator Kundan Singh worked with Brant Cortright, Bahman Shirazi, and Jim Ryan to organize the conference.

Speakers included Hilary Anderson, Debashish Bannerji, R.L. Bijlani, Brendan Collins, Brant Cortright, Susan Curtiss, Charles Flores, Monica Gupta, Neeltje Huppel, Michael Miovic, Aster Patel, Carl Peters, Celest Powell, Larry Seidlitz, Bahman Shirazi, Richard Stein, Suneet Varma, Kathleen Wall, and Eric Weiss.

The conference was the third of a series of gatherings by scholars and practitioners in Integral Psychology. The first was held in Matagiri, New York, and the second in Pondicherry, India.

For AUM attendees who were lucky enough to attend this meeting the weekend after AUM 2003, it was a wonderful chance to extend their yogic experience for another week.

Briefs

Searchable writings: Twelve works by Sri Aurobindo and 16 by the Mother are now searchable online at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram's website, <http://www.sriaurobindoashram.info>. This is an important contribution to study and practice for sadhaks everywhere, especially because this is the first time that the works of the Mother have been accessible for searching.



Thanks to the selfless work of the Ashram and the Archives department for their continuing efforts to make these works available!

Michael Murphy interview: A fascinating interview between Michael Murphy and Julian Lines is available at <http://www.lifepositive.com/Mind/personal-growth/transformation/michaelmurphy.asp>. Michael, who spent a year and a half in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, is co-founder of Esalen Institute, co-founder of Integral Transformative Practice (ITP), and author of *The Future of the Body*. Julian is president of Matagiri Sri Aurobindo Center. He runs the Pondicherry Gift Shop and the Auroville Information Office, both in Woodstock, NY.

E-cards: Beautifully designed electronic greeting cards, with apt quotations from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, are available on the website of the Sri Aurobindo Society: <http://sas.shubhkaamna.com/>. The cards can be emailed for free, and are lovely for sending to sadhak friends on special occasions.

Poems and music on CD: The Sri Aurobindo Center of Los Angeles is pleased to offer for sale a new CD by Dominique Chevalier, French organist, composer, and

disciple of Mother and Sri Aurobindo. The CD is called *Anima* and consists of seven poems of Sri Aurobindo sung by professional singers. The CD retails for \$15 (plus \$2 shipping). To order, send email to ewcc@earthlink.net.

Correction: The Fall/Winter 2002–2003 issue of *Collaboration* stated that Dmitry Melgunov was a translator/editor with Aditi Publishing, editor of *Sadhana Journal*, and the Auroville liaison in Russia. We have since been informed that he no longer works with Aditi Publishing or is a member of Auroville International in Russia, and that *Sadhana Journal* has ceased publication.

Mother's mahasamadhi, Nirodbaran's 100th

17 November 2003 was the 30th anniversary of Mother's mahasamadhi. The message for the day was a quote from Sri Aurobindo: "Sitting calm and quiet, remember the Mother and open yourself to Her. This is the rule of meditation."

It was also the 100th birthday of Nirodbaran, a physician who joined the Ashram and wrote about his contact with Sri Aurobindo (*Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo* and *Twelve Years with Sri Aurobindo*). Greetings from AVI France, Germany, and the UK are copied below.—Julian Lines

Happy birthday from France

Please convey the best wishes and joy of all the members of AVI France to Nirod-da on his very special birthday, 100 years. It is wonderful to have lived a century, and that also lived with Sri Aurobindo for so many years with total dedication to his ideals and in all simplicity. His living examples will inspire many young and old devotees.

Sonia Dyne from England has written a beautiful poem [see p. 10], and we join too with her and all AVI board members to greet him. Let him live long and be the flagbearer of Sri Aurobindo's light and thoughts.

Our prayers to the Divine Mother and Sri Aurobindo to bestow on Nirod-da always bliss and health throughout many years to come.

—Devasmita on behalf of AVI France

Congratulations from Germany

Auroville International Germany would like to extend its heartfelt congratulations and best wishes on the occasion of this very special day.

We still feel honored to remember the day when you, dear Nirodbaran, laid the foundation stone of our German Pavilion in the International Zone of Auroville on 15 August 2001.

On that auspicious day when you deposited the boxes (which had been consecrated in Sri Aurobindo's room) into the soil of Auroville, we had the feeling that you graciously acted as the connecting link between our two countries.

May the deep love that many of our great German thinkers and poets have felt for India, your native country, bear full fruit in our common striving for human unity!

With deep love and respect,

—Friederike Werner for all members of AVI Germany



Mother and Sri Aurobindo at AUM '02. (Photo by Lynda Lester)



To Nirodbaran on his 100th birthday

Auroville greets you on this happy day
And Auroville's friends their salutations send—
Homage and love from places far away
To one who is poet, healer, guide and friend.

No words of ours can match the brilliant stream
Of Aurobindo's verse that by your hand
Was given to the world: a future dream
Of hope that rose from India's ancient land.

Your life, not measured on a common scale,
Became a channel of unending light,
A pattern of selfless love that will not fail
Against the onslaughts of opposing night.

For Fate plucked out from Time's unfolding skein
A hundred golden years in history's chain.

—Sonia Dyne, AVI UK

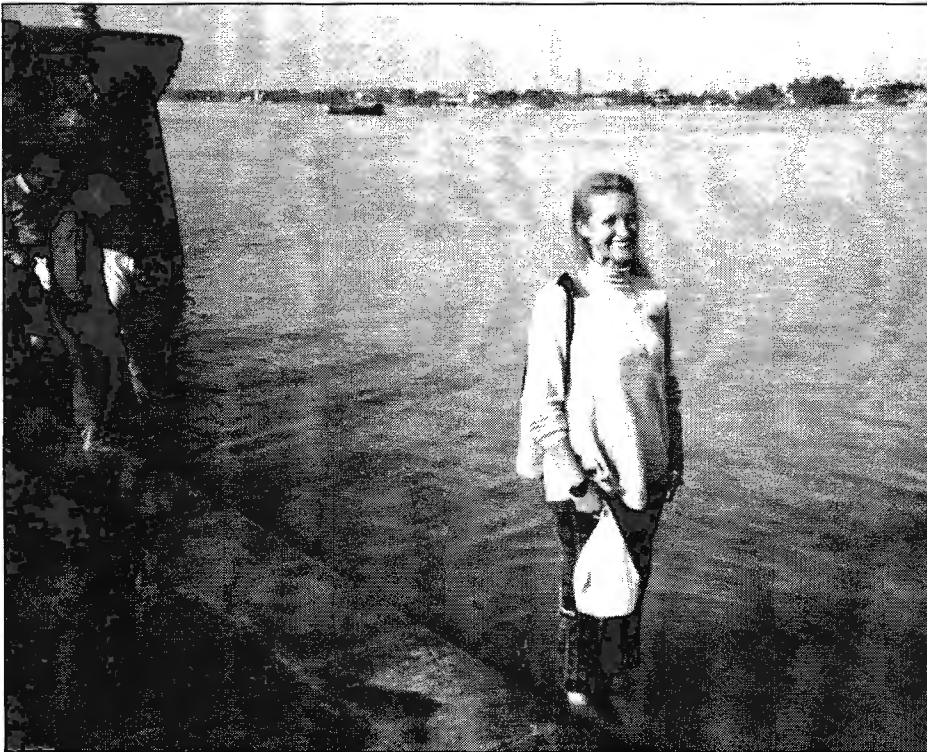
Passings

The fear of Death

Death wanders through our lives at will, sweet Death
Is busy with each intake of our breath.
Why do you fear her? Lo, her laughing face
All rosy with the light of jocund grace!
A kind and lovely maiden culling flowers
In a sweet garden fresh with vernal showers,
This is the thing you fear, young portress bright
Who opens to our souls the worlds of light.
Is it because the twisted stem must feel
Pain when the tenderest hands its glory steal?
Is it because the flowerless stalk droops dull
And ghastly now that was so beautiful?
Or is it the opening portal's horrid jar
That shakes you, feeble souls of courage bare?
Death is but changing of our robes to wait
In wedding garments at the Eternal's gate.

—Sri Aurobindo

Ariel Browne: A unique pioneer



Ariel Browne in the Ganges. (Photo by Wayne Bloomquist)

Dr. Ariel Browne passed away on 9 March 2004 in Atlanta, Georgia, after a long battle with cancer. Her devotion to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother sustained her throughout the process of transition, as she called it.

Ariel (she recently had taken the name Ariela Grace) was a former board member of the Sri Aurobindo Association. Her center in Atlanta was devoted to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, and she presented numerous talks and workshops.

She developed a process called Cell Talk and was very focused on the process of transformation of the cells.

Ariel was a unique, pioneering person who was generous in her support of others following the path.

She is survived by her husband W. David Browne, her son Ivan McCloskey and his wife Mindy McCloskey, and grandchildren Brendan and Janie.

A memorial service was held on 3 April in Gainesville, Georgia.

—Wayne Bloomquist



New Creation in Auroville. (Photo by Nilauro Markus)

Remembering Daniel

Daniel Wilms passed away on 29 July 2003. He was a member of the Integral Yoga Forum and was one of my best friends in the yoga.

Daniel lived in Chiang Mai, Thailand, with his wife Chika and his daughter Johanna, and had suffered from a cancerous brain tumor. Chika wrote me: "On one hand we are glad that his ordeal with glioblastoma multiforme is over . . . On the other hand, he is no longer with us, and that void cannot be easily filled."

Daniel was loved by many. It must have been his universal love for people and

life that could inspire others. When it came to yoga, his aspiration, self-giving, effort, dedication and devotion for the Divine were genuine, from the depth of his being. This was what he inspired in others too. To work with him was a joy: he would focus on what needed to be done, and do it, with all the joy the moment could bring.

He loved India. He told me when he arrived for the first time in Auroville, he could sense the divine force so strongly that it made him prostrate on the road.

Daniel was someone who experienced the hardships of life first-hand. He knew people well, as he knew himself well. Behind the external person there was deep insight and wisdom. That made our friendship

worthwhile—the joy and the depth, life and yoga, friends and love.

After India, there was a long gap of time before we met again. He, Chika, and Johanna settled in Thailand after having lived and worked in Japan. This brought us together on a few New Year's celebrations, which were most joyful times.

An unexpected meeting happened last year here in Bangkok when long-time Aurovilian Narad, now settled in the USA, came to Thailand to visit a nursery. The three of us together after such a long period of no contact was a grace indeed. This contact deepened our friendship—and looking back now Daniel has left us, it was a significant meeting for us. I am glad that it happened, a



soul reunion. Instead of feeling sad, I rather experience gratitude. Friendship with Daniel was rewarding—a true contact with a fellow soul, a relationship that came through the yoga, an eternal connection with India. Yes, this lifts me up again, it is gratitude that wants to express itself—and that would be exactly in Daniel's spirit.

I remember very well after an evening of much talking, he looked at me with most joyful eyes. He was free.

In gratitude of having been his friend. Wishing Chika and Johanna the inner joy and love and peace Daniel inspired so generously.

—August Timmermans

August Timmermans (august.t@bu.ac.th), is originally from the Netherlands. A former Aurovilian, he has lived in Bangkok, Thailand, since 1987. He was a co-moderator of the Integral Yoga Forum from September 2000 until the list closed in January 2004.

Sri Aurobindo on death

compiled by Narad (Richard Eggenberger)

All quotations below are from the Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1972.

Death is the question Nature puts continually to Life and her reminder to it that it has not yet found itself. If there were no siege of death, the creature would be bound for ever in the form of an imperfect living. Pursued by death he awakes to the idea of perfect life and seeks out its means and its possibility.—*Essays in Philosophy and Yoga, p. 205*

We have to face the future's offer of death as well as its offer of life, and it need not alarm us, for it is by constant death to our old names and forms that we shall live most vitally in greater and newer forms and names.—*Essays in Philosophy and Yoga, p. 129*

Death has no reality except as a process of life. Disintegration of substance and re-

Bhakti and everyday life

Daniel Wilms posted this message to the Integral Yoga Forum, an online discussion group that was active for several years, in February 2003.

From the readings this month, which I enjoyed, I pick out this excerpt from Sri Aurobindo:

"And one element of this consecration must be a self-purifying so as to become fit for the divine contact, or for the entrance of the Divine into the temple of our inner being, or for his self-revelation in the shrine of the heart. This purifying may be ethical in its character, but it will not be merely the moralist's seeking for the right and blameless action or even, when once we reach the stage of Yoga, an obedience to the law of God as revealed in formal religion; but it will be a throwing away, catharsis, of all that conflicts whether with the idea of the Divine in himself or of the Divine in ourselves. In the former case it becomes in habit of feeling and outer act an imitation of the Divine, in the latter a growing into his likeness in our nature. What inner adoration is to ceremonial worship, this growing into the divine likeness is to the outward ethical life. It culminates in a sort of liberation by likeness to the Divine, *sadrsya-mukti*, a liberation from our lower nature and a change into the divine nature."

In another reading, Sri Aurobindo points out that in the Integral Yoga, that consecration includes all life, all our being, inner and outer. This is a tremendous task, which without faith sounds ridiculous. As a friend of mine used to say, "Genetic structures of one million years stand against you. Whatever you 'spiritual' people try to achieve, it is only the tip of an iceberg that is biologically determined."

Indeed, I don't take that determination lightly—I know how the old vital physical, mental, etc. raise their heads again and again.

But nothing can take away that deeper faith, the joy of the bhakta in me that leaps up with a great cry of rapture: "Oh, I shall see my Lord! After a lakh of lives, I shall see my Lord! How great is the Lord indeed!" (That story, renarrated by Sri Aurobindo, spoke to me deeply).

For me, my rapture is no more the spectacular firework of moments of realization—they come and go, no experiences of deep hot fires of divine love, which may burn today and are cold embers tomorrow (due to my inability to hold those moments). My bhaktic joy is that each however insignificant step, lived with awareness, minute by minute, day by day, brings me closer to that encounter "after a lakh of years"!

That's why I get inspired when forum members share with us often mundane, everyday life experiences—they are charged, they have for me the bhaktic fire . . . or when I read about the garden that someone had turned into her sadhana—so inspiring!

It's the small, insignificant event—even now writing to you, feeling the tip of my fingers on the writing board, being aware of each finger used for the Divine, feeling my eyes fixed on the screen, and feeling joy possessing all these beautiful tools with nerves and muscles and veins and arteries, which right now are all used to this one purpose!

Next moment my eyes may be captivated by something much less divine and my fingers may not even know to whom they belong—and yet there will be the joy of another moment of full awareness and true offering.

—Daniel Wilms



newal of substance, maintenance of form and change of form are the constant process of life; death is merely a rapid disintegration subservient to life's necessity of change and variation of formal experience. Even in the death of the body there is no cessation of Life, only the material of one form of life is broken up to serve as material for other forms of life.—*Life Divine*, p. 176

Of course, that is the real fact—death is only a shedding of the body, not a cessation of the personal existence. A man is not dead because he goes into another country and changes his clothes to suit that climate.—*Letters on Yoga*, p. 463

Man, born into the world, revolves between world and world in the action of Prakriti and Karma. Purusha in Prakriti is his formula: what the soul in him thinks, contemplates and acts, that always he becomes. All that he had been, determined his present birth; and all that he is, thinks, does in this life up to the moment of his death, determines what he will become in the worlds beyond and in lives yet to be.

If birth is a becoming, death also is a becoming, not by any means a cessation.—*Essays on the Gita*, p. 294

Even Science believes that one day death may be conquered by physical means and its reasonings are perfectly sound. There is no reason why the supramental Force should not do it. Forms on earth do not last (they do in other planes) because these forms are too rigid to grow expressing the progress of the spirit. If they become plastic enough to do that there is no reason why they should not last.—*Letters on Yoga*, p. 1229

There is no such thing as death, for it is the body that dies and the body is not the man. That which really is, cannot go out of existence, though it may change the forms through which it appears, just as that which is non-existent cannot come into being. The soul is and cannot cease to be. This opposition of *is* and *is not*, this balance of being and becoming which is the mind's view of existence, finds its end in the realisation of

the soul as the one imperishable self by whom all this universe has been extended.

Finite bodies have an end, but that which possesses and uses the body, is infinite, illimitable, eternal, indestructible. It casts away old and takes up new bodies as a man changes worn-out raiment for new; and what is there in this to grieve at and recoil and shrink?

This is not born, nor does it die, nor is it a thing that comes into being once and passing away will never come into being again. It is unborn, ancient, sempiternal; it is not slain with the slaying of the body.

Who can slay the immortal spirit? Weapons cannot cleave it, nor the fire burn, nor do the waters drench it, nor the wind dry. Eternally stable, immobile, all-pervading, it is for ever and for ever.

Not manifested like the body, but greater than all manifestation, not to be analysed by the thought, but greater than all mind, not capable of change and modification like the life and its organs and their objects, but beyond the changes of mind and life and body, it is yet the Reality which all these strive to figure.—*Essays on the Gita*, p. 62

AV almanac

From Auroville: Best wishes for 2004

by Tine (Christine Zimm)

To all of you wherever you are, I wish you a Very Happy New Year—Bonne Année—Ein Frohes Neues Jahr—full of joy, light, peace and progress.

Here in Auroville, it was a luminous, strong, and peaceful ending to 2003 and beginning of the new year.

The Tibetan Pavilion in the International Zone had again invited us to join the candlelight meditation at 7 p.m. on the 31st. A mandala of oil lamps was drawn on the grassy floor in the inner courtyard and little lamps flickered on all balconies and window sills, creating chains of light. There was Tibetan music, monks chanting mantras, a talk by the Dalai Lama on tape—and later, beautiful flute music. People flowed in and out of the building.



Dewdrop. (Photo by Nilauro Markus)



Flowers and floating candles near the Matrimandir. (Photo by Nilauro Markus)

It was a calm atmosphere, the warm wind caressed hair and skin, the light of the flames shone in people's faces, stars flickered above in the clear night sky. What an extremely beautiful night!

The Matrimandir and the banyan tree have some new features since a while: At night there are several strong light beams installed at the petals, illuminating the golden sphere. Also under the banyan, on two opposite sides of the tree, two lights are shining indirectly into the thick leaf foliage, making a walk under the banyan like a stroll in a fairytale forest. A new pathway, starting at the Matrimandir office, was made recently, so that one can walk now easily from the office directly under and through the ban-

yan tree and then to the Matrimandir.

