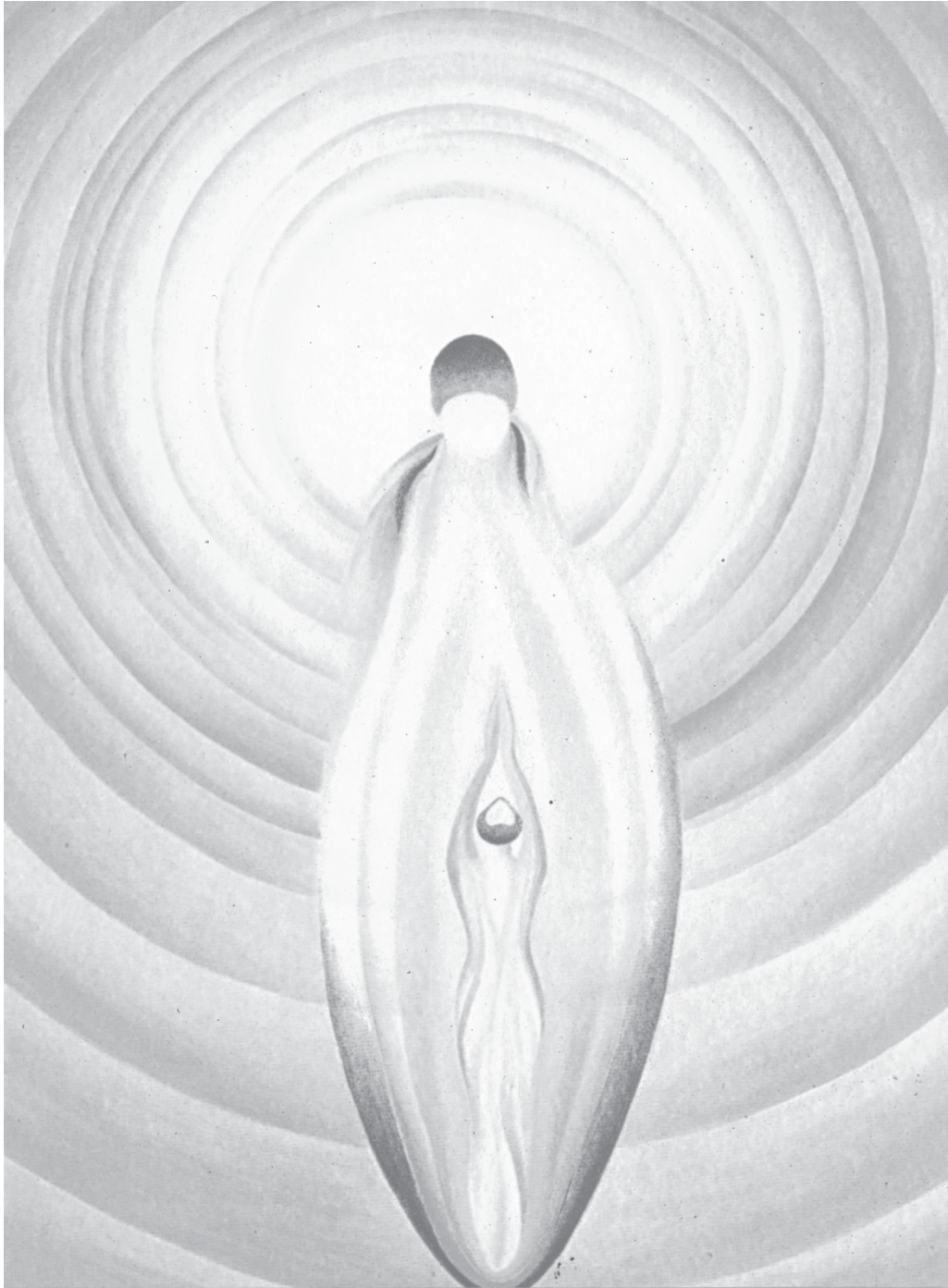


Collaboration

Summer 2010

Journal of the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother

Vol. 35, No. 1



**Interview with Ramchandra Das of Sri Aurobindo Yoga Mandir, Nepal •
The experience of the psychic being and its development by Alain Grandcolas •
Current Affairs • AV Almanac • Source Material • Poetry • Apropos**



About the cover

This greyscale copy of a watercolor painting by the late Usha R. Patel, an Ashram painter, is from her book, *Love Treasures*, paintings based on Sri Aurobindo's book *The Mother*. It was published in 1985 by the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and is used with their permission.

The authors and poets

Alan (alan@auroville.org.in) is a British Aurovilian who in 1988 helped initiate Auroville's monthly news magazine *Auroville Today*, and since then has been one of its editors.

Harindranath Chattopadhyaya (1898-1990) was an Indian English poet, actor, and politician. His poetry was highly regarded by Sri Aurobindo.

Dhyaanavati (hridalaya@gmail.com) studied and worked in the field of psychology in both Croatia and California. The poem included here is from her book, *Recovering the Sacred*.

Alain Grandcolas (alaing@auroville.org.in) was involved in the initial phases of constructing the Matrimandir. After a long stay in France, he returned to live in Auroville in 1999. Since 2002 he been working on the Matrimandir gardens.

Rod Hemsell (rodhemsell@yahoo.com) is an American Aurovilian who for many years has hosted Savitri Immersion Workshops at the Sri Aurobindo Learning Center in Crestone, Colorado.

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The late **Nishikanto** (1909-1973) was a member of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram whose mystic poetry was highly regarded by Sri Aurobindo.

Anie Nunnally (aniemere@gmail.com) has served on the board of the Foundation for World Education and is a long-time member of the Sri Aurobindo Center in Los Angeles.

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The late **Thémis**, a sadhika of the Ashram, was best known for her translation of Satprem's *Sri Aurobindo or the Adventure of Consciousness*. Her book *Poems* was published in 1952/1994.

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From the office of Collaboration

In this issue we feature Alain Grandcolas' study of the experience and development of the psychic being. This paper focuses on a set of interviews that the author had with 15 individuals which were selected from of a larger group of 38 because they had either described a sudden bursting forth of their psychic being, a pivotal experience discussed by both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, or for two of the interviewees, because they had reported having always had a contact with their psychic being. The study is divided into an introduction and nine sections. The first section distinguishes between three different types of experience of the psychic being, as an influence, as a sudden intense experience, or through its touches on certain parts of the being. Sections two through four focus on the experience of the sudden bursting forth of the psychic being and its after-effects. The fifth section focuses on methods for finding one's psychic being, based on the writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. The last four sections examine the relation between the psychic being and the supramental being, based largely on the Mother's discussion of the issue with Satprem, and including some thoughtful speculations by the author himself. The paper brings together much relevant material from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on the psychic being in an organized way and integrates it with the findings of the author's interviews to provide a deep look into this important aspect of the Yoga.

In our Chronicles section, we feature an interview I had with Ramchandra Das (bchandramani@yahoo.com) who, after living 12 years in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, founded the Sri Aurobindo Yoga Mandir (www.aurnepal.net; sriurobindo@gmail.com) in a suburb of Kathmandu, Nepal, and subsequently a second ashram in a valley about 200 kilometers west. Ramchandra recounts his beginnings of yoga as a wandering Vaishnava sadhu and his eventual settling in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. In addition to working in the dining room, he eventually took up serving Champaklal, which he did for three years up until the moment of Champaklal's passing. After this, he decided to make his first visit back to his family and hometown in Nepal, where he received an adesh to start an organization. After much struggle, and with the Mother's help, he succeeded in creating an Ashram in which he transforms and builds the lives of scores of impoverished children as well as numbers of adults in the light of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. He describes how he achieved and manages this remarkable work and service for the Divine.

A second interview is featured in our AV Almanac section, in which Alan of Auroville's monthly news magazine *Auroville Today* interviews Dr. Doudou Diène, a former Director of UNESCO's Division of Inter-cultural Projects, and presently a member of the International Advisory Council of Auroville. Here Dr. Diène explains the roots of inter-societal tensions, and how Aurovilian's are dealing with and overcoming the historical patterns of divisiveness and conflict. At the heart of the successful handling of this challenge is the spiritual development and transformation taking place deep within the individuals and the community as a whole. This has important implications for outsiders who would impose old but ultimately ineffective mechanical or outer solutions to intergroup tension and conflict.

In Source Material we complement our featured article on the psychic being with an extended excerpt from *The Life Divine* explaining its development and the reasons for its initially partial and mixed influence on the outer nature, together with the secret to its full emergence. A second passage from the Mother explains how the psychic being chooses and enters a human being, and the ways in which it shapes and influences the outer life.

Our opening Current Affairs section reports on the two big conferences in the US this summer, and on recent activities and developments at three US centers. Our Poetry Room features wonderful poetry from Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*, and selections from his gifted poet-disciples. Apropos winds up the issue with a selection of wise quotations.

The photographers

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Publisher: *Collaboration* (ISSN 0164-1522) is published by the Sri Aurobindo Association (SAA), a California nonprofit religious corporation, 2715 W. Kettleman Lane, Suite 203-174, Lodi, CA 95242 USA; e-mail: saa@aurobindo.org.

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Subscriptions: A one-year subscription (three issues) to *Collaboration* is \$25 (\$35 for airmail outside the USA, except India; in India, send Rs. 150 to Larry Seidlitz, 39 Vanniar St., Vaithikuppam, Pondicherry 605012). A patron subscription is \$50 or more. A subscription sponsoring an Indian resident is \$4.

Submissions: *Collaboration* welcomes writing, photos, and artwork relevant to the Integral Yoga and spirituality. Submit material by email to: editor@collaboration.org; or by post to *Collaboration*, 2715 W. Kettleman Lane, Suite 203-174, Lodi, CA 95242 USA. *Collaboration* cannot be held responsible for loss or damage of unsolicited material. Letters to the editor may be published unless you indicate otherwise. Letters and articles may be edited for style and space considerations.