Yesterday a few golden discs filled with water, flowers, and floating candles were placed under the banyan, and people sat around them and everywhere in the grass and on the granite benches, meditating, and quietly absorbing the atmosphere.

The Chamber was open until 1 a.m. When I arrived at 11:45 p.m., I had to look for a place to sit. But despite the many people, I had an intense meditation and felt a strong force in the chamber. Welcome 2004!

When I drove home at 1:30 a.m., it started raining. Raining?? Yes, really, raining. And it rained more and more for hours, until 5 a.m.—like a blessing for the new be-

ginning, it came down from the sky. It was not easy to get up again at 5 a.m., but the expectation to experience the force of the new year at the Amphitheater just pulled my legs out of bed.

The lamp shades written with Sanskrit mantras and OM NAMO BHAGAVATE led the way to the Amphitheater. Big surprise: There was almost no one there! Usually the first-January celebration draws crowds and crowds, but today morning, only a handful of people sat on the steps, maybe 100 or 120; probably the rain had kept many away. Meditation music was playing and some sang and hummed OM.

As soon as I entered the OM-filled amphitheater, it was as if someone had opened



a zip—to another dimension or something. I sat down and concentrated, and it was just wonderful. Very peaceful, very strong, uplifting and joyful.

The rain had stopped, but the sky was overcast, clouds became visible in the first new dawn, and birds flew noisily overhead. A brief show of colors, then the light played hide-and-seek with the clouds. I had not expected that strong atmosphere. The few people who were there quietly sat or walked around, and the whole area was as if submerged in a solid peace. It's like one walks on cotton, or on something not material and firm, I can't really describe it.

Now, four hours later at 11 a.m., the sun shines, and a gentle breeze shakes the leaves of the trees outside my window.

This year being a leap year, I wonder what we will have in store—renewed acceleration of processes and insights?

My prayers go out to the world, thinking of all the people who need relief and wishing so much that all of us will shoulder our loads and offer them to the light, to be transformed.

OM Mother Sri Aurobindo . . .

With love and best wishes for 2004 from Auroville.

Tine (tine@auroville.org.in) lives in Auroville, where she is the international secretary for Auroville International.

'Million-dollar campaign' in progress for AV land

To help secure its physical base, Auroville has initiated a campaign to raise one million dollars (\$1,000,000) from friends and supporters of Auroville around the world.

Auroville and Auroville International centers are hoping to raise the funds to purchase the land currently being offered for sale to Auroville, both in the city area and the Green Belt.

Due to population pressure in the Pondicherry region and Auroville's development itself, land within the township has become a commodity for financial gain. Real estate speculation and developments,

Marathon man

Chandresh Patel from Santa Clara, California, pledged to run for 100 minutes to raise money for the "million-dollar campaign" for Auroville land, inviting friends to sponsor him by the minute. Here is his report.

On Saturday, 9 August, from 7:00 a.m. to 8:42 a.m., I completed the pledge run (total: 102 minutes).

The lake was serene that morning, very calm. The sun just peeked over the south hills. The birds were all up and about all along the creek. Saw few rabbits, did not get so scared. They, I mean. A flock of birds, pecking on worms or something on the trail, all marched off at a distance under a bush. Had I not noticed them from afar, I would not have known the large cache of birds in that bush as I passed by. All quiet on this creek side, not a squeak.

On the way back, around the 80-minute mark, Mother Nature (or the great collective that frequents the trails) donated \$1 to the run. I found the George Washington folded lying on the trail. I presume it is towards the AV Land Fund as I found it during the pledge run.

A GW in hand is worth a flock of birds in the bush.—Chandresh

P.S. I have got pledges for \$12,644 so far—THANK YOU!!!

inconsistent with Auroville's master plan, are on the increase, threatening Auroville's future. Commercial activities may soon extend into the Green Belt, a sensitive and critical area for environmental conservation and water resource management.

The "million-dollar campaign" has been successful in bringing together diverse groups working for a common aim. Individuals in Auroville and outside are coming up with creative ideas for raising money [see "Marathon man," sidebar]. Well over \$400,000 has been raised to date.

Donations may be sent to Auroville International USA, P.O. Box 877, Santa Cruz, CA 95061 USA. For more information, see www.auroville.org/million/million.htm.

Of further interest

Living on Earth, a nationally syndicated environmental show on National Public Radio, broadcast a segment on Auroville the week of 18 July 2003. Reported by Andrew Blackwell, the piece is called "Ecovillage, Indian Style." It is available in audio file and transcript in the "Archives" section of their website at <http://www.loe.org/>.

Tapes or CDs of the program can be purchased online.

New Auroville journal: In August 2003, the Sri Aurobindo International Institute for Educational Research in Auroville launched *RITAM*, a new biannual journal focusing on material and spiritual researches in Auroville. It is for Aurovilians and those outside Auroville who are looking to Auroville for pioneering work in many fields: <http://www.auroville.org/index/ritam.htm>.

AVI's Evolve: Auroville International USA's *Evolve* newsletter is available online in Adobe Acrobat PDF format at http://www.aviusa.org/resources_evolve.html.

AV Information Office: The Auroville Information Office in Woodstock, NY, offers pamphlets, books, CDs, and videos via mail order. Auroville handicrafts are available through the Pondicherry Gift Shop, located at 12 Tinker St. in Woodstock, New York. If you come to New York, please look us up. We're happy to give talks or show videos to interested groups.

For more information, see <http://www.matagiri.org/avinfo.htm>.



Chronicles

'Exercise is my connection to the Mother'

An interview with Lakshman Sehgal

by Devdip Ganguli

The following excerpts are reprinted with permission from an interview that appeared in the February 2002 issue of Sport Spirit, a publication of the Physical Education Department of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, under the title, "I Have Almost an Addiction to Exercise."

Lakshman Sehgal, one of our ex-students, was here last year. During the short period that he stayed here, he coached B group and D group in gymnastics and athletics. His enthusiasm, vitality, and dynamic coaching methods were liked by all group members. Many of them asked us who this person was and how he was so good at sports at this age. We therefore took the opportunity of having a conversation with him just before he left.

At what age did you come to the Ashram and when did you leave?

My parents moved to Pondicherry in 1945 when I was two-and-a-half years old. I was here till September of 1964.

Did you complete your education here fully and then leave? Who were your batch-mates?

I completed my higher course in 1962. Then with Mother's permission I went to the U.S. for higher education. My classmates were varied. Madhusudhan, Norman Dowsett, Usha (who is now a captain), Arvindbabu, Namita were all in my class. There were a few others, but they have left the Ashram.

How good were you at sports? Which were your preferred activities?

I am not sure how good! Good or bad is

a relative term. I can tell you what I enjoyed doing the most: gymnastics, athletics and obviously the games—basketball and tennis. Volleyball was not my favorite game as I always ended up hurting my fingers! In terms of ability, I had probably more of that in athletics—track and field items—and in gymnastics.

We hear that you previously held the records for a few items. Which were the items? Are there any interesting stories that go with them?

You are testing my memory! I think I had the records for triple jump and pole vault for a while. During the triple jump event, I remember, the year I did the jump—13.4 meters—one of my jumps was quite a bit behind from the measuring line, but the Mother, who used to stand by and looked at everything very intently, had Arunkumar measure the distance from where I had actually taken off (about half a meter behind—13.7m). So that was my unofficial longest jump. In high jump I was pretty good, I think my best was 1.71m. I don't remember if I ever tied Manoj-da's record of 1.73 or if I was just shy of it.

I think the lasting memory of anything we did was the fact that Mother was very close and was a part of everything we did. The spirit with which we did was just to do the very best we could as children to please her because she couldn't act more like a proud mother than your own mother. She used to get just as excited and just as disappointed when something didn't go well for any of us. That is a lasting memory of everything I have done in the Playground and the Ashram . . . she is sitting there and watching everything.

Your pole vault performance of 3.25m seems an astonishing feat considering that you had only sand to land on . . . did this have a negative effect on your legs (knees)? Now it seems quite unthinkable to land on tile sand!

I think you didn't think about the conditions. The only thing you thought about was doing the very best because the Mother was sitting there and that was the only consideration.

In terms of the effect, I will be 59 next month and I have been pretty much injury free since I left the Ashram. I have exer-

cised almost seven days a week. I play a lot of tennis, and yesterday I was able to do a round-off to back somersault. My knees held up; so obviously jumping on the sand, be it pole vault or high jump, or doing agility in the Playground on the carpet hasn't affected me.

A lot about injuries had to do with the attitude with which we did it. We did it without fear and we did it to show our best to the Mother. We didn't worry about whether it would hurt us or not.

Yesterday, incidentally, Batti-da was taking vaulting for the boys and he came up and said, "Do you remember the picture in the *Bulletin*?" It was a picture of me doing vaulting over a box (neckspring). The picture of me shows that I didn't use my hands at all. I did the neckspring without the hands! He says nowadays we get children who can't even do a stride vault. They are so afraid of it! Those days we just did it because we did it with Mother around. It was focused in one direction . . . only towards her, and the result was that fear of accidents or the fear of this or the fear of that was not really there.

* * *

How did you benefit from your education in the Ashram to cope with life outside? What role, if any, did physical education play in that?

I think physical education has had a significant impact. When I left here, I was in a sense, addicted to physical education. For two respects: 1) All the physical education that I did was in front of the Mother, so that became for me a way to connect with the Mother. So even when I was a poor graduate student with very little funds and access to physical facilities in the 60s, I used to go and do some gymnastics with the Illinois State school gymnastics team. But traveling was cumbersome—I didn't have a car—in addition to studies. After classes at 10:30 at night, I used to do some *dund baithaks*, asanas, and use my chemistry textbooks as barbells! I used to exercise for half an hour and then study for two hours. I used to find that all the fatigue of the day used to go away. I was convinced that it stimulated and kept me up and alert. The brain generates endorphins that stimulate and that keep one physically alert. 2) My desire to stay look-



ing as fit as when I last performed in front of the Mother . . . I have maintained my weight within two pounds since I left the Ashram. The clinical and medical benefits of exercise have now been proved (slow aging process etc.), but of course the intention and motivation for physical education here is different from outside.

What are the essential differences you see in students (in the domain of sports or even otherwise) between us and our counterparts outside?

One basic difference is that very early in the outside world, a selection process takes place and the facilities are only available to the best or the most physically enabled. Everybody till the age of 18 is required to do some physical activity as part of their daily routine. But what was available in the Ashram 50 years, back both for girls and boys, only came about 20 years later in the U.S.A.

Here you can accomplish a lot more with a little effort in the sense that teachers are so much more accessible. Any student who is serious and willing to put the effort can go long ways.

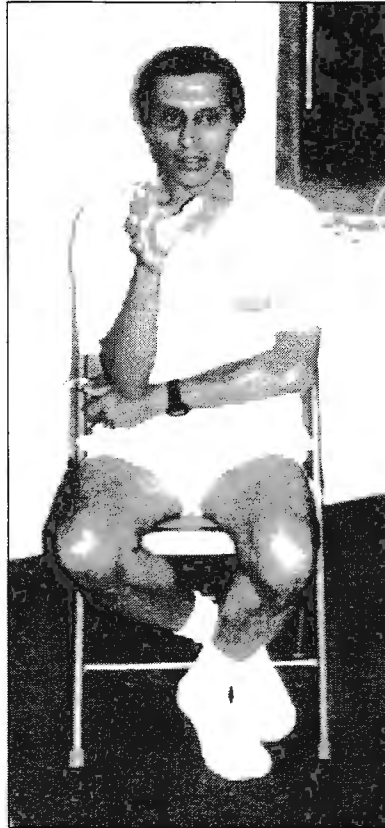
In another sense, this environment is a lot more protected from many negative distractions—drugs, alcohol, smoking, and similar other distractions that take away and corrupt the life and brain of the youth. The environment here is a lot more conducive to personal progress. There, you find a lot of brilliant students, but the parents at home and the social infrastructure have to put in a lot more effort to maintain the Indian heritage and values. It is a greater challenge outside than it is here.

* * *

What differences do you see in coaches outside and here?

Certainly the coaches outside have a lot more resources at their disposal. It has become a very scientific training. You can see the results of the training program—100m at 9.79. Nobody would have thought that humanly possible. It is about understanding the physiology of the muscle and knowing how to optimize it. I think they have more access to these kinds of facilities.

Remember that it is not fair to compare standards of coaching because the goals are different. Outside it is all about winning.



Lakshman Sehgal. (Photo by Lynda Lester)

And you see some students graduating simply because they were good at sports and part of some university team. It is a different reference frame and in a sense almost perverse approach to education and sports.

Here the performance becomes secondary to the attitude in which you participate. You try to do it to the best of your ability as an offering to the Mother. If the children can do it with that attitude, they are the real winners. Whether they have a world record or an Indian record become irrelevant. In the long run that attitude is going to stay with them for the rest of their life. Records come and go.

* * *

How do you find the medical facilities here in the Ashram?

For the size of the population and the needs of the community, I think it is very adequate. The lifestyle in the Ashram is a model lifestyle. I am extremely impressed with the diet in the Corner House. Dada has been kind enough to allow me to eat there, I

have been eating a lot of my meals in the C.H. I think it is an incredibly well-balanced diet and it shows in the height of the children eating here. So given the lifestyle—in the sense of diet, stress-free environment, and exercise, which are the three ingredients for a long, healthy life which anybody anywhere in the world would promote, and which you have that as an inherent part of your life—the medical issues are more than adequately handled. Plus the needs are small.

Do you have any future plans to come back permanently to the Ashram?

I leave it up to the Mother. I pursue one of the things the Mother said after I had gone from this place and was, at one point during my early days, in a state of confusion as to what direction I should go with my education.

Normally I used to write letters to the Mother, and usually within one day of my mailing I had my answer in some form or other, I didn't have to wait for an answer from her. But on that one occasion, I was so confused that I insisted on a written answer from her. She wrote back saying, "Whatever you do, do it with conviction that I am behind your action." So that is what I try to follow.

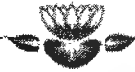
The world has become so small after the Internet: I can live outside and still keep the Ashram within me. I see changes in America that directly reflect the work she did here. I don't know where I will be physically five, ten years from now or for the rest of my life, but I know I am part of the Ashram and the Mother, and the Mother is part of me. I worry less about where I am going to be, physically.

What do you do to keep yourself fit? After yesterday, you are probably the oldest in the Ashram to have performed a back somersault!

I have almost an addiction to exercise, and I try to exercise seven days a week. If I don't exercise two days in a row, I can't keep food down in my stomach. Another reason, as I have mentioned before, is that I feel connected to the Mother through physical education. As long as my body will permit, I want to remain the way she saw me.

* * *

In the light of difficulties that modern



(Photo by Lynda Lester)

man faces today, how do you think physical education can help?

I think if you look at two major topics people everywhere are talking about, they are health and education. On both counts, what the Mother started in the Ashram was health and education. On both counts. What the Mother started in the Ashram was a unique model.

In terms of health, there is more and more data coming out in scientific and medical journals and every week I can pick up a medical journal and read an article on say, the benefits of exercise in the recovery from cancer, heart disease, glaucoma, anything! So I think that if we were to talk about a cure for all kinds of things, anyone reading the literature on the topic would say that exercise is one such cure, one that has incredible benefits. I think they are just now recognizing the tip of the exercise iceberg—they are finding that exercise has many beneficial effects.

The reasons are not quite clear, but it is obvious that at the cellular level, a lot of things change metabolically in a positive fashion that lead to a whole chain of events in the body that result in much better health. What may not have been recognized as yet is that exercise can increase intellectual ability. There is some allusion to that in a study: women who have never exercised in

their life started to do so at the age of 60 and were compared with a group that had not exercised and continued not to do so, and they saw that the first lot were more alert, had better memory, etc. They are also finding that people who exercise are less likely to have Alzheimer's disease. It is much easier to show the benefit of exercise in the elderly. It is more subtle in the young.

The spiritual environment is a third dimension that is only now being recognized in the West—the benefit of meditation, yoga, asanas, music: you actually see articles in leading medical journals that talk about spirituality and medicine.

These are three things that Mother integrated in the life of the Ashram, an education based on a spiritual foundation and a physical education based on a spiritual foundation. The benefits of these are now coming out in terms of objective criteria—life span, alertness, and intelligence. I think you will see more of that becoming obvious in time. America is about 40 years behind in what the Mother started, but the seeds are now blooming and mushrooming.

Any final word of advice to us youngsters?

I tell you from my experience: do not take what this place offers for granted, because the moment you leave this place, if your destiny leads you out of here, you will

appreciate what you had and hopefully you will take everything you got from here. Capturing the essence is what this place is all about—the spiritual foundation, the spirit that the Mother created with her intense physical involvement in every activity, putting in 18–20 hours a day.

The students would benefit talking to the elders who had a direct experience with the Mother—talking to people like Pranab-da, Batti-da, Jugal-da, Manoj-da, Kittu-da . . . any number of people. They would benefit a lot by talking to these people and trying to imbibe the spirit and motivation by which we all were driven. The students must be able to capture some of that and make it part of their own. We cannot give you the physical experience of being with the Mother, but we can tell you what it meant for us. Maybe hearing that from people who have had that opportunity and privilege will inculcate that spirit in you and lead you in the right direction.

It is a unique opportunity you have here, and this is the direction the rest of the world has to move in. I certainly feel America is trying to move in that direction. All of you can be the leaders in that march.

Looking back at last 59 years of your life, as a chain of events that have fallen in place, how do you feel now?

Well, looking back, I think I can't thank my parents enough for bringing me here. I saw the Mother for most of my formative years, till I was 22. I don't think anybody who has gone through that experience can ask for a better start for life. For that I am extremely grateful. I only hope and pray that I can carry my share of the bargain and fulfil my responsibilities and duties as she expects of me. I pray for her guidance and I hope she will lead me to do what I am supposed to do.

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The yoga today

Darshan with Sri Aurobindo

by Lynda Lester

In November 1998 I visited the Sri Aurobindo Sadhana Peetham in Lodi, California. The second night I stayed up late, couldn't get to sleep, and had the following experience.

24 November 1998

At 3:00 a.m., I was still wide awake: too much vivifying energy, too much renewal. I couldn't drift off.

So I got up and, as I had the night before, crept downstairs in my flannel nightgown, turtleneck, long johns, and down vest to sit before the altar in the meditation hall.

Because it was darshan—Sri Aurobindo's Siddhi Day, the descent of the overmind into the physical, Krishna in the earth atmosphere—the glass case had been taken off the relics. There they were, in a carved teak box: unshielded, uncovered, radioactive.

I sat down a foot away. It was like sitting in front of a heater, a radiator, a generator—woh! It hadn't been like this before. Last night my ego had fallen off—I'd lost my personality, had disappeared into the Atman, the Self, the Mother. But tonight—tonight, Sri Aurobindo was there, and I kept my psychic identity.

Oh! It was a wonder, a miracle.

First off, I noticed that there was a radiant force coming out from the altar, a powerful dynamic convection: streams of energy, flares of it, whole standing waves and fronts of it surging forth. It was physical, tangible, almost like heat—it touched my skin like heat coming out of a fire—but this wasn't heat: it was a thick density, a luminous force.

And then I felt him—then I felt Sri Aurobindo. He was there . . . and he was divine.

Then I understood what an enlightened being is, and why people cluster around and throw themselves to the floor in pranam, and why they want to be nowhere else.

All thought stopped. My mind became perfectly still, just as it had in front of the Samadhi.

I sat there, basking in the impossibly strong force field that was pouring out, beating out from the relics—and that just from some hand cream Sri Aurobindo had put his fingers into, some nail and hair clip-pings . . .

What would it have been like to have been in front of him in person?! No wonder there are thousands of accounts recognizing him as master, avatar, Lord.

I'd never had such an experience. It was a tangible, physical pressure of the Supreme Presence—full-bodied, enveloping, overwhelming.

Sri Aurobindo was there . . . and he was beautiful. Oh, he was beautiful, he was divine: a total manifestation of God through the human person.

All that was left in me was humility and gratitude and worship.

My eyes were open; I was not in a cosmic state of deep meditation. I was sitting there in my nightgown with all my senses

working, feeling the material nearness of Sri Aurobindo.

He was full of light—beaming light, beaming force, resonant with love: velvety and deep and luminous and warm, beneficent and magnificent and far exceeding human scope, but interfaced with my human psychic awareness: the psychic understands.

My gosh—I had darshan of Sri Aurobindo: actual, living, bona fide darshan—and he wasn't even in the body.

And you know, I've never had much of a personal relation with Sri Aurobindo—or Mother (in her human form) either. For me it's been the Divine, the Lord, the inner Divine, the Divine Mother, universal and transcendent—I haven't felt the strong, personal touch of a human guru. Helpers along the way have had to stand in.

But this—this was the personal, the human Divine—Sri Aurobindo as God and man.

Wow, it was a stunner. I couldn't believe it, I was so shocked.

Talk about my money's worth for a visit to the Ashram. Talk about a grand finale to a miraculous month of pilgrimages!

Darshan with Sri Aurobindo: 50 years



Altar and meditation hall, Sri Aurobindo Sadhana Peetham. (Photo by Lynda Lester)



too late, but I got it anyway!

It lasted a long time.

I stayed there in front of the altar till 4:00 a.m.

Then I crept up the stairs like a little mouse, went back to bed, and fell asleep.

Lynda Lester is a writer/editor at the National Center for Atmospheric Research in Boulder, Colorado. She has been managing editor of Collaboration since the mid-1990s, was a co-moderator of the Integral Yoga Forum from 2000 to 2004, and is a member of the Sri Aurobindo Association.

Feeling the Presence

by Rick Lipschutz

Early in 2000 I returned to San Francisco from New Orleans. I had been reading Sri Aurobindo and the Mother extensively for about three years, but had met few sadhaks.

Then in mid-February at the Cultural Integration Fellowship in San Francisco, I heard Wayne Bloomquist speak on the psychic being. He carries with him a solid presence; one could palpably feel the presence of the Mother emanating from him. Strong, peaceful, solid; and when he spoke of the soul, something could be felt.

After the talk I (and many others) obtained blessings packets from Wayne and I asked him how best to do this yoga. He said: Write a letter to the Mother, ask her to be your teacher, to do your sadhana. Tell her your aspirations and place your sadhana in her hands. Put this on an altar, or in a private place. You must be absolutely sincere. (I am told you may also mail letters to The Mother, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry 605002, India and it is then kept in her room.)

During the talk he also suggested an exercise the Mother and others before her have used: Throw all your thoughts, emotions, vital impulses, physical obscurations into the fire at the center of your being for transformation, visualizing the fire if you could, seeing if you could observe it growing bigger. This was Aspiration.

He also recommended a second exercise: Surrender. Become a blank empty slate

open entirely to the Force from above.

I did as Wayne suggested. That night, I felt a presence, like a diamond light, piercing and entering into my heart. It was sweet and extremely strong, a bit much for me at the time, and I said rather urgently, *That's it for now.*

I emailed Wayne and told him the experience; he said there is nothing wrong with letting her know you can only take so much at any given time.

Some months passed; it was early summer. I was living alone in a room in a house on Third Avenue near the University of California—San Francisco, where I work. My wife and son would not be able to join me until the end of that year.

I was staying right next to the kitchen with a Taiwanese family who rented out as many rooms as they could. I liked my room because it looked out on a green, garden-like area out back, and because there were pictures of children and roses on the walls—a nice collage that did duty as a closet door. I had done a lot of sadhana in that room and wanted to stay there until my family returned and we could rent our own place.

However, Peter, the landlord, informed me his son was coming to visit with his possible bride-to-be and he wanted me to move out into an airless basement room. This was certainly illegal, but I felt I was in no position to argue: the dot.com bust had not yet hit, rooms were prohibitive and impossible

years ago, I was not immune to the presence in the heart, descends from above into the head felt subtle-physically, and even a lively sense of the presence of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. I don't remember what passage I was reading. The air felt sweet, everything began to feel beautiful—but I have always been responsive to the beauties of nature.

Then I realized all my anxieties were gone. I had not been at all happy about being relegated to the basement on the morrow, but all that now—along with any anxieties of any kind—had simply vanished. A feeling of ineffable sweetness came from deep inside me and filled the entire room. It would have been overpowering, but there was a deep peace on which everything was overlaid.

The feeling in the center continued to grow for some time. The presence of the Divine was undeniable; the knowledge that I was eternal was in me and all around. Everything felt incredibly precious, the world and all that was behind and beyond it. Surrender was a fact. Immortality was as plain as the nose on your face. The ego was hiding behind a burning bush. Time was . . . different.

And a light began to grow—I blinked, could almost see it. Just for a second the thought came, *Somebody has slipped me some hallucinogen*, but I realized that was not the case.

I did not entirely trust the mind, so I

*The air felt sweet, everything began to feel beautiful . . .
the presence of the Divine was undeniable.*

to come by, and I had no real friends except the Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

I came home from work. It was June 20; this would be my last night in the room. I opened the window to get some fresh air, got out a copy of *The Mother* to read, and plopped down on the bed, as there were no chairs comfortable to sit on for any length of time.

Even at that time, almost exactly three

kept it busy with a mantra. No reason to write or think. I kept the vital calm, because there was no cause to get overly emotional or let it appropriate this moment for itself. The physical was no problem.

After 45 minutes or an hour the intensity began to abate, and to a great extent the experience passed after a couple of hours. I thanked the Mother and asked, *What should I do?* She said, *Just go about*



Spring flowers in Leyden, Holland. (Photo by Nilauro Markus)

your business. And I must say although I could not see her, the Mother's presence was strong; when one experiences the psychic, one has also the experience of the Mother.

The next day Peter told me his sister in Eugene had told him to let me stay in the room, not to relegate me to the basement. His son's bride-to-be, she said, must be tested by not given any special treatment.

But quite frankly, I think the knowledge that this was to be my last night in the room with the view and the air allowed somehow for the grace to materialize. It seems one way or another, a "certain feeling of helplessness is the best kind of help" for finding the psychic.

Letting go is not always easy for the human being. This thing happened to me by grace; it was not an attainment, nor yet a permanent realization. And believe me—such grace, though unmerited, has been paid for in blood. It may have been wanted, it may have been needed, it is obviously a foretaste of the glory that is to be right here in this mortal world on the path to immortality.

The next day I wrote Wayne, who let me know that the time would come when this experience was definitive. One must offer up these things to the Mother (while they happen and afterwards) for her use and work and be vigilant that they not be appropriated by the vital or any other of the being

and perverted by the asura. One does this yoga for the Divine alone, and one's goal must be to become a divine center.

Rick Lipschutz (rlipschutz@pedcard.ucsf.edu) is a member of the Cultural Integration Fellowship in San Francisco. In October 2003 he gave a presentation at Sri Aurobindo Sadhana Peetham in Lodi, California, called "The Mystic Fire and the Mother's Force." His article on Nolini Kanta Gupta appeared in the November 2003 newsletter of SABDA, the Sri Aurobindo Book Distribution Agency.

No joy is comparable to the feeling of the eternal Presence in one's heart.—The Mother



Talks & essays

Glimpses of Mother's transformation as recorded in her *Agenda*

by Larry Seidlitz

Larry gave this talk at the Sri Aurobindo Sadhana Peetham in Lodi, California, on 16 November 2002.

Today I am going to speak about the latter part of the Mother's life, and in particular about the latter stages of her sadhana as recorded in the 13-volume work, *Mother's Agenda*.

The *Agenda* primarily consists of a series of transcribed conversations of the Mother with a disciple, Satprem, that span the years 1956 to 1973, the year of the Mother's passing. It also includes some correspondence between the two as well as some statements by the Mother dating back to 1951.

There has been a lot of controversy over the *Agenda*. A number of objections have been raised. Although most of the material is based on transcribed conversations, there is also some supplemental material written by Satprem. Some of this material criticizes various people around the Mother and others who have or had authority over the Ashram's affairs.

Objections also have been raised that the conversations, or portions of them, should not have been published because of their personal nature. In some cases Mother herself indicated on the tape that certain statements she made should not be published. In most cases in the text a single initial has been substituted for personal names, but it is possible to figure out who these people are from the context if one knows—or knows about—the people involved. In a few cases personal names are used, and harsh criticism is applied.

A more serious accusation is that some of the material, Mother's words, may have

been made up, as some of the tapes no longer exist to verify their authenticity. There are also complaints that the English translation from the French in some cases distorts Mother's true words or intentions.

Of course, everyone must decide for him- or herself about the merits or demerits of the *Agenda*. Still, I would like to read a letter from Eric Hughes of Matagiri, who himself helped in the translation of the *Agenda*, in which he responds to these objections. [See "A letter from Eric Hughes, p. 28.]

Whatever its shortcomings, the *Agenda* is a fascinating and powerful account of Mother's sadhana and inner experiences and physical transformation, as well as her views on a wide range of issues. It also worth noting that in the *Agenda* the Mother said that if it wasn't for Satprem, this account would never have been made.

Characteristics of the supermind

As a result of Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's yoga, a new consciousness and force, which they called the supramental consciousness, manifested in the earth consciousness on 29 February 1956. "Supermind" and "supramental" have a specific meaning and significance in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy and yoga, and I may as well begin by clarifying the meaning of these terms.

There are many levels of consciousness between the ordinary human consciousness and the supermind—Sri Aurobindo described these as the higher mind, the illumined mind, the intuitive consciousness, and the overmind. Even the lowest of these, the higher mind, is far superior to the ordinary rational mind in its ability to reflect the higher truth. For example, Sri Aurobindo said that in the higher mind one is constantly aware of the Self, the One everywhere, and lives in a vast peace and calm enlightenment (*The Future Poetry*, p. 342; *The Life Divine*, p. 944).

Each of these higher gradations is able to envision and express the Absolute Reality in a more luminous and comprehensive way. The supermind is above all these, and represents a fundamentally new principle. Unlike the levels below it, it no longer sim-

ply reflects the truth of things, however purely or brightly or broadly, but is itself the very substance of the Truth.

In the *Synthesis of Yoga* there is a chapter called "The Nature of the Supermind," in which Sri Aurobindo described the supermind. He said, "The fundamental nature of the supermind is that all its knowledge is originally a knowledge by identity and oneness . . . The spirit is one everywhere and it knows all things as itself and in itself, so sees them always and therefore knows them intimately, completely, in their reality as well as their appearance, in their truth, their law, the entire spirit and sense and figure of their nature and their workings." (p. 757).

He said, "The supermind has the vision of the three times [that is, the past, present, and future] . . . it sees them as an indivisible movement and sees too each containing the others. It is aware of all tendencies, energies and forces as the diverse play of unity and knows their relation to each other in the single movement of the one spirit." (pp. 762–763)

He also said that the supermind is "not only a direct truth consciousness, but an illumined, direct and spontaneous truth-will. There is not and cannot be in the will of the self-knowing spirit any contradiction, division or difference between its will and its knowledge. The spiritual will is the Tapas or enlightened force of the conscious being of the spirit effecting infallibly what is there within it . . ." (p. 761) "The supramental will and action are therefore a will of action of the spontaneous self-fulfilling truth of the spirit, the right and at the highest the infallible movement of a direct and total knowledge." (p. 763)

Finally, he says, "the supreme and universal Supermind is the active Light and Tapas [that is, enlightened force] of the supreme and universal Self as the Lord and Creator, that which we come to know in Yoga as the divine Wisdom and Power, the eternal knowledge and will of the Ishwara [which, translated, means Supreme Lord]." (p. 763)

1956: The supramental descent

When the Mother said that this consciousness manifested in the earth con-



consciousness on 29 February 1956, she meant that this Truth-consciousness and Force began to act here on a terrestrial scale, seeking and preparing instruments for its manifestation in the evolutionary formula. It began its work to prepare the field and to prepare the new species that would manifest this consciousness and replace humanity as the leader of the earth evolution. Moreover, human beings could cooperate with this new Light and Force in the manifestation of its higher possibilities in the human formula, and thereby create a transitional being between ordinary mental humanity and the full supramental species.

Just 20 days after the supramental manifestation, on 19 March 1956, the Mother wrote a brief statement about a personal experience she had (a straightening of her bent vertebrae) which she attributed the influence of this descent of the supramental consciousness into her body. At the top of that written statement, she put the heading, "Agenda of the Supramental Action on Earth," thus giving the name that eventually became the 13-volume *Agenda*. Although Satprem used the title *Mother's Agenda* on the cover, on the first page inside the cover the full title is given.

1957–1958: A new world

In October of 1957, Mother commented more at length on these effects in her body. She said, "One of the very first results of the supramental manifestation was to give the body a freedom and an autonomy it has never before known . . . For the first time, the cells themselves have felt that they are free, that they have the power to decide. When the new vibrations came and combined with the old ones, I felt it at once and it showed me that a new world was really taking birth . . ."

She said that this new vibration in the body allowed her to understand the mechanism of the transformation: "It is not some-

thing that comes from a higher Will, not a higher consciousness that imposes itself upon the body: it is the body itself awakening in its cells, a freedom of the cells themselves, an absolutely new vibration that sets disorders right . . . This is a gradual process, but . . . little by little this new consciousness will grow, gain ground and victoriously resist the old forces of destruction and annihilation, and this Fatality we believed to be so inexorable."



*"For the first time, the cells themselves have felt that they are free."
(Photo courtesy Sri Aurobindo Ashram)*

On 3 February 1958, Mother had a remarkable experience that further confirmed this birth of a new world taking place. She said, "Before, I had an individual, subjective contact with the supramental world, whereas on February 3, I went strolling there in a concrete way—as concretely as I used to go strolling in Paris in times past—

in a world that exists in itself, beyond all subjectivity. It is like a bridge being built between the two worlds."

She said, "The supramental world exists in a permanent way, and I am there permanently in a supramental body. I had proof of this today when my earthly consciousness went there and consciously remained there between two and three o'clock in the afternoon. I now know that for the two worlds to join in a constant and conscious relationship what is missing is an intermediate zone between the existing physical world and the supramental world as it exists.

"This zone has yet to be built, both in the individual consciousness and in the objective world, and it is being built. When I formerly used to speak of the new world that is being created, I was speaking of this intermediate zone. And similarly, when I am on 'this' side, in the realm of the physical consciousness—and I see the supramental power, the supramental light and substance constantly permeating matter, I am seeing and participating in the construction of this zone."

She then goes on to relate the experience in detail, which involved an immense ship that had just arrived at the shore of the supramental world. On this ship were people whom she knew, whose forms were in various stages of transformation. Those whose substance had been sufficiently supramentalized were disembarking, and there were other supramental beings on shore waiting to re-

ceive them. The Mother herself, who had a supramental substance, and a bright sun for a head, was directing the whole operation.

1959: Addition of a mantra

Probably in February or March of 1959, the Mother began repeating a mantra. On 19 May, she said that she had "come to



realize that for this sadhana of the body, the mantra is essential." She said that the purely psychological method is inadequate and that *japa*, the repetition of a mantra, is necessary, because only it has a direct action on the body. She said that now with her mantra, she had done ten years of work in a few months. She said she repeated her mantra constantly—when she was awake and even when she slept. She said it was always there in the background.

Also about this time, she wrote a series of prayers, to which she gave the title, "Prayers of the Consciousness of the Cells." It is evident from the title that these prayers were an aspiration arising from the cells of her body. Later, I will conclude the talk with one of these prayers.

On 6 October 1959, she said, "For the West, with all its outward development, a few centuries may be needed before the junction between the two worlds can be made. And yet these two worlds—the physical world and the world of Truth—are not distant from one another. They are as if superimposed. The world of Truth is there, close by, like a lining of the other." She indicated that shortly before 15 August, she had had an experience that exemplified this.

First she had felt the supramental light entering directly into her body without passing through the inner beings. It entered through the feet and rose towards the head, and as it rose a fever also rose because the body was unaccustomed to the intensity. As it neared the head she thought she would burst and that the experience would have to be stopped—but she called down calm and peace and widened the body consciousness so it could contain the supramental light.

Suddenly there was a second of fainting, and then, she said, "I found myself in another world, but not far away (I was not in a total trance). This world was almost as substantial as the physical world. There were rooms—Sri Aurobindo's room with the bed he rests on—and he was living there, he was there all the time: it was his abode. Even my room was there, with a large mirror like the one I have here, combs, all kinds of things. And the substance of these objects was almost as dense as in the



"A truly essential change in the body has occurred." (Photo courtesy Sri Aurobindo Ashram)

physical world, but they shone with their own light. It was not translucent, not transparent, not radiant, but self-luminous. The various objects and the material of the rooms did not have this same opacity as the physical objects here, they were not dry and hard as in the physical world we know."