About SAA: The Sri Aurobindo Association distributes information about Sri Aurobindo, the Mother, and Auroville and supports various projects related to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Auroville, and Integral Yoga activities in America. Current officers: Lynda Lester, President; Kalpana Patel, treasurer; Chandresh Patel, secretary. Members: Vishnu Eschner, and John-Robert Cornell.

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



Current affairs

AUM 2010: An experience of Grace and Unity

by Martha Orton

The All USA Meeting was held from 8-11 July in Phoenix, NY, at the Menla Mountain Retreat and Conference Center, a short drive from Matagiri Sri Aurobindo Center in Mt. Tremper. Once again it was a beautiful experience of unity in diversity, as participants from a wide range of backgrounds converged and transformed the meeting place with their own unique and vibrant atmosphere. It was very much an "All USA Meeting." Over the course of the event, the harmony with which the gathering began evolved into palpable unity. One particularly fine aspect of AUM is the experience of a collective yoga. This occurs with the bringing together of old friends and the discovery of new ones. I was especially impressed by the experience of a person for whom this was his first AUM. He explained that he had been engaged in practicing the yoga for many years on a completely private basis and said that now that he had "come out" and met with others at an AUM, he felt a close experience of being part of a spiritual family.

In keeping with the theme, "Manifesting the Spiritual Destiny of America," topics ranged from "Visions of Matagiri and the US Pavilion," presented by Julian and Wendy Lines, in which possibilities were explored for the future of both these deeply meaningful places, to discussion of ways of putting the Integral Yoga to practice in life and work in the talk "Integral Activism" by Charles Flores. Linda Lester delighted and touched us all through her powerful multimedia presentation on "The Union of Matter and Spirit: Science, Consciousness and a Life Divine." Linda's talk concluded with the playing of the Gayatri Mantra, as rendered musically in the science fiction series *Battlestar Gallactica*, expressing an extraordinary timeless truth and power.

The conference explored the spirituality inherent in American culture, with Richard Geldard speaking on "Emerson and the Dream of America." This presentation described Emerson as the prime example of spiritual idealism in the Transcendental movement in 19th century America, and explained the great influence Emerson had on American idealism and the sense of spiritual purpose. In his talk titled "Serenity, Courage and Wisdom: Reflections on Reinhold Niebuhr and Sri Aurobindo," Richard Hartz spoke on Reinhold Niebuhr, describing aspects of his thought and its influence on spirituality in America and examining Niebuhr's work in relation to Sri Aurobindo's spiritual philosophy.

The significance of Nature, including the importance of honoring the beauty of the natural world and the sacredness of Mother Earth, was very much a part of the sessions, being beautifully described by John Robert Cornell speaking on "The Mythic Po-



Participants of the AUM 2010 in Phoenix, NY (Photo by Lynda Lester)

tency of Nature in America," Judy Abbott explaining "The Spirit of Place," and Tiokasin Ghosthorse who, in his talk "Tree Roots Consciousness," enhanced our understanding with eloquent description of the perspectives of native peoples. Spirituality as expressed in architecture and design was discussed by Bryan Walton, who spoke on "Frank Lloyd Wright: Visionary of the American Spirit," and Mira Nakashima, who spoke on her father's life and work, as well as the continuing creativity of the Nakashima workshop in "Nature Form and Spirit."

Other presenters were Miriam Belov, whose topic was "Eco-Healing: Healing Yourself, Healing the Planet;" Loretta Shartsis, who presented an audiovisual program on "The Psychic Being" which she had created in collaboration with Coren from Auroville; Mita Radhakrishnan, who presented a program on "Listening with Body, Mind and Spirit;" Aloka from Auroville, who each morning conducted a session on "Awareness through the Body;" and myself, speaking on Sri Aurobindo's perspective on motivation in "The Quest for Knowledge and Mastery." Chi Gung was conducted by Cassia Berman, and Wendy Lines offered morning hatha yoga sessions. A particular highlight was the experience of the Om Choir, led by Narad. Altogether there was a rich variety of meaningful programs, all with an intense spiritual focus directed ultimately toward the vision of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

The meeting included a trip to Matagiri, which became part of the process of aspiring for its future development. During the morning, Eric Hughes, who founded Matagiri along with Sam Spanier, spoke about an experience he had had earlier that day:

Early in the morning I was sitting alone very quietly, very serene and comfortable, almost thoughtless and very calm and at peace. Suddenly these words came to me—in French, as they appear here. Never before had anything like this happened to me before and certainly not in French. Here are those words:



“Matagiri, c’est un jardin des larmes, pas de tristesse, mais de joie et un éclat de lumière psychique.”

[“Matagiri is a garden of tears, not of sadness, but of joy and a burst of psychic light.”]

The truth of this statement resonated with many as the group visited the Overlook. This area has a splendid view of the mountains and is adjacent to the site which has been identified as the location for a new building, one which would enable more visitors and also longer-term residents to stay at Matagiri and foster its ongoing programs. The Matagiri Board will follow up with more details as planning progresses. They are working with architects and a design/build team to develop suitable plans. Their goal is to find the most ecological and appropriate building solution to meet Matagiri’s needs. While gathering at the Overlook, forming a circle of aspiration, Tiokasin Ghosthorse suggested that the group progress around the circle with each person thanking each of the others, simply thanking them, with the meaning of this being as small or as large as one might intend. This evolved into a powerful experience of gratitude for many of those participating.

The closing circle on the final day resonated with Grace and Unity. Remarkably, when the participants sang their final Om together, this was the most exquisite of all. Now we are all looking forward to meeting again next year at Lodi.

Sri Aurobindo Integral Yoga Retreat: July 2010

by Narad Eggenberger

Imagine, if you will, a time in your life when all worries, concerns, obligations, fears, challenges, etc. were gone, almost instantaneously, because you were in the presence of something so pure, so beautiful, and filled with such love and light, that no negativity, no hostile entity could enter into that force-field of absolute power, peace and calm, that atmosphere of purity and consecration. This was the experience of many at this year’s retreat in South Carolina. It was the Presence of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother felt each day as Their blessings and Grace filled the rooms and our hearts.

Set in the beautiful atmosphere of Furman University with its magnificently landscaped grounds, its comfortable accommodations, courteous staff, a spacious dining room offering an eclectic cuisine, and, with everything centrally located, it would inspire anyone to walk and meditate among the large trees, the gardens and especially the clear lake with its graceful swans and colorful mallards.

Yet, those who attended the retreat came for a different purpose and once inside the main halls, the transcendent miracle occurred for which our souls so deeply yearn. A higher force came



Participants of the Sri Aurobindo Integral Yoga Retreat in Greenville, SC (Photo courtesy H.P. Rama)

through the various presenters, especially Ananda Reddy and Sraddhalu Ranade, as often they spoke heart to heart of personal experiences with the Mother, aspects of the Integral Yoga, sensitive and attuned to planes above the mind. Many in the audience were brought to tears, psychic tears, coming to the front of the being and aspiring to absorb Her Love, Her tenderness and Her Grace. The OM Choirs that were held touched deep chords and brought down waves of the New Music.

I have attended a number of AUM Conferences, Integral Yoga Retreats, gatherings of disciples in the various Sri Aurobindo Centers in America, numerous talks in the Ashram, many of which have moved me deeply, but the Sri Aurobindo Integral Yoga Retreat was unlike anything I have previously experienced. At the end of the program people left surrounded by a light that suffused these five days and aspiring to keep it safely within.

This experience is so rare that one should hold it as long as possible in the consciousness helping the flame to grow stronger and brighter. Personally, I witnessed moments of the blossoming of love in people I had met for the first time. On leaving the retreat, a woman came up to me and said that for her devotion and consecration had always been something outside of herself and now she understood it with her inner being. And as she spoke, the tears flowed in cataracts down her cheeks.

I had just returned from the AUM Conference in New York, and was very grateful to have been able to attend both events even though they took place only a few days apart. How often is it that we can have the closeness, the satsang, of those called to the path by Mother and Sri Aurobindo? In the future let us pray that these regenerating events can carry us through the difficulties we face in our daily lives, knowing that They are with us, lifting us after every stumble or fall and guiding us infallibly towards the Light and the promised transformation of earth and humanity.

Our next Sri Aurobindo Integral Yoga Retreat will be on 22 June till 26 June 2011.

With my love and prayers to all.



Activities at The Sri Aurobindo Center of Los Angeles

by Anie Nunnally

The East West Cultural Center - The Sri Aurobindo Center of Los Angeles continues its regular program of Satsang on Saturdays from 4-6 p.m. We are currently studying *The Life Divine*. The observance of all darshan days are held and we are receiving many guests for book sales and meditation. Sri Aurobindo's birthday darshan this year brought 32 people from Los Angeles and surrounding counties for readings, Sanskrit chanting, meditation and prasad. We also showed a short film produced by Loretta Shartsis of Auroville, called "Finding the Psychic Being."

On May 16th we celebrated our founder Jyotipriya's birthday and announced the completion of a tribute to her with a biography and photos on our website www.SriAurobindoCenter-LA.org.

In June we hosted Nadaka and Gopika, singer/musicians from Auroville. They presented a concert on June 5th consisting of Sanskrit chants and hymns accompanied by Raga-guitar. This was preceded on June 4th by a workshop on ragas and chants. Their seven year old son, Keshu, delighted all of us with his masterful playing, for that age, on the tabla!

In August we hosted Richard Hartz from the Archives Department of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram for a five day visit. He gave a lecture on "Parallels between Reinhold Niebuhr's Serenity Prayer and Sri Aurobindo's Yoga of Self-Perfection."

In between guests, we have had the center and cottage repainted and are concentrating now on the refurbishing of the interiors. Our garden has brought great joy this summer to many people and beautifying it and keeping it maintained is an ongoing work-in-progress. We are grateful for the opportunity to serve in Their work and to continue to manifest the Presence of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother for the Los Angeles area.

Update from Sri Aurobindo Sadhana Peetham

by Dakshina Vanzetti

The Lodi Ashram recently completed a 30' Yurt (circular structure) in the northeast corner of its three acre property. It is used as a multi-purpose hall for group physical activities and exercise, children's activities during the monthly retreats and extra dormitory space. The Yurt's inaugural event occurred at the August retreat when it was transformed into the "Palace of Truth" for a children's drama production of the Mother's short story, "The Virtues."

Flowers for the Soul: Inspiring quotations from many luminaries on flowers have been collected over the years by Narad Eggenberger. As part of a collaborative project to provide an in-



Dakshina and Saraswati from SASP join Eric, Julian and Wendy in Matagiri preparations for AUM 2010. (Photo by Julian Lines)

come stream for the Lodi Ashram, these quotations have been paired with beautiful, mystical close-up photographs of flowers in an inspiring collection of greeting cards. The cards include the botanical and common names of the flowers, as well as the spiritual significances given by the Mother. There are 30 cards in three varieties: Flowers for the Soul, Roses for the Soul, and Gardens for the Soul. The next step in the project is to find a publisher for a gift book in the series. For a free catalog or to learn more about the project contact: Auromere at 800-735-4691 or email: dakshina@auromere.com.

News from the Institute for Wholistic Education

by Santosh Krinsky

Sri Aurobindo's major works are now available on the Amazon Kindle E-Reader platform. Readers need not own a Kindle device to use this as there are Kindle applications available for PC's, iPad, iPhone, Blackberry and other devices. Readers can find these books by shopping in the www.Amazon.com "Kindle Store" under "Aurobindo." We have had an incredible response to these new "e-reader" capable Kindle editions from devotees all around the country. We continue to add additional titles as the work of formatting gets completed for each one.

The ongoing systematic study of *The Life Divine* at our blog <http://sriurobindostudies.wordpress.com> continues with daily posts. The entire series is available on the blog for anyone who wants to start from the beginning. We expect to complete this systematic review by the end of 2011.

We have also added substantial new material in the form of spoken lectures, readings and mantra recitations by Sri M.P. Pandit on the www.mppandit.com website which is available for listening or download at all times. For further information on our activities, see www.wholisticinstitute.org and www.aurobindo.net.



AV almanac

Auroville attempts to break a deep historical trend

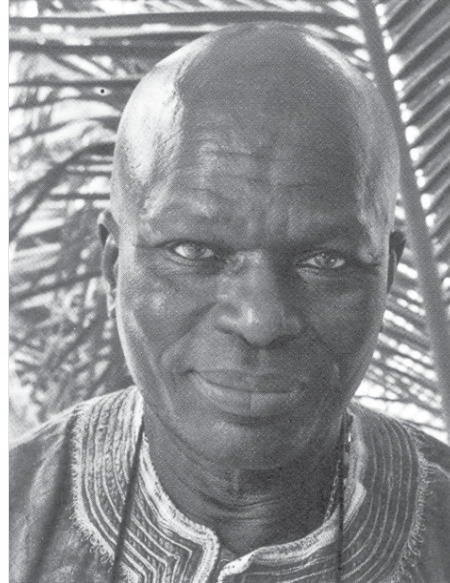
From an interview with Dr. Doudou Diène by Alan

Dr. Doudou Diène is a member of the International Advisory Council of the Auroville Foundation. Before that he had a distinguished career in UNESCO where, among other posts, he was Director of the Division of Inter-cultural Projects. Between 2002 and 2008 he was UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. [Alan of]Auroville Today spoke with him during a private visit he was making to the community in February. (Reprinted with permission from Auroville Today, August 2010.)

Alan: In a talk during a previous visit to Auroville you mentioned that whenever we encounter somebody from a very different culture there is a “tension.” And the way that individuals and societies deal with this tension determines whether there is a positive outcome, where diversity is embraced, or a negative outcome reflected in intolerance, discrimination, racism, etc. What determines how an individual or society responds to this tension?

Doudou Diène: Every community or group constructs an identity for itself because people need to recognize themselves not only as individuals but also as members of a group. However, in this process of identity construction the negative dimension has always tended to predominate because, historically, identity is always constructed in a context of division or of war. In other words, the construction of an identity has always tended to be done against something or somebody else. Take the nation state. The process of constructing the nation state was done in a context where nations were warring among themselves. So the factor of fear, of the need to defend itself, preceded the construction of the state.

Political leaders have played a crucial role in creating such group identities because they have played on fear of other groupings to get power and control. Historically, the basic ingredient of identity construction has been ethnicity, because this is the most obvious way that people differ from one another. Another factor which has played a very powerful role has been religion as every group has created beliefs, gods, spirits, to answer to the fundamental questions of life and death. Then the intellectual elite artificially put all these factors together using, in addition,



Dr. Doudou Diène is a member of Auroville's International Advisory Council. (Photo courtesy Auroville Today)

archaeology, religion, philosophy, history, etc., to give coherence and meaning to the idea that a particular group has a distinct identity.

The end result is the notion that we are distinct group and the enemy is anybody who is different, ethnically, religiously or culturally, from us. In other words, diversity is interpreted as a threat.

However, in all communities

you also find individuals or small groups who do not share this negative view of ‘the other,’ either because they themselves have originally come from another culture or because they have reinterpreted the dominant tradition or legacy and have found another way of looking at others, a way which embraces difference rather than fears it. The basic point to understand here in the context of social evolution is whenever you have a negative you also have the seed of its contrary. And it is this inner tension which brings the deep evolution of any society.

Alan: Do you see Auroville as being such a ‘seed,’ as a way of redefining diversity?

Doudou Diène: Yes, because Auroville is based on Sri Aurobindo’s incredible vision of the unity of mankind behind its diversity. So it is clear that Auroville is an attempt to break or to reverse this very deep historical trend of interpreting diversity as opposition, as something to be afraid of. It is clear that when people once come here with the ideal that the other is not an enemy but my brother or sister, a part of me, they have to live and interact in a different way from other societies. At the same time, everybody carries within them also the legacy of their cultures, their education, their separateness and fears of the ‘the other’: they see through the ‘tinted lenses’ they have inherited. So the tension in Auroville is between this very pure, profound reinterpretation of diversity and the legacy which everybody is carrying. And what is fascinating is that you are openly trying to confront this, you are not trying to deny it. You are conscious of your legacy but you are determined to do something else. This is not happening elsewhere, and it makes Auroville unique.

Alan: How well do you think Aurovilians are doing in transcending their legacy, in cleaning their culturally-tinted lenses?

Doudou Diène: It is impossible for me to make a judgment as



I have not had the inner experience of Auroville, of the dynamic of trying to work out this tension which each of you is facing every day. But as someone who sympathizes with your ideals from the outside, I can share a few observations.

Firstly, let's look at the context. One thing that fascinates me is that Mother did not call you here to pray together in an ashram. She called you to build a city, to engage in a yoga of action. So you are engaged in something which necessarily puts you together in such a way that constantly you have to invent solutions to the tension between inherited notions of diversity and the ideal set before you. And you are doing it in a way which I like very much because it is very human. You bring all your weaknesses and your strengths, you bring your passion. I have seen this when Aurovilians interact with each other. Sometimes very negative feelings, even hatred, have been expressed but I have realized, whenever I encounter such negativity among Aurovilians, that it is never very profound, never very deep, unlike the negativity I have encountered in other societies.

Why? Because the dynamic of creating Auroville has been a dual process—you are building the city but there is also the inner process of transformation. And clearly this inner process has produced something which allows Aurovilians, whenever this negativity comes out, to tap into something deeper. It's like when you throw a stone in a pool. It makes ripples on the surface but soon some inner force wells up to make it calm again.

It is this inner thing, this inner force, which allows you, while being very human and expressing your passions in your daily life, to transform them. This is what has allowed you to persevere for so many years in dealing with so many challenges.

Take, for example, the governance dimension of Auroville. Mother said that she wanted something that goes beyond democracy. Here you don't have any existing models to refer to, you are in a void and it's very uncomfortable, yet you are trying to find solutions. You go about it in a chaotic way, but this chaos is a creative chaos.

Sometimes we who come from outside, like the members of the International Advisory Council or the Governing Board, see the chaos and immediately we want to bring order. But this is an order which we carry within ourselves, it means the old solutions, the old ways, because we only know the old ways, we don't know the new ways which are emerging here. So we have to be very modest and careful in the advice we give because we tend not to get inside the inner dynamic of what is going on here.

This is why the autonomy of Auroville is a fundamental principle which should be respected by everybody. Aurovilians

should be their own light, working out their own solutions, because it is only here in Auroville that the external realization and the inner transformation are going on hand-in-hand.

This brings a different dimension to everything you do here. For example, I see that most of the scientific and technical breakthroughs you have made in Auroville are marked by the notion of service: they are there to serve others rather than simply to generate profits. Look at what Jacques has done in the villages. Seeing the poverty and the difficulty of providing dental care to these people, he set up outposts in the villages, using a simple table instead of a dentist's chair and training the local people to do primary care. Or take Aquadyn. They developed a process to not only purify but also to dynamise water. A machine was invented, as would have happened in London or Paris, but because it was created here in Auroville the first thing done was not to sell

these machines on the market but to install them in the local villages where, historically, water has not only been a life force but also a force of death.

I have visited these villages and seen what a difference

it has made to provide, day after day, purified water to these people. This is incredible, fantastic, and I think that this kind of work is perhaps the high mark of Auroville for the time being.

Alan: These projects are also building bridges between different communities.

Doudou Diène: Yes. If Auroville is to break the historical tendency of seeing diversity as opposition, it must go beyond the intercommunity tensions which have led in other countries to individual or institutional prejudice. And you are making real efforts; you are in the process of trying to clean your tinted lenses. Sometimes you are failing—there have been moments when those lenses were very dark, but now I think they are becoming much clearer. I see this not only in the diversity of cultures represented in your main working groups but also in the way that children from different cultures and background interact in your schools. I see it in the growing number of marriages between communities and in the way that Auroville, sometimes with difficulty, has been trying to get the local villages on board.