She said, "You see, it's not as if this world of Truth had to be created from nothing: it is fully ready, it is there, like a lining of our own present world. Everything is there, everything is there. Sri Aurobindo gave me two days of this—total bliss. But all the same, by the end of the second day I realized that I could not continue to remain there, for the work was not advancing. The work must be done in the body; the realization must be attained here in this physical world, for otherwise it is not complete. So I withdrew from that world and set to work here again. And yet, it would take little, very little, to pass from this world to the other, or for the other to become the real world. A little click would be enough, or rather a little reversal in the inner attitude."

1961: An essential change

On January 24, 1961, the Mother had another remarkable experience in which her

body consciousness joined with the supreme consciousness. The experience as she describes it is a little difficult to grasp, but it resulted in an important change in her body consciousness. She said, "A truly essential change in the body has occurred. I see that the body will have to—how can I express it? . . . It will have to accustom itself to this new Power. But essentially the change has been accomplished. It's not . . . It is far, very far from being the final change, there's a lot more to be done. But we may say that it's the conscious and total presence of the supramental Force in the body."

1962: Crisis and certitude

In March and April of 1962, Mother went through a severe crisis and somehow arrived on the other side quite changed. During the night of April 2–3 she had a total cardiac arrest. The following morning she explained that was an asuric force that had succeeded in taking the form of Sri Aurobindo and was trying to kill her, since only by doing so could he succeed in his efforts.

That morning she said, "I am no longer in my body. I have left the Lord to take care



of it, if it is to have the Supramental or not. I know, and I have also said, that now is the last fight. If the purpose for which this body is alive is to be fulfilled, that is to say, the first steps towards the Supramental transformation, then it will continue today. It is the Lord's decision. I am not even asking what he has decided. If the body is incapable of bearing the fight, if it has to be dissolved, then humanity will pass through a critical time."

Then on 13 April, she had a decisive experience. "Suddenly in the night I woke up with the full awareness of what we could call the Yoga of the world. The Supreme Love was manifesting through big pulsations, and each pulsation was bringing the world further in its manifestation. And the certitude that what is to be done is done and the Supramental Manifestation is realized." But she wondered, how to express it in the world? "It was like an impossibility, because of the contradiction . . . But then it came: 'You have accepted that this world should know the Supramental Truth . . . and it will be expressed totally, integrally.'"

She later elaborated, "The words came: 'You promised to do it, therefore you will do it'; and slowly the transition began, as if I were again being sent back to do it. Yes, as if . . . 'You promised to do it and you will do it'; well, that's what I meant by a promise. And I came back towards this body to do it."

1967: Reflecting back

Years later, in 1967, she reflected on these experiences. She said, "At the time when I was said to be ill, the mind was gone, the vital was gone, the body was left to itself—purposely. Yes it is that, it is just because the vital and the mental were gone that it gave the impression of a very serious illness.

"And then, in the body left to itself, little by little the cells began to wake up to the consciousness (*gesture of aspiration rising up*); this consciousness that was infused into the body by the vital (from the mental into the vital, from the vital into the body), when both had disappeared, the consciousness emerged slowly, slowly. That started with a burst of the Love from the highest

summit, the last supreme altitude, and then little by little, little by little, it came down into the body.

"And then this physical mind, that is to say, something altogether, altogether stupid, which used to turn round and round, repeating always the same thing, a hundred times the same thing, little by little it was illumined, became conscious, was organized, and then it entered into the silence; then in the silence the aspiration expressed itself in prayers."

1968: Consciousness in the cells

On 15 June 1968, she had an interesting discussion about the transformation of the body. She first indicated that it was becoming increasingly established that health or illness is the result of a choice of the cells of the body, and groups of cells. Many of her cells had become conscious, and they could choose between the true consciousness, or disorder and disequilibrium. And she suggested that there was a natural variation in cells or groups of cells in their ability to follow the movement of progressive harmony.

She said most of the time it is just laziness, something unwilling to make the effort or the resolve. She called it the remnant, the residue of the inconscient. She said, "it's a sort of spinelessness . . . which accepts a general, impersonal law. On the other side, there is the sense of the true attitude, which in the cells is expressed with great simplicity: 'There is the Lord, who is the all-powerful Master. It depends entirely on Him.' For the cells it's not sentences, but expresses itself by repeating the mantra: 'May Your Will be done,' and a tranquillity—a luminous tranquillity."

She wondered, "What I don't know yet, what's not very clear, is . . . what will be the fate of this residue? To people's ordinary thought, it's what they call 'death,' that is to say, the rejection of the cells that weren't able to enter this plastic state of consciousness. But the way the work is being done, there is no categorical division [into groups of conscious or unconscious cells in Mother's body]: there are imperceptible (almost) states of variations between the different

parts of the being." She seems to mean that some cells lag behind, have difficulty taking the proper attitude, so it takes longer.

She added that this problem was complicated by the entry of mental formations from others around her, with their suggestions of illness and death. But she wondered what would be the fate of this residue, these cells that lagged behind. She said that with time everything would change, but it was a question of patience.

In August 1968 she went through another crisis and then another powerful experience of the supramental force in her body. She wrote a note:

"Night of the 26th. Powerful and prolonged penetration of the supramental forces into the body, everywhere at the same time . . ." She later elaborated, "Yes, penetrations of currents I had had several times, but that night . . . what came all of a sudden was as though there was nothing anymore except a supramental atmosphere. Nothing remained except that. My body was in it. And it was pressing to enter, from everywhere, but everywhere at the same time—everywhere. You understand, it wasn't a current flowing in, it was an atmosphere penetrating from everywhere. It lasted for at least four or five hours."

1969: The superman

1 January 1969 brought with it the consciousness of the superman, the intermediary being between the supramental being and the human. She said, "It came slowly in the night, and this morning when I woke up, there was a golden Dawn, as it were, and the atmosphere was very light. The body felt, 'Oh, it's really . . . truly new.' A light, golden Light and . . . benevolent. Benevolent in the sense of a certitude—a harmonious certitude."

A few days later she added, "It was something very material, I mean it was very external—very outward and luminous, with a golden light. It was very strong, powerful. But its character was a smiling benevolence, a peaceful joy, and a sort of blossoming in the joy and the light."

She said, "My own impression was that of an immense personality, immense (mean-



ing that for it, the earth was small, like this [*Mother holds a small object in the hollow of her hand*], like a ball), an immense personality, so very benevolent, and coming to . . . (*Mother seems to gently raise the little ball in the hollow of her hand*). It was the impression of a personal god (yet it was . . . I don't know) who comes to help. So very strong! And so sweet at the same time, so understanding. And it was very external: the body felt it everywhere, everywhere (*Mother touches her face, her hands*), all over like this." This presence stayed with her, and she continued to comment on its tremendous power, and on how it was educating her, educating her body.

Three months later, she speaks of it again as having given her the answer to the problem she had posed the year before about the fate of the residue, the cells that lagged behind. And here she restated the problem slightly differently: "All this work of the transformation of the cells, of consciousness in the cells, with the ordinary way (*of dying*), won't it be wasted since the body is going to disintegrate?"

Then she said, "There came in a very precise, almost concrete manner: 'There is a way, which is, before dying, to prepare within oneself a body with all the transformed, illumined, conscious cells, to collect them together and form a body with the maximum number of conscious cells; then, when the work is over, the full consciousness enters it and the other body can dissolve, it no longer matters.'"

1970: New discoveries

Then on 9 May 1970, Mother had an experience of her supramentalized body in the subtle physical. She said, "I was walking around naked, but deliberately naked from here to there (*gesture from the top of the chest to the thighs*); here (*above*), there may have

been clothes. I was deliberately showing myself to certain people . . . Ah, and that part I was showing was sexless, that is to say, neither man nor woman: there was nothing; and its color was . . . a little like Auroville's color [orange], like that, but vibrant, that is, as if . . . not luminous, but with a sort of luminosity."

In the experience, someone was with her whom she called "the physical Mother," and who in another place she called "Na-

ence in which she discovered another important aspect of the transformation, that "it is the psychic being that is to become the supramental being." She had this experience when a disciple had come and was kneeling in front of her.

She saw the disciple's psychic being towering above her, about eight inches taller: a sexless being, neither man nor woman, with features of both combined. It exceeded her on every side by about eight inches. And its color, if it became very material, would be Auroville's color: "It was softer, as if behind a veil, it wasn't absolutely precise, but it was this color."

She said, "I found it very interesting, because that being seemed to tell me, 'You're wondering what the supramental being will be—here it is! Here it is, this is it.'"

1972: Supramentalizing the body

Then on 24 March 1972, Mother again saw her own supramental body. She said, "I don't know whether it's the supramental body or (what shall I say?) a transitional body, but I had a completely new body, in the sense that it was sexless: it was neither woman nor man. It was very white. But that could be because I have white skin, I don't know. It was very slender. Really lovely, a truly harmonious form."

Two days later she said, "Yes, I *was* like that. It was me; I didn't look at myself in a mirror, I saw myself like this [Mother bends her head to look at her body], I was . . . I just was like that." Satprem asked her, "But

this form is in the subtle physical, isn't it?" She answered, "It must be already like that in the subtle physical."

As 1972 wore on, and up until the end, it appears Mother began to have more difficulty. Perhaps as more and more of her body consciousness was supramentalized, more



"It is the psychic being that is to become the supramental being."
(Photo courtesy Sri Aurobindo Ashram)

ture." Nature was wearing a dress of the same orange color, and said, "See, I've put on your dress, I've put it on to tell you that it's accepted—I've put on your dress." Mother explained, "It means that material Nature has adopted the new creation."

On 1 July 1970, Mother had an experi-



and more she encountered the resistance, the remnant of the inconscient. She alternated between two states, one of absolute surrender and openness to the Divine, living in a divine peace and bliss, and living in a painful hell, the very contradiction of that peace.

For example, on November 4th, she said, "The whole subconscious is . . . (*gesture of something rising up en masse*). And then . . . it's a certitude—a certitude in the perception—that Bliss is there . . . right there, waiting for us, but a whole world of contradictions that have been repressed in the subconscious keeps rising up from the subconscious to prevent us from feeling it. So . . . you could say it's a battlefield, but in a perfect calm. It's impossible to describe. When I remain still and enter that Consciousness, time flies with fantastic speed, in a kind of . . . luminous calm. But the slightest thing that pulls me out of it seems to pull me into hell. Exactly. The discomfort is so great one feels one couldn't last a minute or a few minutes like that. So one . . . one calls the Divine . . . You feel like curling up in the Divine. And then it goes well."

Important themes

There are several themes in this account that should be emphasized. From the beginning, Mother seemed primarily concerned with the influence of the supramental on the consciousness of the body. There is little mention of its effect on the mental or vital levels. In one place she seems to suggest that these were instruments to knead matter, to awaken it to consciousness, and that once this was done they would be replaced by something else. In her, especially after the crisis in 1962, the mental and vital beings were sent away, and she was left with her body consciousness, so that it would itself open to the supramental light and power. She seemed often to be identified with her physical body, occupied with its opening and transformation.

Another important recurring theme was that supramental world, the supramental truth was here, already established, and the work was really in establishing a more and more complete link with it. This was for

her personally and also for the earth as a whole. That world was quite real and concrete, in many ways more than this one. She seemed to sometimes find herself in that world, and sometimes in this one. She seemed to go back and forth between the two as a result of a subtle shift in consciousness, in the inner attitude. She said it was like a lining beneath this physical world. It was very close, not far away in some rare ether of consciousness. Sometimes she would walk out into that world, do things, meet people, and the effects of her actions would be there in this physical world. It seemed as she forged this link between the two, this closeness and interpenetration increased.

A third theme that perhaps did not come out so much in the excerpts I read, but really was implied in all of them, is that Mother was like a lightning rod for the supramental action on the earth. Sometimes when she would be silent and open to the Divine and supramental forces, she would see them flowing through her to points all around her, all over the world and perhaps beyond. For she was universalized in her consciousness—parts of her consciousness, even her physical consciousness, were identified with the whole world, the entire universe. Her physical presence, her physical opening to the supramental light and power enabled these to penetrate into the physical world around us, and also to act on people and events in very specific ways.

Finally, the whole tenor of her sadhana, was in a sense unchanged—fundamentally it was the same as it is for the beginner. It was simply a surrender into the hands of the Divine. Whoever does this sadhana must surrender to the Divine. And the more we do, the more we become conscious, we begin to see the more within us which withholds its surrender. Then this too must open up to the Divine. This progressive surrender of more and more of the being seems to be the character of the sadhana up until the very end.

For Mother, this progressive opening and surrender was occurring in her body consciousness. She said one of the first results of the supramental descent was that the body began to realize its autonomy, its abil-

ity to choose between the Divine and the old way of being. Her progress in the sadhana seemed to involve precisely more and more of these cells, this body consciousness, surrendering and uniting with the Divine. As more of this body consciousness opened up, it became a part of her supramental body that would survive the death of the remnant which she laid down on 17 November 1973.

Significance of Mother's mission

On this day, as we honor Mother's life and work, it is well that we appreciate the significance of her mission, struggle, and accomplishment.

Her primary mission was to bring down the supramental consciousness on earth, to establish it as a new principle in the evolving terrestrial consciousness. This she did, with Sri Aurobindo's help, in 1956. For the next 17 years, she worked to establish it into her very cells, into matter.

This work of physical transformation, she often said, was extremely difficult and painful. At times it was like a living hell. This work she did gladly, out of her inexhaustible love, for she knew that the further she went the easier it would be for all that followed. It is fair to assume that she took this work as far as was possible at the time.

It also appears, from what she has said in the *Agenda*, that the supramental consciousness is actively at work here, is assured of its eventual manifestation in a new race of supramental beings, and is working to manifest its light and power in human beings who are open to it.

Finally, we can assume that the Mother herself is directing this work, and exists in a supramental form in a world close to ours, a world that is like a lining of our own.

I will conclude with one of Mother's "Prayers of the Consciousness of the Cells":

Lord, God of kindness and mercy,
Lord, God of sovereign oneness,
Lord, God of beauty and harmony,
Lord, God of force and realization,
Lord, God of love and compassion,
Lord, God of silence and contemplation,
Lord, God of light and immortality,
Lord, God of youth and progress,



Lord, God of abundance and plentitude,
Lord, God of strength and health,
Lord, God of peace and vastness,
Lord, God of power and invincibility,
Lord, God of victorious Truth.
Take possession of this body,
Manifest Yourself in it.

Larry Seidlitz (larry.seidlitz@hotmail.com), a former resident of Sri Aurobindo Sadhana Peetham in Lodi, California, is now living in Pondicherry and working with the Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced Research (SACAR). With the next issue of Collaboration, he will take over as managing editor.

A letter from Eric Hughes

30 October 2002
Matagiri Sri Aurobindo Center

Dear Larry,
I have your letter regarding *Mother's Agenda*. I was very happy to learn it was to be the theme for your next retreat. For some time now I have been wondering why no one except Satprem talked about it. So I hope its time has come and your program sparks interest. I will try to reply to all the things you brought up (and I have heard the objections before).

My view of the *Agenda* is that it is the crown of Sri Aurobindo's yoga. It is Mother's record of the sadhana of the Yoga of Self-Perfection (to which she made a change: Sri Aurobindo, she said, had thought it could be done psychologically, but she found it necessary to have a physical aid, which was her mantra). And it is also her living experience of the climax of *Savitri*, the Dialogue with Death. So it is a record of the yoga of transformation done in the midst of her daily life, hence all the other things recorded there, her remarks about world events, disciples, and organizational problems.

And note what is printed in the front of each volume of the *Agenda*: "This Agenda . . . is my gift to those who love me." That should be enough for those interested to take notice.

As for the suggestion that it may not accurately reflect Mother's words, one has



"Transform the body of the mortal like a sweet and magical rhyme . . ."—from "Rose of God" by Sri Aurobindo. (Photo by Nilauro Markus)

only to listen to the tapes, if one knows French. We have a complete set of those tapes here. And she occasionally spoke in English (there is a separate tape with her remarks in English). When no tape of a conversation still exists, it is noted in the text. The missing tapes are the result of the fact that Satprem sometimes ran out of tapes and so recorded over a previous one after it had been transcribed. He even mentions a

few times to Mother that he sometimes had difficulty obtaining more tapes. And where there were errors in transcription (because of unclarity in the tape), there has been correction (for the translation) and I have recorded them in the French edition from which I worked (and which is littered with my notes).

The translators (including me, when I did the whole *Agenda* before it started to be



issued in English) have attempted to be absolutely faithful to Mother's words and intent. Translation is always problematical, and a word or sentence can be rendered in more than one way, as can be seen in the texts of subsequent translations of the same work (at least three exist of *Adventure of Consciousness*, for instance). Satprem made no effort to alter what Mother said, and he often asked her to explain something more fully and often repeatedly. I have now worked with three different translators: Luc, Michel, and now Marie. As far as I am concerned, they are excellent and devoted to the truth of the matter.

As for Satprem's asides, they are clearly so identified in the printed text. One need not read them if one doesn't want to. There are two types: one is his notation and explanation of a subject or reference Mother was speaking about which is not clear from her remarks.

The other is Satprem's opinion on events or people who he believes have not been loving or truthful to Mother. Hence his indignation (and often anger). You must remember his feelings about betrayal (and he felt Mother was sometimes betrayed by her disciples). He had been betrayed by a member of the French underground during World War II, and then put into a concentration camp and tortured (and talks about that experience with Mother in the *Agenda*). So when he feels there is betrayal, he reacts emotionally. This in no way should make people believe he is distorting Mother's words.

Satprem loves Mother and even used to massage her legs (also mentioned in the *Agenda*). That is why he reacted so vehemently when he felt people were betraying her (or lying to her, and she herself mentions when someone lied to her). The *Agenda* can be read without getting caught up in Satprem's asides.

Now, Mother chose all the people who were around her, not just Satprem, but Pranab, Nolani, and many others. She knew perfectly well what they were. I mention Pranab for a particular reason: he symbolically represented the very thing she was dealing with in her work of transformation: the physical mind.

But this leads to the objection that Satprem published some things she didn't want published. Probably true (since she mentions this in the *Agenda*). I don't find anything she objected to being published as being unfortunate, nor does it detract from the very work she was doing. It's *there*, like life. And she knew Satprem and his nature.

Now, objections have been raised also especially in regard to volume 1 of the *Agenda*, because it deals so extensively with Satprem and his sadhana. Well, she was preparing him for the work to follow. As a matter of fact, he is a kind of representative sadhak, and she deals with his sadhana throughout the *Agenda*. So one can put oneself in his position when he asks a question about sadhana and find oneself being instructed. She was his guru and he was her disciple. That he had difficulties should be an encouragement to us all. And Mother dealt with them. And sometimes laughed at him.

So let people forget Satprem's remarks if they want, and read what Mother said, about everything, not just her painful and difficult sadhana, but everything else, including disciples (mostly not identified by name and thus known only to those close or aware).

The transformation is *THERE*. Let people do it, or let it be done. Mother's love is showered on everyone everywhere.

You can quote any of this you like. Just know that I regard *Mother's Agenda* as the Holy of Holies and the Secret of Secrets.

I send you all my best wishes for your retreat and would like to hear how it goes and . . .

My love,

Eric

P.S.: Any questions?

P.P.S.: And don't forget that Mother said Satprem was following her closely even when he said he wasn't aware. And now we have several volumes of his record of yoga since she left.

Eric Hughes was the first editor of Collaboration and one of the original translators of the Agenda. With Sam Spanier, he co-founded Matagiri in Mt. Tremper, New York. Matagiri has been an important center of the yoga in America since the late 1960s.

But once that has been done (this is something Sri Aurobindo had said), once ONE body has done it, it has the capacity of passing it on to others. . . It's contagious. That I know. And it's the only hope, because if everyone had to go through the same experience again . . . Well, I am ninety now—at the age of ninety people are tired, they've had enough of life. To do this work one **must feel** as young as a small child. It takes a long time, I see clearly that it has taken a long time. And it isn't done, of course, it's *BEING* done—it isn't done, far from it. Far from it . . . What's the proportion of conscious cells? We don't know.—The Mother, *Agenda*, 22 November 1967

There is a whole side of human thought which has held the conception that identification with the supreme Consciousness could only come through the abolition of the individual creation, but in fact Sri Aurobindo said it was possible *WITHOUT* doing away with the creation. They hold the conception that the creation must be done away with because they don't take the creation beyond the human creation—it's impossible for man, but possible for the supramental being. And that will be the essential difference of the supramental being: being able, without losing a limited form, to unite his consciousness with the supreme Consciousness.—The Mother, *Agenda*, 25 September 1968

There must be found the relationship between the consciousness in ONE body and the consciousness of the whole. And the extent of the dependence, and the extent of the independence; that is, how far the body can be transformed in its consciousness (and, necessarily as a result, in its appearance), how it can be transformed without . . . without the transformation of the whole—how far? And to what extent is the transformation of the whole necessary to the transformation of the body? That remains to be discovered.—The Mother, *Agenda*, 21 December 1968



The transformation of the body

A conversation with Mother recollected by Mona Sarkar

The following excerpts are from The Supreme: Conversations with the Mother Recollected by Mona Sarkar, published by the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in 2000. Not being recorded, the conversations in the book were noted down later from memory—similar to Nirodbaran's Talks with Sri Aurobindo and Purani's Evening Talks, which documented sadhaks' conversations with Sri Aurobindo in the 1930s. Because Mother's words are reconstructed from memory, the conversations in the book have a somewhat different "voice" than the verbatim transcriptions in Questions and Answers and Mother's Agenda. Nevertheless, they provide a new source of information about, and a fascinating glimpse into, the Mother's work. Unfortunately, as none of the conversations are dated, the passage below cannot be compared with what might be conversations in the same time frame between Mother and Satprem—although its spirit and substance seem similar to many passages in the Agenda.

Preface to the book

These conversations with the Mother, originally held in French, took place in the late 60s. They were noted down from memory, some on the same day, some later.

Those were the days when we could go to the Mother and speak freely with Her. I went to the Mother like a child, with a prayer in my heart, a prayer to Her whom I adored as the Supreme Lord! And She treated me like a child. She spoke to me about various things, sometimes chiding me for being too playful, sometimes asking me to be just happy, and always helping me to have the right attitude in life.

Her words, charged with a "mantric" power, expressed the profoundest Truth and radiated the 'moods of Infinity'; they conveyed Her sublime vision of the unknown, of what is to come. And Her subtle humour

made everything seem so simple, even the attaining of these lofty ideals.

In spite of the human incapacity to convey the true value of Her words, despite the inaccuracies that might have crept in the transcription and translation, these talks, it has been felt, reflect Her Light and Her Force; they bring something of Her Presence.—Mona Sarkar

* * *

The conversation

Bonjour!

Bonjour, Douce Mere.

... Your knee is all right, isn't it? Yes, it should be all right.

It is better, Mother, but ...

It is forgotten, what had happened. Past. No words, it is perfectly cured now. It ought to be. When you are reborn in the New Consciousness, it will be completely cured; it is the sign. You have understood? It should be normal, completely cured. Then it is the sign that you begin to live in the New Consciousness. So, it is understood. It is a fact ... It is well ... All right.

(After a brief pause Mother resumes)

You know, what you must do is to try to forget that your knee gets dislocated when you make a certain movement. Make it understand that the past does not exist for it,—all its habits, its responses, its reactions and their consequences ... in such and such a circumstance, it should behave like this or adjust like that, ... what could happen in these situations, and how it should react,—for all these decisions which the knee habitually followed as necessary precautions in order not to collapse,—how you reacted in certain situations, when you played, or while you exercised,—all this you must forget. Your knee itself must forget that in these circumstances it should act in this way. Nothing more. The past does not exist for the knee so that it awakens to a new process of consciousness,—of acting, of adjusting, of conducting, or of behaving,—by the infusion of the New Consciousness into the knee. All the past habits, the atavism, the essential nature of the cells, the mental formations, the ideas, the ways of conduct, the physical actions and reactions, the vital

attractions and repulsions, all, all that constitutes the mode of action, the fear and the spontaneous shrinking, all that must be forgotten, leaving behind all the traits and habits. You must renew life, blossom into a New Consciousness. This is the only way to cure your knee.

In fact, this is what I am doing on myself and the results are convincing. The body follows an inner rhythm leading to a limitless blossoming. It is the influence of the all-powerful Consciousness, dazzling the comprehension, without words. This is what I have discovered. I have been able to change the very cells—what they are constituted of—by an ultraterrestrial phenomenon, that is to say, that which is not to be found in the terrestrial evolution. It is of a new type with possibilities of endurance unknown to man, which could be extended to the immortality of the body; or the possibility of retaining the Supramental power in the cells leading to a prolonging of life with a constant and infinite renewal. With this, the body has lost the sense of time. The laws of Nature have lost their meaning for this body. The inexhaustible Force pouring perpetually, ceaselessly, or without diminution of the Supramental energy which gives the capacity to prolong life,—this is what I have arrived at by infusing this force into the cells. And the cells have not only forgotten the past which constituted them—the memory of these mutations of millions and millions of years in the terrestrial evolution, the habits of the old world, forgotten—but they have begun to accustom themselves to respond to the transforming light of the Divine Consciousness. They radiate with a perpetual splendour and a glow in a renewal of life which expresses only the joy of existence, the Divine Ecstasy hidden in them. This is a new experience for me, with infinite possibilities of being reborn in the new consciousness, in an eternally true blossoming.

This is life, this is the hidden mystery, this is the Divine Will unfolding itself in its terrestrial manifestation. This is a new discovery for me, an unforeseen discovery which I did not expect, and I knew nothing about its immense possibilities—as if innumerable horizons have opened before me



and the things that were promised have been fulfilled.

Everywhere, everywhere there is this ineffable joy of expression which is the base, the foundation of all this existence, the first spark that the Divine has sown in all that he has created,—the Divine spark in all that exists,—and which by a mutation has assumed a visible or an invisible form. The whole universe vibrates with this Joy—the Divine Joy hidden in all things. It is this that I am now aware of, that I feel imperatively, a need to renew each cell by this ineffable contact, this inexhaustible Joy which the Divine has infused even in the cells, which lasts and lasts . . . which endures endlessly, infallibly, eternally, infinitely. This is the unseizable, the truth of our terrestrial, ultra-terrestrial, and cosmic existence.

And we can have this knowledge only by identity, by a sort of enveloping, or one might say, a sort of englobing which gives one the truth without any resistance—as if one opened out into the Divine Consciousness pure and entire. Nothing is left out, nothing is neglected, but all is transformed by this light, by this Ananda, by this Peace and by this Power. With this the whole cycle has changed, and in this New Manifestation nothing deteriorates—which means that nothing dies. There is no conflict because each one lives dependent on the other in a mutual interchange, knowing well that each has in him a right to the Truth; which means that decay, contradiction, suffering, and pain disappear entirely; it means that the possibility to survive in this consciousness gives an impetus to extend life up to Eternity.

This is what I think; no, this is what I feel as the immortality of the body. This is what has touched here and there in the history of man in his terrestrial evolution to become immortal, and people have individually invoked their Adored One in an intense tapasya to make them immortal, each for his own self,—but this did not work out because each person wanted this for his own existence, for his own body and not as a terrestrial event. And also because they were still far from this Supramental substance about which, moreover, they were totally ignorant. But now that the Supramental Man-

ifestation has taken place on earth and that the process of the transformation of the body—with all that is being worked out—can be done, one becomes the master of life, as one wants and be what one wants.

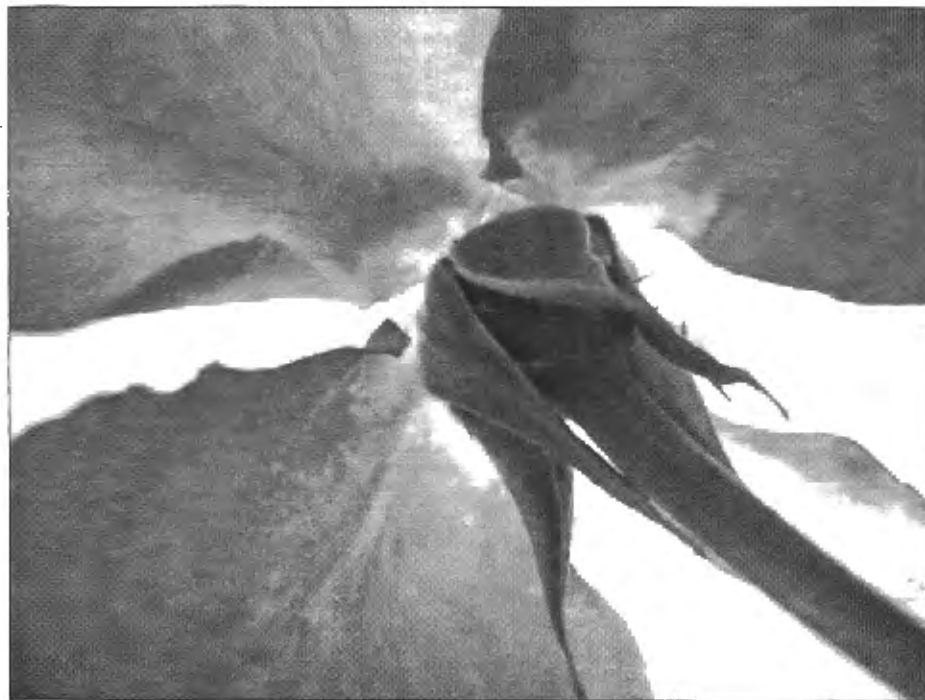
And yet there were quite a few attempts which failed completely in their results. It was evident, because the conditions were not right and the methods were not known. But I find this very interesting: there is an analogy in the Indian tradition which is very remarkable. The gods wanted to become immortal and did not want to share the elixir with the asuras, who, in fact, were very powerful. Then, a great battle followed for the control over the 'Amrita'—one who tastes this elixir becomes immortal—which the gods had hidden. Commonly it is known as the churning for 'Amrita.' But it was only to draw the attention towards all those who tried to become immortal but without success, as they did not have the key to launch towards the Supramental; and it is not at all a "churning," for it is found without resistance. But now it is different. Let us leave behind these childish things.

What I find interesting is what I am doing on myself, not for a particular result but

for the possibility that is opening up for the entire earth . . . for a new process which extends from here, with me as base, from my body, where I have been able to charge this matter with the Supramental substance, to those who are ready to open to the New Consciousness, who aspire for the transformation of the body. For them it will be so much less work, so many difficulties removed by the work that I have done on myself. What I have succeeded in doing in me as the forerunner, the first to trace this route towards the Supramental, is astonishing, it is marvelous. And I have begun to take a lot of interest in it, a lot of joy, with an enthusiasm which cannot be expressed in words. It has become an essential part of my existence. I find an extraordinary meaning in what I am pursuing, in what I am doing on myself. It is a new experience, a new life which has begun, with possibilities which go on and on and extend towards the truth of existence.

The why and the how do not exist in the domain of the Supramental Consciousness because the principles of division and ignorance have no place there. It is above the dualities of the mental substance and the

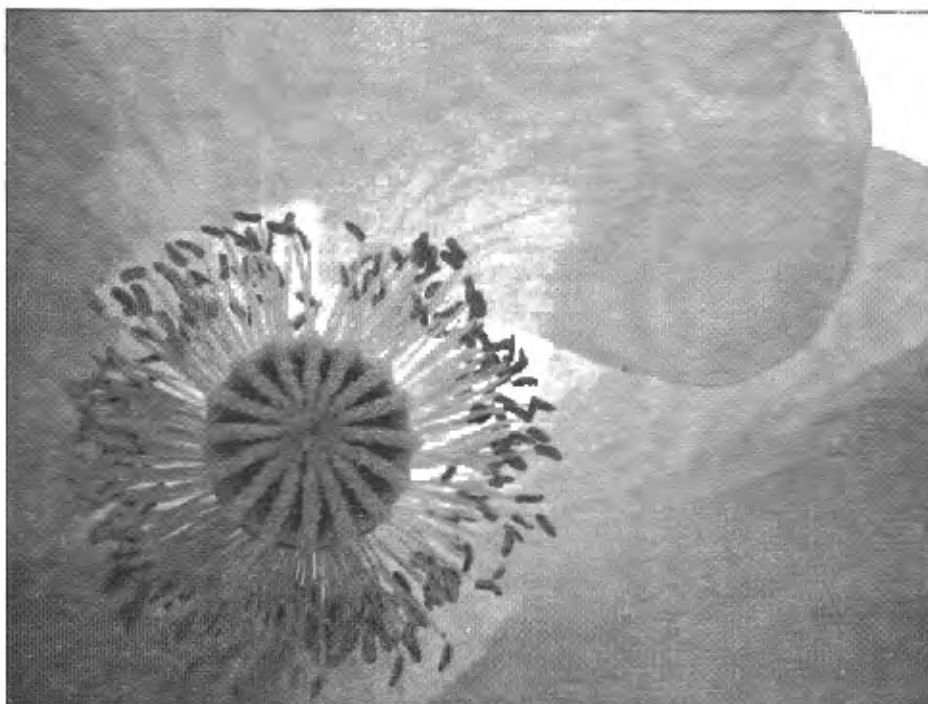
Rose. (Photo by Nilauro Markus)





mental movements. It is ever luminous with the full knowledge and a will that is instantly effective the moment one thinks or wants something,—without any intermediary whatsoever,—a knowledge by identity and a will that accomplishes. This is its power of execution, and I do not know what else . . . how to express it in a language which is so poor and which after all does not lead anywhere. And I am silent and I remain silent, knowing well that soon with the descent of the Supramental will emerge a language proper to its consciousness and its dimension, capable of expressing better all that one feels, all that one wants to say for communicating better. It will be born. Perhaps it will not be through the words or modes of expression that we now use, but by a sort of identity, a sort of concordance and a mutual exchange, without any exterior intermediary, like an extension of the consciousness, a wave that prolongs and becomes one. Or rather, one could say that it is by an expansion of the consciousness which stretches out towards the thing to be known and by identity absorbs the essence of what it wants to know and comprehend. It is a direct method, free and with a greater depth which surpasses our comprehension.

Poppy. (Photo by Nilauro Markus)



At last the body is experiencing the conquest of Matter . . . of inertia, of tamas, of this misery and suffering; and this kind of illusion disappears with the victory over death. The whole body is enthused, happy with the work, and overflows with light, joy and consciousness, splendour, goodness, happiness and beauty,—a sort of intimacy with the sovereign and all-powerful Consciousness.

It is a kind of illumination, a kind of revelation of the inner reality, of the secret of Matter which awakes from its torpor and reveals the knowledge and Ananda of its existence. It is a delightful work I am engaged in, constantly, night and day, with more or less ardour, according to the circumstances. Even when I am outwardly occupied with some laborious work which demands a lot of attention, even then, this inner work of transformation of the cells continues unabated with a vigilance and an absolute concentration. It is true that at night when I am all alone, left to myself, the work of transformation proceeds faster. But it demands an enormous patience of a different kind, with an unparalleled tenacity and exactitude, to work minutely with a meticulous precision and without reserve.

I take up one cell (*Mother makes a gesture with Her fingers*), it is a very small cell, like this, microscopic, which one cannot see with the naked eye, but I possess that power and that vision. Like this, I take up one tiny little cell and I open it to the transforming light of the Divine Consciousness. Then in it I infuse this immutable Divine Joy with an unwavering Peace, and I charge it with the Luminous Power of the Divine Reality. In this way it becomes complete in all the aspects of the Lord: the Light with His knowledge, the Joy that brings the Divine Love, the Peace with its Perfect Serenity, and the Power to endure eternally until it dissolves itself in the Supreme Will. This is how I work. And I charge each cell with this Divine Consciousness and then I take up another cell, and then another, and then another. I continue to charge them in the same way.

These cells vibrate and radiate with a resplendent consciousness. The ones that are ready, I collect them and keep them aside and I observe the difference between those that are ready and the ones that I have not touched; it is so different, so unreal in comparison, and the others experience this state and the body smiles and has become conscious. The cells begin to realise the Unity, and what is most astonishing is when I see the difference between the cells that are transformed and those that are not. It cannot be compared! In the old cells, that is to say those in which the past still persists, there is only a faint glow, a spark of the Divine, whereas in the cells that are charged with the Supramental Consciousness, there is the perception of the Ananda of the soul, the soul of Matter which is awakening after thousands of years from its torpor of inconscience. It is so living, so real, so concrete in the manifestation of matter that if one gave just a bit of this Ananda to someone to taste, he would forget the whole world in order to pursue this extraordinary phenomenon. Truly, how absurd everything seems, how dull and worthless, how absolutely insignificant before this quest for transformation.