Auroville has changed their lives, it is changing their lives. That factor is a very important one and maybe it will be the ultimate test of how successful you will be in shedding the old clothes of prejudice and emerging into something else, a more fertile concept of diversity. For, finally, you are constructing a new human tapestry where each thread, each individual, nationality, will retain its specificity, its beauty, while contributing to the tapestry as a whole. You are not there yet, this is the ultimate, but you are definitely on the way.

Aurovilians should be their own light, working out their own solutions, because it is only here in Auroville that the external realization and the inner transformation are going on hand-in-hand.



Chronicles

Interview with Ramchandra Das of Sri Aurobindo Yoga Mandir, Nepal

by Larry Seidlitz

Collaboration: When and how did you first get involved with Sri Aurobindo's Yoga?

Ramchandra: My life has always been a little dramatic. When I was just 12 I left my parents and went from Nepal to India because of many reasons, and perhaps, because of the divine Hand behind. There was the outer reason, but I think the inner reason was that the Divine wanted to take me to many places and finally to Pondicherry, and also, to help me realize for what work I was being born. So when I left at 12 I went to the Eastern part of India, and eventually to the Indian Army. After two years in the Army I realized that it was not my place and left. Then I started studying, and went to various places in India, such as Bhopal and Varanasi. Then I became a monk, a sannyasin or sadhu, or rather you can say a Vaishnava, touring the whole of India. At the same time, I was following spiritual practices and reading the Gita, Upanishads, Vedas and Puranas. I was also taking Sanskrit classes.

Once, when I was in a particular ashram, someone gave me a book of Sri Aurobindo. When reading that book I became so inspired, because previously I always used to feel some questions in me—what life should be, who we are, why we are here; those kinds of questions used to come very often in me. So when I read Sri Aurobindo, it seemed that his thinking and my thinking were almost the same. Then I was curious, who is this person who can tell what another is thinking? I was very much impressed. When I saw the address in the book, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, I immediately decided to



Ramchandra Das, a karma yogi now serving the Divine in his country of origin, Nepal. (Photo courtesy Ramchandra Das)

come here. I came in 1983 and I liked this place very much. I had planned to come for only 15 days just to visit and see how it was. But there was some intuition; when I was still in Delhi and getting to ready to leave for Pondicherry, the thought came to me that “Ramchandra, you are not going just for 15 days, but perhaps forever.” I stayed for 12 years.

An amazing thing happened, the first time I entered the Samadhi, the atmosphere was so powerful that I decided immediately, this is the place for me to stay. What happened at the Samadhi was that my mind became absolutely calm, as if there were no thoughts—it became thoughtless. The serenity, the joy—in Sanskrit we say ‘ananda’—that I could feel there was exceptional. I had never felt that before. I thought, “This place is wonderful. I must stay here and experience more of this beauty, this joy.”

The next thing I did was to go to the Ashram bookshop. I was attracted by the book *Savitri*, because I had read about Savitri in the Mahabharata. My English was not that good at that time. But opening the book, I saw some light on the first lines. I read a few lines and felt that my heart was understanding, though my mind was not capable of understanding. I thought, “It’s fantastic!” So I bought *Savitri* and began reading it.

Then I inquired about how to stay

here in the Ashram. Luckily I got the chance. I was taken to Rabindra-ji. Since I was a Vaishnava, I was expecting there would be a big reception for me. Normally, if you are a Vaishnava, people come to touch your feet or even wash your feet. That is the Vaishnava thinking. Here nobody respected that. It did not hurt me, but still I was expecting something, because I had received that kind of treatment in the other parts of India. And then when I decided to work here, they gave me work in the kitchen, to clean the big vessels. In other parts of India I was a guru, but here I cleaned the vessels. But I liked it inwardly. But in the beginning it was really difficult. Some of my friends came and said, “You know Sanskrit, you can change your work if you don’t like it.” Then at one point I decided to change, and I went to meet Rabindra-ji. On the way, just in front of the playground there is a big tree, near where Sri Aurobindo and Mother had stayed, and while under that tree, it came to me, “Ramchandra, is it correct that you know better than the God? Maybe God has given you the work according to your nature, according to your need, as a preparation for the future.” When this came, suddenly I turned back. I didn’t go to him. After that I liked very much the work that was given; it was a joy. I could really feel the joy of karma yoga. The Mother says that karma yoga, working in silence and offering it to the Divine, becomes 10 times more powerful a meditation than when it is done just sitting. I fully realized this then. It made me so happy. So continuously, for almost 12 years, I stayed and I worked. At the same time I studied. I studied French because I wanted to read Mother in French.

Collaboration: Did you go to the Ashram school?

Ramchandra: No, I went to Alliance Française. I went there for four years in the evenings. Before coming to Pondicherry, I had gone to a university in Varanasi. I used to follow their exams.

Collaboration: At some point you became close to Champaklal. How did that come about?

Ramchandra: That is interesting. Actually, I was attracted to Sri Aurobindo’s



room. In those days he was staying in Sri Aurobindo's bathroom, so the one who would serve him would have access to Sri Aurobindo's room day and night. So that was the first attraction for me. But in those days, many boys, my friends from the kitchen, were going to serve. So one day I decided that if I serve Champaklal, I will have more time to meditate in Sri Aurobindo's room and enjoy the atmosphere there. Normally on your birthday you can meditate there for 15 minutes and that is all.

One day I asked my friend who was working in the dining hall kitchen. He said he would ask Champaklal, because without his permission you cannot join. But he used to forget to ask him. I used to remind him again and again. So finally he said, "OK, Champak-dada has called you this evening at 9 p.m." I was so happy. I finished my work, and I went up with him. It was his night duty. When I entered, Champaklal-ji looked at me from head to toe, twice. Then my friend wanted to teach me what to do, but Champaklal said "No" and told my friend to go out. He taught me what has to be done: where to put my bed, how to put the mosquito net, and so on. So that was my first connection with Champaklal-ji.

Collaboration: Then you started serving him?

Ramchandra: What happened was that at first I was interested in staying in Sri Aurobindo's room, but slowly as I served him, when I looked at his body, when I touched him, I felt a lot of joy, as if I was serving directly Mother and Sri Aurobindo. Then my attitude changed. Although I profited from the atmosphere of the room, his presence became strong. I liked serving him, at first maybe once in a week I would have night duty, but later I increased serving. If the others wanted to go somewhere, I said, "OK, I will do it." Because I liked it so much I wanted to take more and more service. I had a lot of work at the dining hall too, so I had to be conscious. So what I would do is that for up to



The Kathmandu ashram is located in the Himalayas and has spectacular scenic views. (Photo courtesy auronepal.net)

three or four nights weekly I would sleep in Sri Aurobindo's room. Two nights I would do regularly, but sometimes three or even four nights if my friends did not come.

Also, someone used to come to massage him in the early morning at five o'clock. When this person stopped, since I knew massage, I asked if I could give the massage. Then I started massaging. When I would stay at night, then in the early morning I would start massaging, but if I did not have night duty, then in the early morning I would come at quarter to five and until six o'clock I would do massage.

Then from three to four in the evening also I would give him coconut water. Previously we used to get coconuts from the dispensary, but sometimes these coconuts were not fresh. The water taste was not good. So I decided to go myself to get fresh coconuts from the Ashram's Maret Garden. So once a day or once in two days I would go to Maret Garden to get fresh coconuts. Sometimes when there was no servant I would myself climb the tree to get the coconuts down fresh. Then I would bring them to Champaklal-ji and he liked these coconuts very much. So from five to six in the morning, three to four in the evening, and during three to four nights a week I would serve him.

Collaboration: Would you mostly just sit silently with him during that time?

Ramchandra: Yes, at that time his voice was not that clear, but we used to speak sometimes, and he used to write also. He did not like to speak too much, but sometimes he would like to.

Collaboration: How many years were you with him?

Ramchandra: Three years, then he left his body. Till the last moment, I was there.

Collaboration: He went out from the Ashram before the end?

Ramchandra: Yes, I was selected to go with him along with another person, Sanjay, and also Kamala went. We went to Gujarat. We went out for almost 60 days. I wrote an article about it, which appeared in the

October 1992 issue of Mother India: "The last 60 days with Champaklal." There I have described that journey.

Collaboration: What year was his passing?

Ramchandra: In 1992.

Collaboration: Shortly after that you went to Nepal?

Ramchandra: Yes. I was not very happy, as I had been very close to Champaklal-ji. I wanted to go see the Himalayas. Twenty years had passed and I had not been back to my village, I had not seen my parents. So I thought, "Why not go once to visit them?"

When I went to Nepal, something happened one fine morning in January 1993. In the lower regions it had rained a lot, in the upper regions it had snowed. When I was a child I used to love to play in the snow. And so that morning when I saw that the mountains were covered with fresh snow, I thought it would be very good to walk to the peak and meditate there and play with the snow. I went alone, and one has to really cross a dense forest. My mother did not want me to go alone, but I convinced her and said I did not want to go with anybody because when you go with someone you have to talk and you lose the beauty and the concentration. She did not want me to go alone because there are tigers and other wild animals, but I was sure that they would not harm me. It took me almost four hours to walk to the top of that mountain. From there you can see the gigantic Himalayan range. It is one of the highest mountains, about 8400 meters



high. I sat just in front of that peak. What I had felt here on that first day at the Samadhi, the same thing I felt there. I felt that the Mother was descending down upon the Himalayas in the form of light. I could not believe how quickly the time passed. I was immersed in joy. I was all alone and there was no trace of another human being. It was a fantastic experience.

It was there that I got an inner *adesha* or command that

I was meant to do something in Nepal. I said OK, and I came down and immediately decided to go to Kathmandu. My native place was about 400 km west. So the next day I started off to Kathmandu. In the villages, there were no printing presses or people who would understand yogic things. The people are very simple and there is much poverty. Another thing which gave me pain was that there were many children without food, without clothing, without proper education. And I thought that this was the generation that would bring the change. So if we would take care of them, we would bring the possibility of a new change and a new consciousness. So I was thinking about how to do this on the way.

When I came to Kathmandu I decided to start an organization. On 24 April 1993, I registered this organization called Sri Aurobindo Yoga Mandir. I put some Nepalese people who were ready to become members in charge of the organization and we became a registered organization. At the beginning I thought that I would give whatever money I had and whatever knowledge I had and I would stay in Pondicherry Ashram and they would run the place there. I stayed two months there and guided the people and then I came back to Pondicherry.

After two or three months in Pondicherry I went back again to Kathmandu with big photos of Sri Aurobindo and Mother and some books for the library that we had created. When I went there it was very dirty, and the money I had left



A view of the Sri Aurobindo Yoga Mandir. (Photo courtesy auronepal.net)

with them they had finished off using for tea and drinks and such. So that made me unhappy. How can they run the center if they are unconscious and if they are unwilling to give something and even waste what I have given? In this way the center would never come up. They said that they could not do anything, and only if I gave the money from Pondicherry could they continue to function just as they were functioning. I left the photos and came back to Pondicherry.

Then I thought, "OK, forget Nepal, you are an Ashramite, you do your work here. Eat, meditate, you have your own circle of friends, what more do you need in life?" So I went on, but after a few days would pass something would always pinch me: "You started something in Nepal and you ran away. You are not doing it." But my friends here would say, "Don't go to Nepal, the outside world is not good." So I would justify myself and say, "Yes," and forget about it. But after a time it would pinch me again.

Then one day I decided that I would ask Nirodbaran, who was very close to me. I said to myself, whatever Nirodbaran would tell me to do, I will follow him. If he said, "Go to Nepal, continue there," I would obey. If he said, "Stay in Pondy," I would stay. I made that resolution and I went to Nirod-da, who was happy to see me after many months. He asked why I had not been here, and I explained that I had gone to Nepal. Then I told my problem: "I had started a center in Kathmandu but the people are not open and it is difficult to

run. In my mind I have no peace. I started it and feel I should continue it, but at the same time my heart wants to stay here. My heart wants to stay here, but my mind or something in me says 'Continue the work that you started in Nepal.' What shall I do, please tell me. If you say, stay here, I'll stay; if you say go, I'll go. It is up to you to decide now. You give the final decision, then I will be in peace." He did not respond immediately; he was silent for almost five minutes,

meditating. I thought he would say the same thing as everybody else from the Ashram had said, "Stay here, forget about Nepal," and I also wanted that same answer from him. But after five minutes he said, "Ramchandra, you have nothing to do here; go to Nepal."

That was quite heavy for me, but I had made the resolution so I had to do it. Then I went with heavy heart. Nothing was sure in Kathmandu, where to stay, how to manage things. It was not easy. When I left Pondy that time I had a lot of luggage and big photos. I got a train from here to Chennai and then had to get another train to take up north. As the train left Pondicherry, my heart was heavy and tears were falling. But as I looked out the window at the scene outside I saw that Mother's feet were walking along side me outside, along with the train. And I thought, "It is very good, at least Mother is there with me." So in this way I went and I struggled.

Collaboration: Did you get another group or that same group to help you?

Ramchandra: No, I did not go back to that same group. I went without registering for many years. That group was not good, they were drunkards. There was one person who was quite interested, and he helped somewhat. I rented that man's house. For one year I was in the city, but then I wanted to go away from the city. We are in the suburbs now, I went there then. At that time it was like a village, now it has become almost a city.

Collaboration: Can you describe what you have there now?



Ramchandra: Now we have two and half acres of land. We have seven buildings, and one is under construction because the kitchen that we had has become too small. So we will have a bigger kitchen and other facilities. From the beginning I decided to have some income generating activity, because you don't get donations, you don't get government aid or help.

First I started working with young boys of about 18-20 years old, but they started cheating because of their old habits and they were not interested in meditation. Then I suddenly remembered the poor children in the villages, on the roads, everywhere. I started collecting these poor children, three, four, five years old. With them I started working, teaching them, and moulding them. One of my first students got a scholarship from a college in Bengal and finished his B.Sc. this year. That will be a good example for the others.

Collaboration: How many people do you have in the Ashram there?

Ramchandra: We have two ashrams now. In the one near Kathmandu there are 110 people, including the children, and in the Kolhuwa ashram, which is about 200 km from Kathmandu in the Terai plains, there are 70 people; so we are 180 altogether. Of these, 150 are children and there are 30 adults.

To go back to what I started saying earlier about money generating activities, we started making incense, and selling them. And then I started keeping cows and selling the cows' milk that we still continue. Then I bought a truck, and we dug a bore well, and since there is a water scarcity in the city we are still selling the water. We are also making Thankas, the Buddhist paintings, and we export them.

Collaboration: You have painters do these for you?

Ramchandra: The children learn and they do them. For the finishing work, we get masters of Thanka and they finish. And now some of the children who have learned and grown up, they can finish also because they have quite good experience.

Then next we make fine, very soft and warm Kashmiri wool shawls; they are made of Pashmina wool which is very pure.

Although we have exported some to America, it didn't work very well in America because I didn't get a proper person to help there. But in Belgium it works quite good. However, because of the world-wide recession, we haven't had much sales in the last few years.

We also sell organic fruits and vegetables that we grow on our land in Kathmandu and Terikula. Then we have a mill that brings some money. In the Kolhuwa ashram we have two tractors that we use for our agriculture, and when we have time, we rent our tractors to other farmers. In this way we manage.

Collaboration: Do you grow your own food for your members?

Ramchandra: Well, we grow about 30-40 percent of our food, the rest we buy.

Collaboration: Are the adults who join the Ashram mostly from that area?

Ramchandra: They are from all over Nepal. Nepal is one of the poorest countries in the world, and it has difficult terrains. In the hilly and mountainous regions, people do not have enough to eat. Often they do not have enough land to cultivate and feed themselves, and to educate their children is quite difficult. So many parents come to me and request to me, "Please keep my children. We can't afford to feed them and send them to school." So I am keeping these poor children too. Also, I sometimes keep the children along with the mother. What happens in Nepal is that sometimes a man gets remarried to another wife, but with the previous wife they have children, and sometimes when they have no other means the mothers come to me. So I say, "OK, you stay with your children." So we have seven or eight ladies like that along with their children. But sometimes the lady also goes with another man, and the man goes with another lady, and the children are left nowhere. Of such children we have many there.

Collaboration: Are the adults involved with the different types of work in the Ashram?

Ramchandra: Yes, but even the children, except for the very young ones, have to work. In Nepal, being a very poor coun-

try, if they do not practice working from the very beginning, it becomes difficult to survive afterwards. So even the children of nine or ten years old do work of hand-rolling the incense for one hour in the morning and one hour in the evening, apart from their schooling time. We make everything ready for them, and then they do quite well. They are happy to do this.

Other children who are 16 and 17 years old take the milk to the city in the morning and evening. We sell fresh milk to the rich people's houses in the city. Some of the ladies and the teachers also work on the farm and milk the cows. Some of the former students who are now grown up, age 21 or 22, work on the farm, milk cows, take care of the health of the cows, do the artificial inseminations. So it is slowly growing.

Collaboration: What is the school like? Do you have a group of qualified teachers, real classrooms, what is it like?

Ramchandra: No, it did not go that way. At the beginning I was the only teacher. Since we could not afford to hire teachers, I did not try to have paid teachers. I wanted to create a different atmosphere with love and not involving money very much. When you start taking money, then your mind starts going to your salary rather than the teaching. So I said, "No money." Those who want to volunteer their time and serve here, then the Ashram will give their basic needs like food, clothing, medications, things like that. But apart from that, we can't give extra money.

At the beginning I was alone. I used to give them homework and teach them. Because I would have to go to the city and do my things, often during the daytime I could not teach, so I would teach them at night until 9 or 10 o'clock. Gradually I created a group among the students who were capable and intelligent, and I trained them how to teach the younger children. So after a few years it was they who started taking the younger children, and I would take only the class of grown-ups. And slowly their number increased. So until now this is how we have managed, except for one or two who came from outside and settled there. They teach Nepali and other



subjects. We follow the government curriculum, it is not like here [in the Ashram school], but I want something different, like Mother wanted here. But still, Nepal is not ready. If I start this way, many children may not like it because they would not get the government certificate. But eventually, in the future if everything goes well, if it is the Mother's wish, I would like to start beside that school that we have, another very free school in which the students can select the subjects they like and not have too many tests.

Collaboration: Is there any scope for the people in the Ashram to develop their own special interests and talents?

Ramchandra: Yes. For example, there is one older student who is interested in classical dance, so I arranged for her a class in Chennai, and now she is a dancer of Bharata Natyam. Another very good student went on to a university in Bangalore and received his BSc. from the Ashram expenses.

So for those who are excellent I try to send them on for further study. This student now would like to go abroad for further advanced study, so we are trying to get him a scholarship to study in the U.S. He should be able to get one because his marks are very high and he is at the top of his class.

Collaboration: How do you deal with medical issues in the Ashram?

Ramchandra: Now, one of our students is a Naturopath, because I send them in all fields where they have interest. She is now a yoga teacher plus a Naturopath. She deals with most of the diseases at the Ashram in a natural way, curing by Yoga, by water, by earth, by sunlight. There is another student who is learning Ayurvedic medicine. We would like to cure them naturally. If there really is some serious problem, then we will take them to the hospital. But hospitals are not free in Nepal, and we have pay the doctors fees,

tests, operations, etc. at the Ashram's cost.

Collaboration: What kinds of devotional activities do you have at the Ashram?