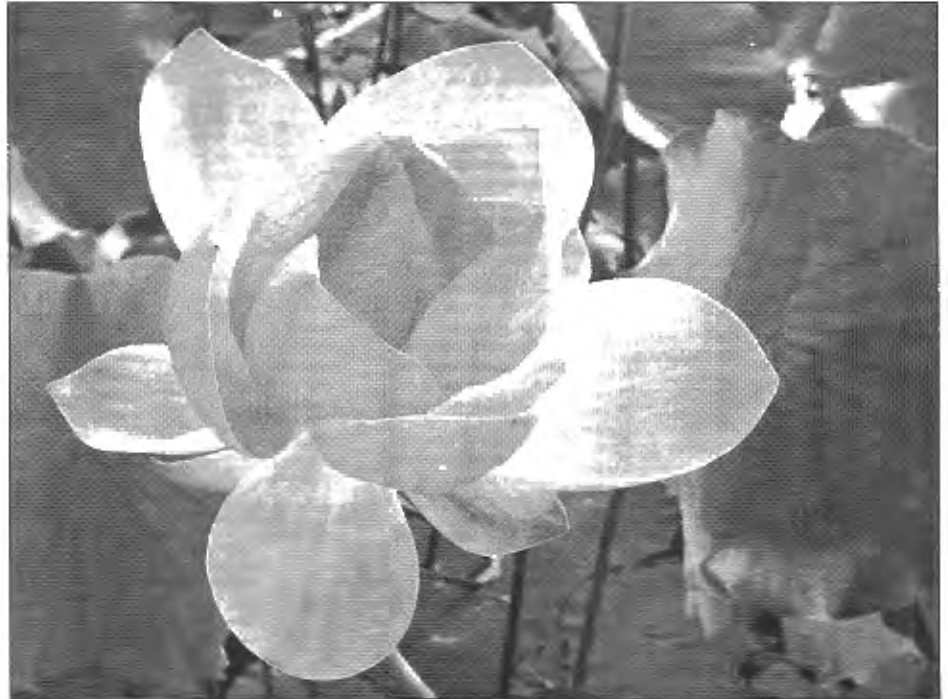
In this state of receptivity the body makes its perfect surrender and repeats: "Only what Thou wilt, Lord, what Thou wilt,"—this is its constant prayer. It is His will that acts, that works, transforms



and guides, and the body just surrenders itself. It is so spontaneous, so total and so marvelously equal—like a perfect transmitter. Nothing happens except what He commands! The body thrills to an unknown joy. There is nothing in it that resists, nothing that distorts, nothing that falsifies. All is pure, pure and limpid, of a purity without stain, a limpidity that seems transparent. When I look at my arm, my body, it is as if translucent. It is so light that it can move wherever I want to go. In this state the body does not get tired even after a day of hard work; and it does not end during the night, when I continue with the transformation of the cells. This demands a patience and an exactitude of precision and a concentration unparalleled in all the endeavours which I have undertaken in the terrestrial existence. The body looks at itself and perceives a vibration of joy: how happy it is with all that is happening! It has a sense of that which is all-powerful, infinite and eternal. Decay and death do not have any meaning for it, for they do not exist in this domain of Ananda. The body is aware of a kind of immortality; it feels that everything that exists is moved by His Will, that in the Divine Consciousness all is eternal and infinite, of a perfect Peace. The inconceivable Splendour! But how could it be otherwise? Always the body, that is to say this Matter which seems to be luminous, repeats: "What Thou willest, Lord, what Thou willest." Or sometimes, in response, it surrenders itself entirely with gratitude, it feels a sort of marvel and it repeats: "Make me worthy of Thy work, make me worthy of Thy existence." All this and much more that I cannot express.

I have also begun the work of transforming the organs, the organs which are inside, one after the other. I began this work so that the outer means of subsistence by something will no longer be indispensable,—the needs of existence and the whole process will not be necessary any more,—they will draw energy from the Universal Force . . .

And now I know how I have been able to accomplish this formidable task. He who prepared and arranged the circumstances, He who has guided me constantly on the path, He who was beside me during painful



Lotus. (Photo by Nilauro Markus)

moments to pull me out of the anguish and the miseries, the danger and the dreadful pain—it was as if my whole body were being torn apart . . . and it was always Sri Au-robindo who was there to guide me.

Since He left His body so many years ago, He has been working in the subtle physical to prepare the descent of the Supramental world. He has arranged everything so that this work of transformation is accomplished upon earth. And now I realise that without His help, how miserably the work of transformation would have languished. Without Him, what could I do? I do not know . . . but not much.

Earlier, fairly long ago, when I became aware of the possibility of the transformation of this body—however I knew well that this body would be transformed—but when I was given the indication and I saw the concrete possibility before me, then I began the work, and it was really a challenge against Nature who did not want to change, who did not want to be transformed. So She began to revolt, to resist in hundreds of ways—to block here, to remove something there, to oppose me in such a way that I would abandon this movement against Her. Nature is formidable in Her own domain. And She

began to send all sorts of discomforts aimed at me. They would literally hit me, and the body would undergo acute anguish and suffering—frightful pain everywhere, everywhere . . . it was unbearable—it was as if the devil had been let loose with all his tricks to do mischief. And the poor body which was not accustomed to endure all these misfortunes, would groan, would cry out in pain and had all sorts of reactions against these attacks. And my only defence was to endure courageously, to try to cut the connection with my body; or else I tried to detach myself from the pain. But nothing would work. It was as if Death were staring at me. But I do not give up so easily. Thus a tremendous battle began, a fierce fight ensued, in which neither of us would give up. The effects and the consequences were disastrous. The poor body suffered, but like a conqueror it voluntarily endured, even if it meant that it had to perish or get dissolved.

At that time, when the attack turned very violent, I asked someone to play for me a piece of my music. At once, within a minute, the body became calm and the pain diminished considerably. The nerves became tranquil, as if a balming effect spread over the body. . . .



White flower. (Photo by Nilauro Markus)

[Mother talks about her music]

But now I have found a method which is invincible. I open myself towards the heights and as soon as I utter: "What Thou wilt, Lord, what Thou wilt" . . . the miracle happens. It is no longer I who work to transform the cells, it is He who does all, who arranges everything, who opens the cells to the transforming light and who infuses them with the Divine Joy. I only remain open to him and repeat: "What Thou wilt, Lord, what Thou wilt." It is so beautiful, so marvelous, and at once, all discomforts vanish. The body vibrates with joy, and an ardour to remain in this sovereign Consciousness lifts me up towards all that is Divine, purely Divine, solemnly Divine. It is fantastic! It is the New Consciousness—an identification, or rather a union with the Supreme. The body becomes vast and immutable, united with His Consciousness, with a vision of the whole, as if seeing through His vision, feeling through His perception of the whole. It is an absolutely different experience of the whole as well as of the individual . . . But we human beings see wrongly and judge falsely. But the body had no sense of the mind or the vital—they did not exist. Instead, there is a Divine 'elan'—

the soul that acts, that feels, that perceives, that understands, that absorbs and directs everything that should be done, and what is necessary for this material existence in the process of transformation into the Superman. It is unbelievable, the possibilities which appear and open up . . .

Often I have been asked how far Sri Aurobindo had succeeded in transforming His body by the Supramental Force.

Yes, Mother, we wonder about it, but we do not really know.

But how can you know with your little mind? No, none can understand what it is, unless one has experienced something. But I tell you, He had amassed considerably the Supramental Force in His body. What a formidable work . . .

You remember, don't you, that when He left His body, the body remained glorious for almost five days. Perfectly luminous, even though He had poured all His Supramental Force into me. He gave me everything, everything, before He left. But His body still radiated with the Supramental Splendour. You know, at that moment, during the last few minutes, I was standing near his bed and I could literally see the Supramental Light entering into me, materially,

with a friction it was entering into me. It was as concrete as that, through the pores, it was entering like this (*gesture*).

And for the first time I see how one can have faith in the Divine Grace, an unshakable faith, without the least anxiety about the work which He had accomplished. It was phenomenal, the consciousness He had accumulated in Himself. It was extraordinary—the level He had reached with diverse and unknown realisations.

And a single decision: that the work for hastening the descent of the Supramental world would be done faster if He left the body in order to work more effectively in the subtle physical. And at once He left His body behind and launched Himself to conquer this domain of the subtle world which still resisted. It was not the perception of the unreality of life that made Him leave his body, but it was the conviction of His faith that to win this victory He had to be free to prepare the ground in order to bring down the Truth upon earth, so that this work of transformation is done in spite of all the consequences. One word from above, and the decision was taken—like a decree. This is the most noble sacrifice that has ever been made. No, it is a total self-abandonment into the Supreme Ecstasy—which He alone could do—to annihilate oneself completely in order to exist in Him alone.

Formidable! What Power, what Consciousness, what Knowledge, what Compassion, what Light He had in Him . . .

And He commanded me: "*You shall do my work of transformation upon earth . . . my help is there.*" (*Mother speaks in English*)

So I did not think at all. I did not formulate anything, but with confidence I launched myself into this work which he had so laboriously undertaken and had now commanded me to do, to continue until it is done . . . I do not question. What He had wanted has to be done, and without Him I can do nothing.

At each step He is there to support my effort, to push me further, to guide me, to enlighten me if ever I hesitate. And what a formidable work we have accomplished together!

All that was conceived, all that was promised is now materialising. And the



transformation of the body is no longer a vain mirage—it is a fact, a process that has taken root and is developing and moving steadily towards a luminous future. Already the body is responding so marvelously to the New Light. And more and more the body feels itself vibrating with a divine confidence. What it can accomplish I do not doubt at all. Nothing seems impossible for it, and its capacity has increased tremendously with an unlimited power and energy. The body is becoming vast, as vast as the universe. The body has already undergone a sort of transformation of the cells and it projects what one conceives of as that eternal form with the Eternal Beauty.

Evidently it is a thousand times more beautiful than what man can ever imagine. It has no age and will never be dissolved by time or its consequences . . . I have become like an infant, but so prodigious! (*gesture*)

The body is luminous, transparent, plastic, malleable—and can take any form according to its need. Even the quality of its consciousness has changed so much that the past no longer exists for it, and so many other things that cannot be expressed in words. Oh, it is marvelous! It is extraordinary! It is unbelievable!

But . . . no one will be able to understand nor believe nor assimilate even a hundredth part of what is happening in me. This is the truth that surpasses all comprehension. (*trance*)

Mother . . .

Yes, my child—

Mother, speak more about this extraordinary phenomenon that You are engaged in, the experience of the Supramental transformation of Your body. Mother, tell me more. It is so beautiful, so marvelous. Mother, speak more about your experiences.

But these are no longer experiences, no longer realisations, not even living in the way we conceive of the highest, truest, and most vast. But it is rather 'being'—'being' more than 'becoming.' It is being Divine; it is being the Supreme Consciousness; what He is and what He will be, more and more. And . . .

But no one will be able to understand me, . . . no one! . . . or grasp; . . . no one possesses this vision or has the knowledge to understand even a bit of what is happen-

ing in me. On the contrary, they will accuse me of creating absurd phantasmagorias which tend towards the irreality of things with false and illusory imaginations; or still more, that they are the mutterings of a child who has lost its head and such comments which have no real truth. And what more, I do not know. But it does not bother me at all, not at all. It does not affect me at all. If man in his ignorance, in his inconscience talks nonsense and heaps all sorts of abuses which he has the habit of throwing at anything that he does not understand, it is his foolishness. If he still denies the Truth, it does not touch me. I remain above, knowing well that the Lord knows everything and it is He who is guiding me. He is my refuge. I am one with Him.

. . . Yet there remains a problem which must be solved. How all this work that I have done on my body,—that I have accomplished and achieved in my body,—this work of the transformation of Matter, (*gesture*) even of this body,—which has begun well,—how to perpetuate this movement in the terrestrial existence so that the nucleus of a new race can take root? How to convince the earth, the terrestrial consciousness, to accept this new process of realising the next step in terrestrial evolution, . . . to launch itself towards vaster and truer horizons? I am still searching in this thick inconscience which man in his ignorance wants to cling to, and does not want to change . . .

But I have not lost hope, for the Lord is guiding me and He knows better His affairs and will arrange whatever has to be done. I leave it to Him: "What Thou wilt! What Thou wilt . . ."

Mother, if I only knew what to do, or how to be useful, I would do every thing, Mother.

Leave everything to me and abandon yourself in the current and you shall be guided. It is evident that the purpose of my descending here on earth, for the transformation of the body and eventually of the earth, by the transforming action of the Supramental, would be accomplished if I could sow a seed of this supramental substance in the human species and which will then ensure its continuity on earth . . . Even if it be only a thousandth infinitesimal part

of what I carry, it will be sufficient to perpetuate this movement.

Otherwise . . . I would say that the earth and men were not ready, were not receptive enough to accept the descent of a greater Light, a greater Knowledge, a greater Ananda, were not ready to open themselves to the Eternal, to the Truth of existence.

Voilà! Now I must not speak further. I have talked a lot, revealed much, much more than I should have. Hurry up, it is very late. Au revoir!

It is . . . yes, I believe the only word that describes the sensation it gives is "an Absolute"—an Absolute. Absolute. That's the sensation: of being in the presence of the Absolute. The Absolute: absolute Knowledge, absolute Will, absolute Power . . . Nothing, nothing can resist. And then this Absolute (there's this sensation, concrete) is so merciful! But if we compare it with all that we regard as goodness, mercy . . . ugh! that's nothing at all. It's THE Mercy with the absolute power and . . . it's not Wisdom, not Knowledge, it's . . . It has nothing to do with our process. And That is everywhere, it's everywhere. It's the body's experience. And to That it has given itself entirely, totally, without asking anything—anything. A single aspiration (*same gesture, hands open upward*), "To be capable of being That, what That wills, of serving That"—not even "serving," of BEING That.

But that state, which lasted for several hours . . . never had this body, in the ninety-one years it's been on earth, felt such happiness: freedom, absolute power, and no limits (*gesture here and there and everywhere*), no limits, no impossibilities, nothing. It was . . . all other bodies were itself. There was no difference, it was only a play of the consciousness . . . (*gesture like a great Rhythm*) moving about.

So there.

Apart from that, all the rest is as usual.—The Mother, *Agenda*, 15 February 1969



The connection of sages: Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi and Sri Aurobindo

by Charles Ismael Flores

This article includes an imaginary interview in which the author compares, based on published quotes from Ramana Maharshi and Sri Aurobindo, what each of them might say to questions posed by an Integral Yoga sadhak. The article sheds light on the distinctly different spiritual approaches of these two masters.

The case of Ramana Maharshi and Sri Aurobindo is one that is unusual in modern times. Two of the greatest saints of modern India lived in the same era, what would today be a mere three-and-a-half-hour drive from each other in southern India, the state of Tamil Nadu. Side by side lived the highest modern representative of an ancient yoga and the lauded progenitor of what has been claimed to be an entirely new yoga.

This article explores the unusual connection of saints that were destined to be linked in a ripple of time and space.

Ramana Maharshi came to the holy mountain Arunachala in Tiruvannamalai in 1896 when he was 16 years old, and he reportedly never left the mountain for 54 years.

Sri Aurobindo fled from Bengal to the French colony of Pondicherry in 1910 due to his revolutionary activities to overthrow British rule. Once there he never left, since at one level, it would have been dangerous—but far more importantly to Sri Aurobindo, he had to focus on his sadhana.

They both died within a few months of each other—Bhagavan Maharshi on 14 April and Sri Aurobindo on 5 December 1950.

So although Tiruvannamalai and Pondicherry are only 65 miles apart, the political realities of the period and the sages' own practices prevented a physical encounter. One may only speculate that these yogis

could have “met” in subtle realities.

What are left are the remembrances of visitors and disciples between the two ashrams. Though it is known that thousands of seekers traversed through both ashrams while both sages were alive, only a few have written about their experiences.

Swami Madhahavamitra was a devotee of Ramana Maharshi who had some familiarity with Sri Aurobindo's yoga, and he recalled one discussion had with Ramana about it. (Godman, 2000)

Two of Sri Aurobindo's most respected disciples, M.P. Pandit and his teacher T.V. Kapali Sastry, were also once disciples of Ramana Maharshi. Both considered Sri Aurobindo and the Mother their ultimate gurus, but that in no way diminished their high regard of their former guru.

Pandit, who is perhaps the most famous and prolific commentator on Sri Aurobindo's yoga thus far, wrote of the Maharshi in his book *Mighty Impersonality*: “He was a direct Emanation from the Divine Being in its aspect of conquering Knowledge, Skanda Sanatkumara . . .” (Pandit, 1998)

Sastry wrote extensive commentaries about the Maharshi philosophy and also recorded talks with him. Sastry explains succinctly in his diary in 1948 how he works out the different yogas for himself:

“In the Maharshi's teaching, as indeed in all the yoga of ancient India, the problem to be solved is the problem of the individual. In Sri Aurobindo's teaching, it is the problem of man in his total being and the meaning of his existence on earth that is sought to be discovered and worked out. The problems are different and so are the solutions.” Thus, Sastry found a compatibility with his gurus.

As A.R. Ponnuswami Iyer writes in his forward to Sastry's *The Maharshi*: “Even after, under the imperative urge of an inner development, he [Sastry] took the sadhana of Sri Aurobindo, he retained his reverential attachment to Sri Maharshi. This he could do without sacrifice for he saw, appreciated, and assimilated the realized truth of these two greatest teachers of the age have given to the world. Small men, with their little egos, boast of their teachers, as they boast of

their material possessions, feel needless jealousies, and stir up passion and discord in a realm where harmony should reign. But Sri Sastry could be loyal to Sri Aurobindo without being disloyal to Sri Maharshi or his still earlier guru Sri Ganapati Sastrigal.” (Sastry, 1979)

How do we as scholars, using our minds, which are so limited in spiritual endeavors, make sense of the relationship of the two seers and their yogas?

The most obvious issue of evaluation is the fact that Ramana Maharshi never wrote of or spoke extensively about Sri Aurobindo's yoga, whereas deep understanding of Advaita was an essential foundation of Sri Aurobindo's Purna Yoga. Maharshi's arguments are ancient, and circular; the eternal Self allows no room for innovation. Sri Aurobindo, on the other hand, wrote extensively in *Synthesis of Yoga* and *The Life Divine* about what he called the old “Mayavada” yogas, the Buddha and Shankara having been the most famous expositors of the world as illusory.

Monistic Advaita, of which Ramana Maharshi is an exemplar, affirms the separation of the limitless Self behind phenomena and the finite self that perceives phenomena. The apparent separation is explained by *maya*, or that the Eternal has imagined itself as divisible.