Ramchandra: In the evenings we have meditation. In a week, on four days we have meditation and readings of Mother and Sri Aurobindo, with explanations in Nepali. Some understand English, but there are some who are illiterate and for them I have to translate into Nepali. On two days we chant some mantras, and on one day we see some good movie, like Ramayana or Mahabharata, to help build the children's character. We don't watch just ordinary movies, but try to select good movies so that they can become good citizens of the world.

I suddenly remembered the poor children in the villages, on the roads, everywhere. I started collecting these poor children, three, four, five years old. With them I started working, teaching them, and moulding them.

Collaboration: What is your main role in the Ashram?

Ramchandra: Most of the time now I cannot give too much time to the children because of our financial crisis. I have to arrange the funds to run the place. Now it has become very costly for all the commodities like food, school dresses, books, pencils and so on. As the children grow, they need more food, and also as we get more children more is needed. So my mind is always on how we can earn more money so we can accept more children and support more children. Once we have self-sufficiency on these lines, once I don't have worries about arranging the finances, then I will be able to spend more time with them. But still I guide them and tell them, as Sri Aurobindo says, the first principle of education is to know thyself. So I tell all of my children there, "This is the thing: know thyself and your surroundings." Of course, they are themselves the master,

nature has made them master, so they will pick up things. So we just need to create an atmosphere, and I am trying for that.

Collaboration: What are some of your pressing needs for the Ashram?

Ramchandra: The first thing we need is money for building and to buy more land in order to become more self-sufficient for food. In Kathmandu we can't buy land because it is too expensive, but at our other Ashram there is the possibility to buy more land, and do our own agriculture, produce enough rice, enough wheat, enough vegetables, and even produce extra to sell. For that we need irrigation facilities and a bore well, and for that we need money. So the first thing we need is money, and the second thing we need is volun-

teers, if it is possible, those who know how we can improve our lives. For example, we could use science teachers, administrators, people in all the fields.

Collaboration: Do you rely on some donations to

run the Ashram?

Ramchandra: No, we do not get much in donations so far, except from some of my friends and family members. I have some friends here in Pondicherry, and I have one brother in New Zealand who helps almost on a regular basis. Also, my youngest sister who was in Kathmandu and helping me, has lately been in the US. Because of our financial crisis, I had to send her there to help us. Now she is teaching yoga in a school in New York, and working part-time as a cashier in a shop because we need money to run the Ashrams. She doesn't spend even a dollar for herself, and she lives with friends to save more money, and in this way we manage. It is alright. As the children grow, I am sure that the situation will become better and better—the quality of education, the quality of livelihoods, the quality of cleanliness, the congeniality of the atmosphere—it will all increase. To contact, email: sriurobindo@gmail.com.



Essays

The experience of the psychic being and its development

by Alain Grandcolas

Author's note: This essay has been written mainly for people who are concerned with Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's philosophy. It is basically a research paper which examines the discovery of the psychic being, a phenomenon which seems no longer reserved to people with a long record of sadhana. It also highlights the growth and evolution of the psychic being as an entity which is meant to become the next species, the supramental being. The first five sections appeared in the December 2008 edition of *Ritam*, a bi-yearly Journal of Material and Spiritual Researches, published by the Sri Aurobindo International Institute for Educational Research, Auroville. The final four sections appeared in the July 2008 edition of *Mother India*, a monthly review published by the Publication Department of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry. All nine sections subsequently have undergone some developments which do not change significantly the content of the essay.

Introduction

The bursting forth of the Mother's own psychic being was once narrated by her to Satprem. It happened in the end of December 1906, when she was 28 years old. It was her "first contact."

To have it (just to give you an idea) took me a year of exclusive concentration on finding that within myself. . . I did nothing but that, thought of nothing but that,



Alain (Courtesy Alain Grandcolas)

wanted nothing but that . . . I was entirely concentrated on that. I was in Paris, and I did nothing else but that; when I walked down the street, I was thinking only of that.

One day, as I was crossing the Boulevard Saint-Michel . . . suddenly, for no apparent reason—I was neither more concentrated nor anything else—poof! It opened . . .

It didn't just last for hours, it lasted for months . . . That light, that dazzling light, that light and immensity . . . This sense has never left me for a minute. And always, whenever I had a decision to make, I would simply stop for a second and receive the indication from there . . .!

Many disciples are under the impression that becoming aware of the psychic being is the result of a long process which started many lives before and may need some more rebirths to complete. In 1955 the Mother stated that:

. . . in almost, almost all cases, a very very sustained effort is needed to become aware of one's psychic being. Usually it is considered that if one can do it in thirty years one is very lucky—

thirty years of sustained efforts, I say.²

But something has definitely changed in the world as the Mother stated in February 1973, just three months before she stopped meeting people. At that time she received some teachers of the Ashram school and invited them to find their psychic being and to unite with it:

. . . normally it takes an entire lifetime, or even several lives in some cases. But here, in the present conditions, you can do it in . . . a few months. Those who have an ardent aspiration can do it in a few MONTHS.³

This report is the result of research on the subject of the psychic being. After some question and answer sessions, it was decided to publish part of the narration of 15 people who state they had at one point or presently have the knowledge of their psychic being. Most of the narrations here have been approved by the persons concerned. For two of them the knowledge has always been there, for 13 of them the knowledge came through a sudden experience. The initial awareness lasted varying periods—from some hours to some days to some months—then it disappeared (except in one recent case). But for many, it came back several times for a certain period, no longer in a dramatic way, but in a soft and gradual manner. It could easily be recognized since the taste of the psychic being was already known. One assumption is that the "present conditions" mentioned by the Mother in her talk of 1973 have been triggered by the descent of the supramental manifestation on 29 February 1956. The Mother stated that on that evening the supramental consciousness and force and light descended into the earth. One year later she commemorated the first birthday of that event by saying that: "a new world has been born." We wonder if one feature of the coming new world is not an acceleration of the blooming of the psychic being and its sudden bursting forth, even without a sustained effort in this life.



The results of this very limited survey seem to illustrate this statement.

The first section is an attempt to describe several phases for the awareness of the psychic being. The second section describes what has happened to several interviewees at the moment they suddenly became aware of their psychic being. The third section describes what remained of the experience afterwards. The fourth section gives some consolidated results of the survey. The fifth section highlights some methods for finding the psychic being. Then, the final four sections, an essay, describe how the psychic being is meant to become the next species, the supramental being.

The survey refers to those interviewed as either a “visitor (to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram or Auroville),” an “Ashramite,” or an “Aurovilian,” a status they had at the time of the happening. One who is called a “visitor” in the survey may now be an “Ashramite.”

1. Becoming aware of the psychic being

For the clarity of the survey, it may be stated that three levels of contact with the psychic being are being distinguished. The psychic being may manifest through an influence, through a sudden happening, or through just some touches in certain parts of the being. The full process of emergence takes longer, as Sri Aurobindo writes:

The psychic being emerges slowly in most men, even after taking up sadhana . . . One has to wait till the necessary process has gone far enough before it can burst its age long veil and come in front to control the nature [emphasis added].⁴

Usually the psychic being is felt as a presence and an influence.

The Mother said, “In every one, even at the very beginning, this spiritual presence . . . is there.”⁵ In most people con-

cerned with the psychic being, it manifests itself as an influence, a presence in the heart region, more or less living according to the aspiration, the concentration and the rejection of the movements which contradict its expression within oneself. A warmth is physically felt. If we think of an analogy of a chick in an egg, it is as if the shell of the egg is more or less warm.

Anybody concerned with the spiritual life perceives, in that region, some inner indication. Those who are following Sri Aurobindo’s and the Mother’s inner disciplines will learn to give great importance to that presence, which will grow in their inner consciousness and more and more become a reference point for all their actions, thoughts and feelings, an indication of the psychic approval or disapproval of some behavior.

For some, the psychic presence is so living that they may wonder if they know their psychic being or not. The answer from the Mother is clear: “There are people who come and ask you: ‘Am I conscious of my psychic being?’ One can tell them: ‘This itself is the proof that you are not.’ Because if you are, you can no longer ask this.”⁶

To “know” one’s psychic being is usually the result of a sudden and unexpected happening.

Several times, the Mother compared several times the sudden identification with the psychic being to a chicken coming out of the egg. In a talk in 1957 she said:

One is shut up in a shell, and inside it something is happening, like the chick in the egg. . . And it is only when all is ready that there comes the capacity to pierce the shell and to be born into the light of day. . .

I don’t think one can go through gradually, I don’t think it is something which slowly wears and wears away until one can see through it. I haven’t had an instance of this so far.

There is rather a kind of

accumulation of power inside, an intensification of the need...

One is like an explosive that nothing can resist, and one bursts out from one’s prison in a blaze of light.⁷

The sudden experience of the psychic being is in another dimension. Some features of it may be ineffable because there is “no point of recognition” in the sadhak. It can be translated into words but only those who have experienced it, who have “tasted” it, may understand the description.

A visitor to the Ashram compared this sudden event to the fission of an atom in order to express, in an image, that something unknown and very powerful was hidden under some surface lid. For a long time, scientists were in contact with the atom without being aware that an atomic energy existed. One day there was a fission of the atom, something sudden, very powerful, emitting an energy of a different nature. In the same manner, inside this psychic space, an individual may not know that another being, the psychic being, is hidden in him and is waiting for the right time to emerge, suddenly.

The next chapter will narrate what happened to some of the 13 persons who have described that sudden experience after which they state: “Now, I know my psychic being.” The features of the bursting forth of the psychic are often different except for two features which are common: the very deep untriggered and unexpected joy, and the certitude that one has come to know one’s psychic being.

An experience of the psychic being may also be the result of touching some parts of the being which are under a psychic influence, though this is not yet a direct contact with the soul.

Some readers may wonder whether the interviewee narrates a true contact with the psychic being or whether it is an experience of the inner consciousness (inner physical, inner vital, inner mental) or an



experience of the higher (spiritual) consciousness. This question is valid and it explains why three of the interviewees who had some experience which they linked to an identification with their psychic being do not seem to have a direct a contact with it. The Mother comments:

... very often, when one touches certain parts of the mind which are under the psychic influence and full of the light and the joy of that light, or when one touches certain very pure and very high parts of the emotive being which has the most generous, most unselfish emotions, one has the impression of being in contact with one's soul. But this is not the true soul; it is not the soul in its very essence. These are parts of the being under its influence and manifesting something of it.

So very often people enter into contact with these parts and this gives them illuminations, great joy, revelations, and they feel they have found their soul ... and then it gets veiled and one wonders, "How is it that I touched my soul and now have fallen back into this state of ignorance and inconstancy!" But that's because one had not touched one's soul, one had touched those parts of the being which are under the influence of the soul and manifest something of I, but are not it.⁸

In analyzing the contents of the interviews, some errors of appreciation of the quality of the contact with the psychic being may have occurred, but it is felt that they do not alter the global observations of this essay.

2. When the psychic being bursts forth

What happens at that instant when the psychic being suddenly "bursts its age-long veil?" Anybody who experiences a sudden contact with his psychic being

has a personal, clear and living memory of that event. Two common features are always there: a certitude of knowing one's psychic being, and an immense unexpected and untriggered joy. Eight other outstanding experiences, feelings or facts may accompany this happening—some are specific to the bursting, some are common to other ranges of spiritual experiences.

One common feature of this sudden identification is that it brings the certitude of knowing one's psychic being.

The Mother commented:

This is an absolutely tangible experience, something more concrete than the most concrete object, more concrete than a blow on your head, something more real than anything whatever ...

When people ask me how one may know whether he is in contact with his psychic being ... it makes me laugh; for when it happens to you ... you can no longer ask any questions.⁹

For two Ashramites and one visitor, it was clear immediately that they had contacted their psychic being and that they could state that they know their psychic being.

For six other interviewees, their intellectual knowledge of the concept of the psychic being was not sufficient and they could not recognize it immediately. One visitor to the Ashram was quite surprised by the experience, since it did not correspond to whatever he had read on the psychic being before; there was no "dazzling light" (he did not see any light) nor any "reversal of consciousness." There was the awareness of a new "being" which was more real than his own flesh, but no reversal! A European person who had just finished reading *The Adventure of Consciousness* by Satprem had an experience after which he "knew" his heart. It was quite concrete, but he could not say "I know that I know it." Later on, he learned

that it was his psychic being. Two ladies, one in Europe and one in the US, could not recognize it since they did not know of its existence. The latter one now states, "without a doubt I know my psychic being!"

Among the 15 people who related that they know their psychic being, two of them stated that its knowledge was not the result of a sudden happening but the awareness had always been there. They became aware of this fact only when they read about it. The first one, an Indian visitor, mentioned that when she read about the psychic being, it was clear for her that it had been always present in her and is always there. The second one is an Ashramite who came to Pondicherry with her parents and was brought up in the Ashram school at the time the Mother was closely supervising it.

Among the interviewees, several other people were well aware of their psychic as an influence, but they answered negatively when asked if they "know" their psychic being.

The second common feature for these sudden events is that it triggers a great joy without any external cause.

An Ashramite who was going to be operated suddenly experienced what he perceived as the opening of his psychic being; it was accompanied by "a joy of an intensity [he] had never experienced in his life." A lady in Europe who was delivering her first child spoke of an "explosion" of joy, a "bursting of love and joy without cause in spite of the pain of the delivery." A visitor in the Ashram who was reading a letter of Sri Aurobindo suddenly experienced an identification "filling the whole body with a great and pure joy." A lady was looking at the deceased body of a dear cousin when she experienced "an explosion of profound overwhelming joy."

All these descriptions of the joy are part of a global experience and are examples of a total or partial contact with the psychic being. The Mother described this event in this way: "... it is an experience that gives a very concrete joy; at the mo-



ment of identification one truly feels a very, very great joy.”¹⁰ Sri Aurobindo said, “It is true that nothing can give so much inner happiness and joy.”¹¹

At the time of the bursting, some people become aware of their “true being.”

In 1958, the Mother described this being as “an organised entity, fully conscious of itself, independent and having the power of asserting itself and ruling the rest of the nature.”¹²

When a visitor became aware of his psychic being, he discovered at the same time that this being was in fact himself, his real “I.” He started to speak of himself in the third person, as “he” instead of “I,” since the one who was talking was the outer envelope of the inner being he had identified as himself, the newly discovered psychic being. A Parisian lady, who hardly knew about Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, knew with certainty that her physical body was not “her.”

It is interesting to note how Sri Aurobindo describes the moment when Savitri discovers her soul. The first section of the canto finishes with the line: “There suddenly she met her secret soul.” Then, after one blank line, the poet resumes with solemnity: “A being stood immortal in transience | Deathless dallying with momentary things.”¹³

The experience often brings the awareness that the individual harbours something immortal in him.

The living awareness that our true self is immortal and cannot die is a sign of the quality of the psychic experience. The Mother said in 1958 that “one has the feeling of having always been and of being for

eternity. That is when one has touched the core of the soul.”¹⁴

A guest of the Ashram who discovered his psychic being in a sudden happening stated his absolute conviction that “this psychic being has always been and precedes the birth of this body. It will always be and will not die with this body. There was the feeling of having always been and of being always. Nobody can ever dismiss this certitude.”

An Ashramite, who was preparing himself for a surgery, was afraid of the coming bypass operation, but after the emergence of his psychic, he had the

The moment you are in contact with your psychic being, you have the feeling of immortality, of having always been and being always, eternally. —The Mother

strong feeling that his body was the robe of his eternal psychic being and he was no longer afraid of the operation. For him, “death was no longer a concern.” The Mother put it very simply: “The moment you are in contact with your psychic being, you have the feeling of immortality, of having always been and being always, eternally.”¹⁵ She also said it gives “the certitude of immortality, the concrete experience that you have always lived and always shall live, that external forms alone perish and that these forms are, in relation to what you are in reality, like clothes that are thrown away when worn out.”¹⁶

This feeling of immortality is well described in *Savitri* through Aswapathy’s experience: “He feels his substance of undying self | And loses his kinship to mortality.”¹⁷

There is the feeling and certitude that one’s psychic being cannot be touched by hostile forces.

A visitor who became aware of his

psychic being inside himself suddenly got the strong conviction that hostile forces cannot touch this “being” and cannot influence him as long as he has his psychic being as a reference.

This feeling is confirmed by Sri Aurobindo who wrote that “[the psychic being] is the only part that cannot be touched by the hostile forces and their suggestions.”¹⁸

The Mother once related her arrival in Theon’s residence in Algeria, less than one year after she had discovered her psychic being: “suddenly, without warning, he [Theon] spun around, planted himself in front of me, and said, ‘Now you are at my mercy. Aren’t you afraid?’ Just like that. So I looked at him, smiled and replied, ‘I’m never afraid. I have the Divine here.’ (Mother touches her heart).”¹⁹

The Mother said in 1954 that a person united with his psychic being is “almost if not totally free from external influences; for, being conscious, when these influences come, he sees them: those that seem to him to harmonise with his inner development and normal growth he accepts; those which are opposed he refuses.”²⁰

After the identification, some are aware of “a reversal of consciousness.”

After a psychic contact, some people experience a reversal of consciousness which the Mother mentions in 1956:

But then, suddenly—perhaps because one is sufficiently prepared, perhaps simply because the time has come, and it has been so decreed—suddenly, when such an experience occurs, its result in the part of the being where it takes place, is a complete reversal of consciousness. It is a very clear,



very concrete phenomenon. The best way of describing it is this: a complete reversal . . .

Those who have experienced this reversal know what I am speaking about; but if one hasn't, one can't understand . . .

It is usually the first contact with the psychic being which brings this experience.²¹

Earlier, in 1951, the Mother had tried to describe this experience like this: "a total reversal of consciousness comparable with what happens to light when it passes through a prism. Or it is as though you were turning a ball inside out, which cannot be done except in the fourth dimension."²²

One visitor said that before, he would consult the psychic space to have a psychic indication, but now he is within the psychic space and looks at his body activities as those of a human being who is not himself, not his true self. Yes, difficult to understand! An Aurovilian stated that in 1972 he had the Mother's darshan, and at the time of leaving, She opened her eyes and suddenly "everything turned over."

Often, the psychic being creates an increased consciousness and awareness.

A visitor spoke of "an increased consciousness, a feeling that the purpose of life is this consciousness. This acute consciousness makes everything become more concrete and living." An Ashramite spoke of "a truer and more vivid consciousness. He saw the world in different way. Everything had a luminous glow in it. Everything was conscious and alive." He had a different relationship with all things: human beings, animals and even plants.

His experience reminds us of what the Mother once wrote about the psychic awareness:

What seemed inert suddenly becomes full of life, stones quicken, plants feel and will and suffer, animals speak in a lan-

guage more or less inarticulate, but clear and expressive; everything is animated by a marvellous consciousness without time or limit. And this is only one aspect of the psychic realisation.²³

For many persons, the bursting includes an apparition or even an inrush of light.

The seeing of light is one of the experiences which are triggered by a spiritual descent, but it is also triggered by the bursting forth of the psychic being. As the Mother wrote in 1952, "An inner door will suddenly open and you will emerge into a dazzling splendour."²⁴ One Aurovilian described "an ocean of light," another saw a white light which was flowing everywhere, a third spoke of a strong white light at the level of the heart. An Ashramite saw a red flame, as large as a thumb, within his heart; this flame went towards Sri Aurobindo and Mother's photos, which were bathed in full white light before him; the flame then came back to his heart. A person, who hardly knew anything about the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, writes: "when this bursting first occurred I connected with a light in my heart center that was so incredibly brilliant. It seemed so brilliant that it was beyond color."

There may be also a sudden awareness that one has always been guided.