The Monistic Advaitist believes that all is Self, life is an illusion. When one realizes the Self, then one will live until the body dies, and after there is no life. For the Monistic Advaitist, there can be no transformation, because the parts of the being—mind, life, and body—are all *maya*. Life is about relations; in pure Self, all relations vanish. There would be no use in transforming an illusion that could be nothing other than an illusion. A life with Self would be impossible. (Sri Aurobindo, *Letters on Yoga*)

Sri Aurobindo, by contrast, describes his yoga as Realistic Advaita. In his book *The Life Divine*, he explains that the world is the manifestation of the Real and is in itself real. The Real or the Spirit is involved in matter, and it is in the process of evolution that it will manifest explicitly as Spirit through his yoga—ultimately by opening all the parts of the being to a transformation



through the descent of the supramental.

But there are many steps that must be taken before the supramental descent is possible—most importantly, contact with the psychic being, and allowing it to purify and guide the body, the vital, and the mind.

Thus Sri Aurobindo takes a completely different approach to yoga for a completely different aim than the followers of traditional Advaita.

It perhaps would not be fruitful to compare these two great yogic realizations by the use of hermeneutics. Both yogas are logically compelling for the scholar. Seekers (and also scholars) are ultimately drawn to the aim of the yoga using their own minds and their spiritual experiences. Some may be compelled to choose the yoga that states that life and the world is an illusion, and many others today will be drawn to the yoga that dares to affirm life and the world by transforming it to something explicitly divine. In the personalities of Ramana Maharshi and Sri Aurobindo, we have seen in modern times just a couple of the great choices we must make for ourselves in our rapidly changing world.

The following fantasy interviews are based upon actual recorded talks and letters with Ramana Maharshi and Sri Aurobindo, and the seekers who came to them. There is no recorded talk between the two sages, so none is ventured here. As previously stated, it is not known whether they had ever met in person, but it seems extremely improbable.

Conversations in supradimensional space

I have been so fortunate as to be able to arrange talks with Ramana Maharshi and Sri Aurobindo in supradimensional space, for the purpose of my inquiry into the natures of their yogas.

Seeker: *Sri Bhagavan, it is an honor to be in your presence. I would like to take this opportunity to discuss with you the differences between the yoga of Sri Aurobindo and your own yoga.*

Ramana Maharshi: You ask about two beings, and supposedly two yogas.



Sri Aurobindo during his early years in Pondicherry. (Photo courtesy Sri Aurobindo Ashram)

What are they? Difference is in relation to some center. What is it? Enquire.

My understanding is that there are differences between your yoga and Sri Aurobindo's yoga . . .

Who is it who sees such differences? Find it out.

Yes, I think I understand what you are getting at. But I have been learning that others believe that there are different routes to realization—and Sri Aurobindo speaks of realization that includes the transformation of matter.

As for Aurobindo, you ask him. As for my opinion, how does it matter to you? How will it be of any use to you? Have you got any opinion on the matter? That alone will affect you, not the opinion of others.

I want know the differences to move further in my sadhana. I am open to the descent of the Divine to manifest within me. What should I do?

All right. *Be what you are.* There is nothing to come down or to become manifest. All that is needful is to lose the ego.

That what is, is always there. Even now you are That. You are not apart from it. What do you wait for?

The thought, "I must know," the expectation to know and the desire of obtaining knowledge, are all the workings of the ego. You have fallen into the snares of the ego. The ego says all of these and not *You*. Be yourself and nothing more!

But don't I have to open myself to the descent of the supreme Self?

Is not the Self already within us? How can the all-pervading Self be taken from one place to another?

Sri Aurobindo speaks of the body becoming supramentalized, and that this new body will not grow old, and will not die without one's desire.

The body itself *is* disease. To wish for a long stay of that disease is not the aim of the jnani. Anyway, one has to give up identification with the body. If one has the attitude, "If the higher power is to come down, it must come down into my body," this will only increase identification with the body. Truly speaking, there is no need of any such descent. After the destruction of the I-am-the-body idea, the individual becomes the form of the Absolute. In that state, there is no above or below, front or back.

Sri Aurobindo says that the Divine has created various kinds of worlds and with this descent, will create a new world.

Our present world is not real. Each one sees a different imaginary world according to his imagination, so where is the guarantee that the new world will be real? The jiva, the world, and God, all of these are relative ideas. So long as there is the individual sense of "I," these three are also there. If you stop the mind, the three will not remain, but Brahman alone will remain, as it remains and abides even now. We see these things because of an error. The idea of a descent is an error. Whether this world is real or unreal, conscious or inert, a place of happiness or a place of misery, whether you feel an ascent or descent, all these states arise in the state of ignorance. They are not useful after realization.

My experience of descent is an error? But the only way I feel this is when I surrender to the Supreme, as Sri Aurobindo advises.



es. Then he speaks of the parts of our being that transform when we surrender.

Aurobindo advises complete surrender. Let us do that first and await results, and discuss further, if need be afterwards and not now. There is no use discussing transcendental experiences by those whose limitations are not divested.

Learn what surrender is. It is to merge in the source of ego. The ego is surrendered to the Self. Everything is dear to us because of love to the Self. The Self is that to which we surrender our ego and let the Supreme, i.e., the Self, do what it pleases. The ego is already the Self's. We have no rights over the ego, even as it is. However, supposing we had, we must surrender those rights, also.

If after surrender, you still feel the desire to bring the power of God into the body, then the surrender has not been successful.

But what of my experience of bringing down the Divine from above into my heart?

As if the Divine is not already in the Heart? "O Arjuna, I am in the expanse of the Heart," says Sri Krishna. "He who is the sun, is also in this man," says a mantra in the Upanishads. "The Kingdom of God is within," says the Bible. All are thus agreed that God is within. So what is to be brought down? From where? Who is to bring what, and why?

I know what you say is true, but I also experience that there are differences between the parts of our being that are important.

Realize the Self or the Divine. All of these differences will disappear.

I am coming to this realization gradually. I am only beginning to have some small partial realization. I am afraid I cannot just get this full realization instantaneously!

Realization is nothing new. It is eternal. There is no question of instantaneous or gradual, partial or full realization. There is only realization.

But Sri Aurobindo actually talks of starting with Self-realization, and developing further.

First realize, and then see. [Pause]

The fact is, there is Reality. It is not affected by any discussions. Let us abide as

Reality and not engage in futile discussions as to its nature.

[Long pause, the Maharshi vanishes into the Self]

Thank you, Sri Bhagavan.

[Sri Aurobindo appears moments later.]

Seeker: *You just missed Ramana Maharshi! Hey wait, come back! Oh, that's not very respectful.*

Sri Aurobindo (chuckling): It seems that you only get one guru at a time, Sir.

I'm sorry. It is such an honor to be in your presence today, Sri Aurobindo. As you see, I just asked Ramana Maharshi about the differences between your yogas. But all he kept telling me to do was to realize the Self. He really wasn't interested in engaging in this conversation, and actually referred me to you about your opinion.

I have written extensively about the difference between my Purna Yoga and the older yogas. I have also discussed my view of Kevala Advaita, of which Maharshi is an exemplar.

Yes, I am aware of that. But how do you understand the difference specifically between your yoga and his? I have read about Ramana Maharshi's experience from a direct disciple of his: "One day the heart center opened and I began to hear 'I, I,' and everywhere I saw this 'I.'"

All experiences are true and have their place. But because one is true, one can't say that the other is false. Truth is infinite. The wider you become, the higher you go. The more you find, there is still more and more. In this instance, Maharshi has his experience of "I," but when I had the Nirvana experience I could not think of an "I": however much I tried I could not think of any "I." The word simply got displaced. One can't speak of it as "I." It is "That." That I call Laya. Realization of the Self is all right: Laya was a part of a realization which is much more comprehensive.

When I do not accept the Mayavada, it is not that I have not realized the Truth behind it or the "One in All," and the "All in the One," but because I have other realiza-

tions which are equally strong and which cannot be shut out. The Maharshi is right and everybody else is also right.

You say Laya is more comprehensive. You and Ramana Maharshi say different things. How do we find for ourselves which is more comprehensive?

Each one goes to the limit of his consciousness. Masters often say that their realization is the highest, and are quite sure about it, yet each one is standing at a different place in consciousness.

When I asked Ramana Maharshi about my sense that there is a divine or supramental descent, he stated that it is not possible for Self, which is everywhere, to move to another place.

It the descent is the experience of many sadhaks even outside of our yoga. An old sannyasi of the Ramakrishna Mission saw a flood of light descending, and when he asked about it he was told it was all the work of the devil and the whole experience stopped afterwards.

In Maharshi's case he has received the thing in the heart and has worked with it, so he does not feel the descent.

Ramana Maharshi did not seem at all concerned with anything in the world but realization of the Self.

Maharshi was intended to lead this sort of life. He had nothing to do with what happened around him. He remained calm and detached. The man is what he was. But I was glad to hear a story of him shouting at an Indian Christian; it means he can also at times become dynamic.

It seems to me that your yoga is more difficult. Ramana Maharshi has realized the Self and he is happy and content with that. It seems a complicated and long process to manifest the Divine in one's body and one's life. Instead of calmness, it would seem to lead to exhaustion!

One must be quite dynamic. One must have the power to be free, by moving out of evolution, that is to say, one must get the power to act from beyond the evolution.

Many yogis when they go beyond into the Spirit or the cosmic consciousness, allow cosmic Nature to act through them without any sense of individual responsibility. They remain concentrated in, or identi-



fied with, the higher consciousness, uncontrolled. So you find as others have found that the spiritual man uses foul language; of course, the yogi or the spirit in him is not bound by the rules of decency.

When one has attained the higher consciousness then, as the Upanishad says, one does not regret: I did not do that which was good, or I did this which was evil. It is not that all yogis act that way. But some of them know the reason, or the necessity of the way they act in a particular situation, at a particular time. Only, they are not bound by their action.

Another difficulty arises because most of the yogis are very bad philosophers, and so they cannot put their experience in mental terms. But that does not mean that they have no real spiritual experience. They do not want to acquire intellectual development, for they wanted only to reach a higher consciousness and they are satisfied with that. I see you looking for things that the yogi has never tried to attain, so you are disappointed, like that other American who objected to Ramana Maharshi's spitting and biting his nails. That has nothing to do with his spirituality.

You have some sense by now that in our yoga, the aim is not only the realization of the Self, but the divinization of inconscient matter itself, a kingdom of heaven on earth. For that integral path, the mind cannot be bypassed or ignored.

Why is it that Ramana Maharshi, along with many other great sages, does not seem to care about or even understand certain aspects of your yoga, such as the supermind, overmind, and so forth?

As I said, they would tend to want to bypass the mind. Mayavada Vedantins had no clear perception of these things because they lived at the highest in the spiritualized higher mind, and for the rest could only receive things from even the overmind.

So you do not accept Maharshi's one injunction to me, "Be what you are," or that I only need to realize That, nothing more.

I do not base my yoga on the insufficient ground that the Self (not soul) is eternally free. This affirmation leads to nothing beyond itself, or, if used as a starting point, it could equally well lead to the conclusion

that action and creation have no significance or value. The question is not that but also the meaning of creation, whether there is a Supreme who is not merely a pure undifferentiated Consciousness and Being, but the source and support also of the dynamic energy of creation and whether cosmic existence has for It a significance and a value. That is a question which cannot be settled by metaphysical logic which deals with words and ideas, but by a spiritual experience which goes beyond mind and enters spiritual realities.

Each mind is satisfied with its own reasoning, but for spiritual purposes that satisfaction has no validity, except as an indication of how far and on what line each one is prepared to go in the field of spiritual experience. If your reasoning leads you toward a Shankara or Maharshi idea of the Supreme, that might be an indication that the Vedanta Advaita is your way of advance.

How do I know if your yoga is correct for me?

My yoga accepts the value of cosmic existence and holds it to be a reality: its object is to enter into a higher truth-consciousness or divine supramental consciousness in which action and creation are the expression not of ignorance and imperfection, but of truth, the light, and the divine ananda. But for that, surrender of the mortal mind, life, and body to that higher consciousness is indispensable, since it is too difficult for the mortal human being to pass by its own effort beyond a mind to a supramental consciousness in which the dynamism is no longer mental but of quite another power. Only those who can accept the call to such a change should enter into this yoga.

Thank you, Sri Aurobindo.

[Sri Aurobindo disperses in supramental light.]

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For my part, I think I have a right to insist on God giving Himself away in the world as well as out of it. Why did He make it at all, if He wanted to escape that obligation.

Devotion is not utterly fulfilled till it becomes action and knowledge. If thou pursuest after God and canst overtake Him, let Him not go till thou hast His reality. If thou hast hold of His reality, insist on having also His totality. The first will give thee divine knowledge, the second will give thee divine works and a free and perfect joy in the universe.

—Sri Aurobindo,
Thoughts and Aphorisms



Radical ideas from *Life Divine*

compiled by David Hutchinson

David Hutchinson recently took on the challenge of reading Life Divine from start to finish. In so doing, he was struck by the number of startlingly original—even shocking—spiritual ideas Sri Aurobindo had included in this work. Here are some from the first 200 pages.

1. Direct opposition, irreconcilable opposites are the method that the world uses for complete harmony—not through a koan-like transcendence, but rather true reconciliation and transformation. (p. 2)

2. Spiritual endeavor and experience should be based on a clear and disciplined intellect. (p. 11)

3. The ego is necessary to the emergence of consciousness, and is the point at which the awareness of unity emerges. (p. 39)

4. Spiritual realization is by its nature progressive. (p. 44)

5. The individual is necessary to the universe, and remains after liberation and realization. (p. 45)

6. The reason is the first way of exceeding the senses, and thereby piercing the walls of the physical mind. This is one of the most valuable powers that we have. (pp. 60–61)

7. All experience is really knowledge by identity, in its essence. The senses and other means are only intermediaries. (p. 62)

8. The force of weakness is the same as that of strength, or of silence as that of sound. Equal “energy” (Brahman, the Divine, Shakti) is involved in each thing, no matter what. (p. 72)

9. Art and poetry allow us to approach a universal aesthesis, an appreciation for universal delight, because we can be detached while experiencing something. (p. 108)

10. When we come into harmony with the universe, the usefulness of pain ceases. It exists to protect a limited being in its “shocks” with the rest of existence. When



Flower mandala near the Matrimandir in Auroville. (Photo by Nilauro Markus)

the being universalizes, there is no more necessity for pain. (p. 107)

11. There is no absolute evil, error, or ignorance. There is only distortion of the truth. (p. 172)

12. Material force is a subconscious operation of [conscious] Will. It is the same thing in physical force as in conscious bodies. (p. 174)

13. Death is a process or power of life; it is really a rapid disintegration and change

of form, not the opposite of life. (p. 176)

14. Death is a necessary process of life, in order for finite beings to attain infinite experience. Forms have to evolve and change to allow new experience. (p. 195)

David Hutchinson (dbhutchinson@ucdavis.edu) founded the Integral Yoga Forum, which was active from 2000 to 2004. He is a member of the Sri Aurobindo Association and lives in Sacramento, California, where, as a registered nurse, he designs software for electronic medical records.



Books

Psychic being compilation

In his latest book, *Emergence of the Psychic: Governance of Life by the Soul—Selections from the Works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother*, editor A.S. Dalal has compiled selections from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother that explain the evolution of the psychic being (the soul) from its beginnings to its full emergence in the individual human being. Topics include the nature and function of the psychic being, the psychic being's action and influence, contact with the psychic being, growth and emergence of the psychic being, and psychic transformation.

The book is available from Auromere Books and Imports, 2621 W. Highway 12, Lodi, CA 95242, USA; phone: 209-339 1342, toll-free: 800-735-4691; email: books@auromere.com; <http://auromere.com>.

Two from Georges

Two recent books from Georges Van Vrekhem are available from Pondicherry Gift Shop in Woodstock, run by Julian and Wendy Lines. *Overman: The Intermediary Between the Human Being and the Supramental Being* is a metaphysical book that dwells upon the evolutionary vision of Sri Aurobindo and Mother, in particular the Mother's concept of "surhomme" as a transitional being. *Patterns of the Present* discusses the meaning of history, the globalization of our planet, the meeting and reciprocal fertilization of East and West, the future evolution of humanity—all these and more are presented in a fresh, often surprising perspective.

Also available is *The Antithesis of Yoga*, a tale of personal pilgrimage by Jocelyn, a long-time resident of Auroville. The book offers a parade of extraordinary people in the Ashram and Auroville along the way of one hippie mama's spiritual journey to India. The anecdotes and stories bring back fond (and paradoxical) memories of early Auroville. Some of the language is earthy and the writing uneven, but Jocelyn's love and devotion to Mother

and Her Dream shine through.

Contact: Pondicherry, P.O. Box 676, Woodstock, NY USA 12498; phone: 845-679-2926; email: info@matagiri.org.

The Future Evolution of Man

Lotus Press, which has published the major works of Sri Aurobindo in U.S. editions, has recently published a U.S. edition of *The Future Evolution of Man*.

In this book, Sri Aurobindo introduces his theme of the evolution of consciousness as the centerpiece of his vision of humanity's meaning and purpose on earth. He reminds us that each being has contained within itself the eventual shape and life force it is meant to express, and that within the human soul is the answer to the current seemingly impossible struggle. Our destiny on the planet lies in the future evolution of our consciousness to a level that can resolve all the contradictions in a new luminous and harmonious oneness of life and action.

Contact: Lotus Press, P.O. Box 325, Twin Lakes, WI 53181 USA; phone: 262-889-8561, toll-free: 800-824-6396; email: santosh@lotuspress.com; <http://www.lotuspress.com>.

Millennial essays

The Sri Aurobindo Learning Center of Crestone, Colorado, is offering a new book by Rod Hemsell called *Essays for the New Millennium*, 198 pages of essays on philosophy, Integral Yoga, *Savitri*, the Mother, and Auroville. Also available is Rod's CD recording of Sri Aurobindo's "The Yoga of the King" with musical accompaniment. Proceeds will support Solar Bridge, a conference center and guest house adjacent to the Solar Dome and Savitri House in Crestone. Contact: rodhemsell@yahoo.com.

This humorous universe

A God who cannot smile, could not have created this humorous universe.—Sri Aurobindo

Sign in the window of a yoga master:
"Inquire within."

Dyslexic cow, on attaining liberation:
"OOO MMMM!"

One psychic friend to another: "You're fine. How am I?"

Yogi to vacuum-cleaner salesman:
"Too many attachments!"

Bumper sticker: "Out of body. Back in 15 minutes."

Try to be happy—immediately you will be closer to the Light.—The Mother

This delight, this wonderful laughter that dissolves every shadow, every pain, every suffering! You only have to go deep enough within yourself to find the inner Sun, to let yourself be flooded by it; and then there is nothing but a cascade of harmonious, luminous, sunlit laughter, which leaves no room for any shadow or pain.—The Mother

The poetry room

Birds sing from the boughs

No longer is life the same—
It's quieter, more serene.
Birds sing from sheltered boughs,
Roses proclaim their glory,
Dogs wag tails, cats nap,
Lizards scamper under rocks;
All speak through their being.
Remembering God is easier now.

Work there is, tasks endless—
Weeding, mowing, planting, pruning
Sweeping, scrubbing, rinsing, rubbing
Typing, telling, buying, selling—
But it is love's work, freely
Given and taken, a joy
That floats on golden wings.
In it His Presence grows.

—Larry Seidlitz



Light and fog. (Photo by Nilauro Markus)

Bolinas

I sit on a coastal pine branch
on a Lincoln Park bluff,
sky about to rain,
and look northwest three, no four headlands away.
Suspended from cumulus sea clouds piled high over Bolinas
is a rainbow
that makes the Golden Gate Bridge
with sunlight falling across it
seem pitiful,
just pitiful enough
to outlive this
prismatic illusion of permanence
that'll last probably five minutes.
This sighting, with all of the seven bands,
I take as a promise that my visit will be short
and leave no trace, no carbon.
After all, the oldest rocks only sojourn here;
and no one will keep my grave clean
unless I pay them eternally
with what I don't have
to do it.
Though this body's hunched happily over an eroding meadow
in the first few drops, a fine, gentle rain,
soon the sky grows dark, flashes white, and hails.
The world is ending this moment in ice and fire,
scattering my ashes all over the bluff.
Death is a bluff,
and if the water looks walked on,
see for yourself, there I am: over the green scum
wrack of ages, I'm going home
to rejoin the rays that sent me here
and send me now
shuffling off toward Bolinas
on the feet of my soul.

—Rick Lipschutz

Cosmic love

Come thee through the path
That spread in the Milky Way
Up in the sky above miles and miles
With beaconing of stars and the
Silvery rays glistening from
Suns and moons of the vast.
Come thee through that path.

And I sit here to gaze afar
To watch thee cascading thy way
Through the galaxy that ushers.
Like a flower blooming in silence
Thy steps unheard bring thee nearer
In silence is thy descent on this —
Earth, like shafts of light is thy fall
Like the fragrance of Parijat*
Inhaled in the dark.

Bewildered am I in utter dismay
At the prospect of thy embrace
An enchantment awaited forever.
Come softly through the Milky Way

—Susmita Chatterjee

**Parijat: the heavenly flower*



This world

This world I've made is not my own.
I have built it, piece by piece,
like a child who amuses with building blocks,
knowing not
that somewhere within that painted woodwork
lies diamond stuff to carve a crystal dome,
hidden, spilling its light across
shimmering skies.

What baubles have I hoarded!
what trinkets jealously stored
to adorn my empty house, my blind days!
What fleeting dreams have I held
in the palm of my hand,
and snatched at barren hopes, like empty air,
to appease the whirlwind of my fruitlessness.

In my crowded world I'm all alone,
akin to none in these peopled lands.
Estranged from those my mind has cherished.
Estranged from myself at every breath,
in this multitude of fantasmal faces:
My desires have built an arbor of gaudy light,
where love harbours not for long
the sweet innocence of our first kiss.
My heart hears not the call
of the Passionate Lover
or the beckoning of my early dreams
of Beauty,
like distant hills purple in the clouds
flecked with the light of
a deathless sun.

It were perhaps a happy world
if I were but an empty house
and my frame
but senseless stone and blood.
Yet, I cannot blot out within my warring being
the memory of those sudden ecstasies,
that surge through me
without a cause;
breaking my dams of doubt
and hold me silent, subdued, complete.

There is something in me I have not built,
a stream whose bourns I cannot see,
that runs so deep, I can only hear it
when my mind, like the sudden hush of the sea
upon a relentless shore,
is stilled.

And when the ringing frenzy of my heart
is quenched,
and my eyes are no longer blinded
by its floodlights,
I can sense these shores of luminousness
that brook my immortality.

And now I know this mansion I have built
is not my own,
but made only to house Him in.
Like an anxious host who in her eagerness
and preparation of comfort
forgets, awhile, her waiting guest,
I too had forgotten,
and left Him standing
silent, undemanding at my threshold.

No more I hear the clamour of my wasted years
of running aimlessly,
tradition-shod.
The flitting of irrelevant memories
like the pattering footsteps
of frightened children,
has receded;
leaving me fulfilled in my solitude,
my nakedness clothed, at last,
in God.

—Mahashweta Parhi

Her love

There is no infinity
Wider than her love.
Even if you touch
The edge of the bluemost,
Or turn inward the eye's sight,
You cannot reach the bounds
Where her gold-fires burn.
The overflowing sun
Is her splendour's dream;
The deep currents of the sea
Are the calm passions
Of her measureless force.
When by faith the mountains move,
Or the sky is full of sounds,
It is the rush of her delight;
Of the southern wind's gust,
Or the hurry of the stream,
Her sweetness is the source.

— R.Y. Deshpande



Silver grace

A love has sealed us one with paradise—
A kiss of crescent moon upon earth's soul
By virgin raptures dreaming in the blue
That even the pit of hell is a buried sky.
No warrior gold can pierce the veil of time;
For God's own glory here has sunk asleep,
And how shall that abyss of majesty
Brook from its summit-self a lash of light?
Therefore this love's seducing glimmer came,
This haloed serpent of the Infinite,
A white bliss curving through our blinded deeps
To give the darkness' mouth a shadowless smile.

—K.D. Sethna

April storm

On that strange and stormy April day
A steady wind outside was roaring.
A silvery light suffused the air.
I felt you near, and calling me
From somewhere deep within my heart,
I listened in a quiet space behind
The churning nature's thunder roll,
In silence watched the raucous whirl
With eyes that sensed both self and world
And felt you there, your peaceful love,
Your stillness soft, your joyful ease.
Enjoying a brief respite from stress,
I drew you close in a warm embrace
And at your opened door we kissed.

—Larry Seidlitz

Dialogue

"Gosh, Mother, do you think that I can bear
Such power? From my head down to my feet,
The current pulses. You have made my seat
Of meditation an electric chair!"
"Oh, hush now and sit quietly. Take care
That your theatrics, child, do not defeat
This force's gentle purpose and so cheat
You out of your own much-demanded share
Of the power needed to transform your worn
And fragile tea-cup into a gold chalice
Fit to receive my undiluted wine,
And change the mud hut in which you were born
Into an immortal marble palace:
A mansion for the immanent Divine."

—Peter Heehs

The morning was dew wet

The morning was dew wet
and scampering and bouncing beside
in front and behind my heels
shanti the cosmic puppy
led me into the wild woods
where the clear light enveloped me
among fallen twigs and marshy little rivulets
along the wet banks of a soft round-stoned stream
in a place untouched by human havoc
and yet not
and the mind was unfettered
thoughts entered and passed through
without comment
the whole seemed present in the moment
step after step on the soft pine-needed earth
breath after breath lifted the heart
and massaged the universe
a wide calm and deep assurance—
in an infinity of possibilities what was there to prefer?
gratitude overflowing
i thought of Her
may i remember and be able to do whatever you ask
may all of us grow in awareness
and act in the new light which is descending
or growing all around,
there is nothing but all that is.

—Bhavana Dee

The unmeasurable joy of the rulerless

Indra smashed the rock
blasting the Dasyus
who stole the luminous Cows of the
Sun.

This was a primal story
a descent through the subconscious
to free the Light within.

This was a physical reality
the mind inside the cells
and the Divinity in matter.

But now I knew it as literal truth and
invocation
for our war against the lizard-kings
in their cities underground.

—Sam Cherubin



Sunlight filters through trees lining a road in Auroville. (Photo by Nilauro Markus)

Three practices of nonattachment

The marathon

Yearning, striving, leaning,
at mile twenty the meditation begins.
Time and distance start dissolving
soon only breath is left.

OM

I am not this thought.
I am not this body.
I am not this mind.

Virabhadrasana (the warrior)

Leaning, breathing, releasing,
I fix my gaze and reach
towards the Atman and the Brahman
perfect forms within.

OM

I am not this body.
I am not this mind.
I am not this thought.

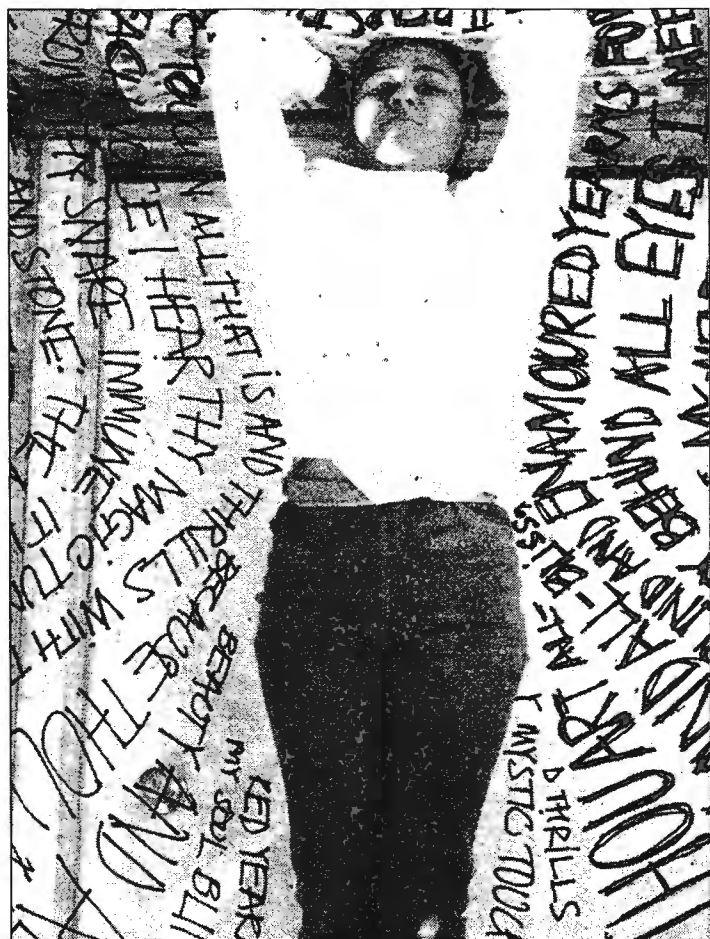
The funeral

Releasing, listening, praying,
did Savasana (Corpse Pose) prepare me?
Self and ego have disappeared
and only the sound of God remains.

OM

I am not this mind.
I am not this thought.
You are not this body.

—James Murphy



"Because Thou art . . ." (Art by Chetana Deorah)

Let me learn to receive

Let me learn to receive
Thy Force in the physical,
So all within this body
Become plastic, supple, and strong.

Let me learn to receive
Thy Power in the vital,
So all within this being
Become calm, poised, and radiant.

Let me learn to receive
Thy Peace in the mental,
So all within this consciousness
Become silent, composed, and surrendered.

Let the psychic govern all
To prepare for Thy descending Grace.

—Chandresh Patel

Because Thou art

Because Thou art All-beauty and All-bliss,
My soul blind and enamoured yearns for Thee;
It bears Thy mystic touch in all that is
And thrills with the burden of that ecstasy.

Behind all eyes I meet Thy secret gaze
And in each voice I hear Thy magic tune:
Thy sweetness haunts my heart through Nature's
ways;
Nowhere it beats now from Thy snare immune.

It loves Thy body in all living things;
Thy joy is there in every leaf and stone:
The moments bring Thee on their fiery wings;
Sight's endless artistry is Thou alone.

Time voyages with Thee upon its prow—
And all the future's passionate hope is Thou.

—Sri Aurobindo

Invitation

With wind and the weather beating round me
Up to the hill and the moorland I go.
Who will come with me? Who will climb with me?
Wade through the brook and tramp through the
snow?

Not in the petty circle of cities
Cramped by your doors and your walls I dwell;
Over me God is blue in the welkin,
Against me the wind and the storm rebel.

I sport with solitude here in my regions,
Of misadventure have made me a friend.
Who would live largely? Who would live freely?
Here to the wind-swept uplands ascend.

I am the lord of tempest and mountain,
I am the Spirit of freedom and pride.
Stark must he be and a kinsman to danger
Who shares my kingdom and walks at my side.

—Sri Aurobindo



Refrigerator poetry

These poems were composed with a set of magnet words tacked onto the refrigerator.

Diamond vision
Still power
A thousand true moments . . .
Purple summer
Blue winter
And me dreaming of light

Screams and moans
Blood on the wind
Smeared whispers
Crushing lies
Shadowed lust
Storm and cry
Run from here
And be gone

The Goddess lives
In eternity
Deathless above time.
So do I
It's sweet
Or as they say
Like cool
I love you God

Spring ahead
Go forward
Want no wants
Need not
Have it all
And use it
Yet for Me

—Lynda Lester

Heaven or hell?

Hellfire is within us;
Heaven dwells there too!
Our searchings,
seekings,
hoping,
dreamings,
For distant Coronados—
Our thrashings,
cursings,
weeping,
aching,
Of our lowly, sinful, fallen state—

ALL MISS THE INNER ABYSS . . .
ABYSS OF FIERY TORTURE, YES.

And gulfs
of Beauty's
kiss.

—Will Moss

After Sri Aurobindo

flame-bright flower
of a flower-bright flame

selfless truth
is the soul's true name

nameless joy
when the one Self came

—Sam Cherubin

"Who will come with me? Who will climb with me?" (Art by Chetana Deorah)





Apropos

Quotes from our sadhak friends

I enter this week with the prayer that I may treat all with equanimity, regardless of their driving skills.—John Chirostarr

Q: How many Aurobindonians does it take to change a light bulb?

A: If the aspiration is sincere and the instrument consecrated, even a single sadhak can do it—and the work can be done even now. However, it is only generally by a slow and laborious process of collective evolution that these things usually happen, due to the present imperfections of human nature.—Michael Miovic

With gurus like that all over the place, I am grateful that Sri Aurobindo hijacked my dad.—Mahipal Reddy

Equanimity isn't a frill in this yoga, it is the very groundwork.—Dave Hutchinson

Don't worry, it will all work out in the end. Love will cover the earth in non-web-safe colors: extravagant hues that have never been seen in the world, each hue a name of God.—Lynda Lester

Call with an anguished heart to Mother . . . SHE ANSWERS! She takes all burdens, solves all problems, uses all forces—miracles, shakti, physics, thermodynamics, chemistry, prakriti, karma, dharma, beauty, music, love, war, peace, bliss, stress, anger, dreams, humor, money, animals, humans, weather, light, ad infinitum—she uses it all to infuse the world with supramental light. The grace is a river pouring into life.

Our only responsibility:
Be thankful.

I am.—Vishnu Eschner

And others ...

At their present farthest limits physics, biology, mathematics touch on certain traditional concepts: certain aspects of esoterism, visions of the Cos-

mos, of the relation between energy and matter. Modern science seen to have ideas to exchange with the magicians, alchemists and wonder-workers of antiquity. A revolution is taking place before our eyes—the unexpected remarriage of reason, at the summit of its victories, and intuition . . .

Today it is a question of a change of state, of a transmutation. From this point of view those concerned with the domain of the interior life and its realities are in step with the pioneering savants who are preparing the birth of a world that will have nothing in common with our present world of laborious transition in which we have to live for just a little longer.—Louis Pauwels, from *Morning of the Magicians*, 1964

A day without sunshine is like, night.—Internet

No wonder there is so much fear, uncertainty and confusion on the planet. I'll tell you how bad it's gotten. You've heard of Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle? Well, they're not even sure about THAT anymore. And so, more and more people are turning to the mystics for answers.

I have often said there are two kinds of mystics, the optimystics and the pessimystics. Now pessimystics seem to be more in touch with "reality," but optimystics are happier and live longer for some reason. The pessimystics have been crying, "The sky is falling, the sky is falling!" The optimystics say, "No. It just looks that way because we are ascending."—Swami Beyondananda

I have seen flowers come in stony places / And kind things done by men with ugly faces / And the gold cup won by the worst horse at the races / So I trust, too.—John Masefield

I felt myself departing from my body as I imagine a spirit would depart—emanating into the cockpit, extending through the fuselage as though no frame or fabric walls were there, angling upward, outward, until I reformed in an awareness far distant from the human form I left in a fast-flying transatlantic plane. But I remained connected to my body through a long-extended strand so

tenuous that it could have been severed by a breath.—Charles Lindbergh on his transatlantic flight, 1927

I love to work I love to run I love to waterski, snowboard, jetski / Skydive, parasail, hang-glide, rollerblade, mountainbike, bungee-jump / Well I mean I'd love to do these things if I ever had the time / I love to work I love to work, I love to work out after work / I love to spend a little time with this woman that I'm seeing / 'Cept we never really get a little time to spend together / So we call each other up and we talk about work.—Jim Infantino, "The Stress Song"

At each stage physical matter is put at the service of a new principle that gives it not only fresh qualities and capacities, but indeed at every stage a new character. Stage by stage it overcomes inertia, weight, bondage, muteness, and gains lightness, space, height, freedom; its sphere of operation broadens and the operations themselves increase in importance. Both the power to act and the scope for action are enlarged.

Does this line of development stop with man as we know him? Our intuitive feeling tells us it must proceed further. Humanity is not a blind alley. The possibilities of what we call body are inexhaustible . . .

What, then, will not be possible when eternity breaks into time and divine strength and holiness holds unrestricted sway, setting the spirit free in its absolute purity and power?—Romano Guardini, 20th century Catholic writer

I can well imagine an atheist's last words: "White, white! L-L-Love! My God!"—and the deathbed leap of faith. Whereas the agnostic, if he stays true to his reasonable self, if he stays beholden to dry, yeastless factuality, might try to explain the warm light bathing him by saying, "Possibly a f-f-failing oxygenation of the b-b-brain." and, to the very end, lack imagination and miss the better story.—Yann Martel. *The Life of Pi*

Whatever is new will always meet opposition from conservative people. If we yield to this opposition, the world will never advance one step.—The Mother