One may feel that one has been guided by the psychic or by the Mother or by something undefined. One Aurovilian said that since that time, he has had the feeling that he has been always guided, that everything is arranged. Another Aurovilian thought that "there is a thread with an origin long before and that the psychic being is directing in spite of all obstacles." A visitor said: "the psychic being indicates that it has always been there to overlook circumstances and nothing can happen in the future without its sanction."

A visitor stated with conviction that the Mother and his psychic being are one.

This is confirmed by these words of Sri Aurobindo: "There is within you a psychic being which is divine, directly a part of the Mother."²⁵ Nevertheless, it is worthwhile noting that during the time of the experience, few interviewees made an identification between the Mother of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and their psychic being.

Powerful sensations are frequently mentioned, varying from one person to the other.

While describing the bursting forth of their psychic being, most persons put emphasis on strong feelings or sensations which were often still vivid in their memory. For one it was a feeling of "richness" which remained for some time; for another a feeling of "plenitude;" for the lady delivering a child it was "a very intense emotional moment and at the same time a great stillness, both were together." Several of these attributes are mentioned in a description of the soul given by the Mother in 1958: "something warm, quiet, rich in substance and very still, and very full, like a sweetness—that is the soul . . . a kind of plenitude which gives the feeling of something complete."²⁶ The word "sweetness" is a characteristic of all the persons who have had this contact. A definite psychic sweetness emanates from all of them.

A sudden contact with the psychic being is one of the rare and intense spiritual experiences which may happen with open eyes in the midst of some activity.

This experience can occur while one is alone or while interacting with people, with open eyes or with closed eyes and does not disappear when one opens one's eyes. Usually, spiritual experiences are characterized by a definite spiritual change in consciousness and a specific sensation within the body (peace, force, waves, current and electricity) or a vision. But as soon as the person having the experience moves or opens his eyes, it vanishes somehow; this is not the case with the psychic experience.



In our survey, more than half of the sudden emergences happened with open eyes, sometimes in the presence of other people quite unaware of the intense experience taking place. One mother was delivering her child; an Ashramite had the experience when the thumb of a spiritual person was pressed on his forehead; a visitor had it alone while reading a letter of Sri Aurobindo; a young American visitor had it while receiving a fierce look from the Mother into his heart: "Her left eye appeared to begin to spin around as if it were a drill, and She bored down into my deepest heart right down to the level of my chest: one time, two times, three times. The obstruction ripped open. Her consciousness went right into my heart centre and opened it."²⁷

3. After the bursting forth

What remains after the sudden experience of the contact with the psychic being? Whenever somebody experiences a sudden contact, he always has the feeling, at that time, that the new state is permanent and will always last. However, experience teaches us that it is not permanent, that it may withdraw after a time which may depend on the initial intensity, but also on our ability to keep it. The inner preparation through a certain discipline or yoga and the understanding of the phenomenon may be two important elements to help the body or the consciousness to "digest," absorb or imbibe the experience. That is why it is very important to know the fragility of this new state of being so that, when it happens, proper steps are taken to nurture it as long as possible and get the maximum psychic nourishment.

Some visitor mentioned that he narrated in a diary his sensations and feelings during the time the psychic was fully living and the description is rich and quite evocative. It has helped, at a later stage, to relive its vibration and some of the feelings and sensations experienced during that moment. Another remembers that this state seemed so "normal" at that time that one does not think it anything strange to write about! He was also wondering if

there is not a risk of "mentalizing" the experience and thus diluting it.

How long did this experience remain living? How did it vanish?

More specifically, how long does this experience carry with it its own reality and force? What is the duration of the various sensations and feelings? In an interesting manner, the identification with the psychic being may last some minutes, some hours, some days, some months, or even three years for one of the persons interviewed, before getting clouded (but never disappearing). After the experience, one usually lives with it in a permanent manner up to the time, one fine morning, we discover that it is not living any longer and we have to make a conscious concentration to become aware of it. We note that for one person, the awareness is still living after eight months and we hope that the reading of this essay will help her to keep it longer!

The question was put to the Mother: "Once the psychic has come to the front, can it withdraw again?" She answered,

*Yes. Generally one has a series of experiences of identification, very intense at first, which later gradually diminish, and then one day you find that they have disappeared. Still you must not be disturbed, for it is quite a common phenomenon. But next time—the second time—the contact is more easily obtained. And then comes a moment, which is not very far off, when as soon as one concentrates and aspires, one gets a contact. One may not have the power of keeping it all the time, but one can get it at will.*²⁸

A visitor in the Ashram has spoken of several emergences and dispersions on the same day, having the impression that his ego was mentalizing and responsible for clouding it, but the original sensation came back often. On the following days, it was still a game of hide and seek, but less living, up to the time it vanished.

A man living in Europe kept the experience quite fresh during three to four days, in the midst of multiple activities, including a football match, "the best of my life, in which, instead of running after the ball, it was the ball which was coming to me!"

For an Ashramite, who had been prepared by some spiritual discipline, the awareness of the new state of being lasted several months. Peace emanated from him and was felt around and reported to him. He thought it would always last but it faded gradually. One day, he became unexpectedly aware that it had withdrawn. He attributed it to a flaw in his own sadhana, which may also be a subjective explanation. But for sure, he may still be able to connect with it at will.

An elderly Ashramite even said that the contact had taken place 100 times (!) Considering the content of the meeting, we definitely believe him!

In all these cases, it is difficult to tell if it was the circumstances which were responsible for the loss of the psychic consciousness, or if the psychic consciousness was doomed to fade in a more or less short time.

Once the psychic nature is known, one is in a better position to differentiate psychic perceptions and vital/emotional feelings.

Once a contact has been established, once the veil has been pierced even slightly, once the taste of the psychic is known, it is always possible, at will, within some seconds, to feel again that presence, that influence, the quality of that vibration and the nature of that substance. One has gained a pretty sure way to recognize the psychic influence.

Somebody writes: "The psychic feelings are more subtle and have a sweetness to them . . . They are very distinctly different than my emotional feelings which seem to be dependent on something and seem to be more coarse or dense in nature. For a certain Aurovilian, the psychic has become a permanent "reference" point. For one Ashramite, it can be recognized since it has a "different nature;" it can no longer



be confused with something else. The Mother expressed it in 1954: "If one among you has had the experience, he knows in this way what comes from the Divine, and necessarily . . . he knows perforce all that does not . . . It is only after this experience that one knows, not before."²⁹ This perception has been confirmed by several other people.

The reversal of consciousness becomes permanent.

The Mother explains that when the reversal of consciousness has taken place in the psychic being:

the relation of the consciousness with the other parts of the being and with the outer world is as if completely changed. Absolutely like an overturning. And that reversal no longer comes back to the same old place, the consciousness no longer returns to its former position.³⁰

The new knowledge and perception that some part of us is immortal remains permanent.

Even if the living contact with the psychic being vanishes, the perception of the immortality of this something else remains with everybody who has experienced it. The relation with death has changed. The fear of the death disappears.

One visitor in the Ashram, some days after such a psychic experience, came down with a high unidentified fever. The Ashram doctor was alarmed and the Mother was informed. That visitor felt that his consciousness was withdrawing from his legs and arms, starting from their extremities, as if death was invading the body, going towards the heart. With interest and even curiosity, and without the least fear, he remained concentrated into his living psychic being which, he knew, cannot die. He was wondering what would happen when the numbness/death would reach his soul which cannot become numb. But he lost consciousness. One hour later, he

was awakened. This experience illustrates the vividness of this sense of immortality and its power since he was in a position to look at death as a witness.

There was an Ashramite who was fearful of a life endangering heart surgery. Suddenly, he got a contact with his psychic being: he was no longer worried and could then go undisturbed to the operation theatre.

A permanent state of happiness without cause may also remain quite long.

One sadhak comments that "during the period of awareness of one's psychic being, when one is so full of happiness, we make very little personal effort for progress since everything is so spontaneously beautiful. We accept any adverse circumstance without fighting since such things become secondary: nothing really matters." He considers that it is "the Mother who gives us such an effortless state of happiness to show how beautiful the life could be and then She withdraws the experience so that we can start the work of transformation consciously."

An Aurovilian, during that living psychic period, was aware of a constant state of happiness, from the time he awoke in the morning (kissing his pillow to tell thank you to the new day to come!). Every hour, he would remember how happy he was to reside in Auroville . . . up to an overnight withdrawal!

There is the feeling that whatever we experience is quite natural and must also be felt by those around us.

This is another unique feature of the psychic experience. As long as the experience is living, the one undergoing the experience feels that many people around him must have or share the same feelings, must be experiencing the same thing and be living with it. It is as if we are close to a tree with a lot of jasmine flowers and we breathe their perfume: we are convinced that the others also smell the same fragrance although they do not.

In the same manner, when we are in contact with our psychic being, whenever we meet somebody with some psychic sweetness, we think that he is also living with the inner perception of his psychic being.

After that contact, does life become a sunlit path?

With the new awareness, the new feelings and sensations, everything seems to contribute to the transformation of our lives so that we get a permanent state of joy. As seen from the beginning of this essay, this is partly true in that life may or may not become a sunlit path, but life is no longer the same. The Mother would say in 1955 that:

[the psychic is there] when one feels better within oneself, when one is full of light, hope, goodwill, generosity, compassion for the world, and sees life as a field of action, progress, realisation. Doesn't it make a difference from the days when one is bored, grumbling, when everything seems ugly, unpleasant, wicked, when one loves nobody, wants to break everything, gets angry, feels ill at ease, without strength, without energy, without any joy?³¹

Has life become a sunlit path? Not quite, since another feature of this awakening was highlighted by the Mother one year later:

. . . the more psychic one is, the more is he in contradiction with the present state of the world. . .

First, the development of the psychic being has a double result, which is concomitant. That is, with the development of the psychic being, the sensitivity of the being grows. And with the growth of sensitivity, there is also the growth of the capacity for suffering; but there is the counterpart, that is, to the extent



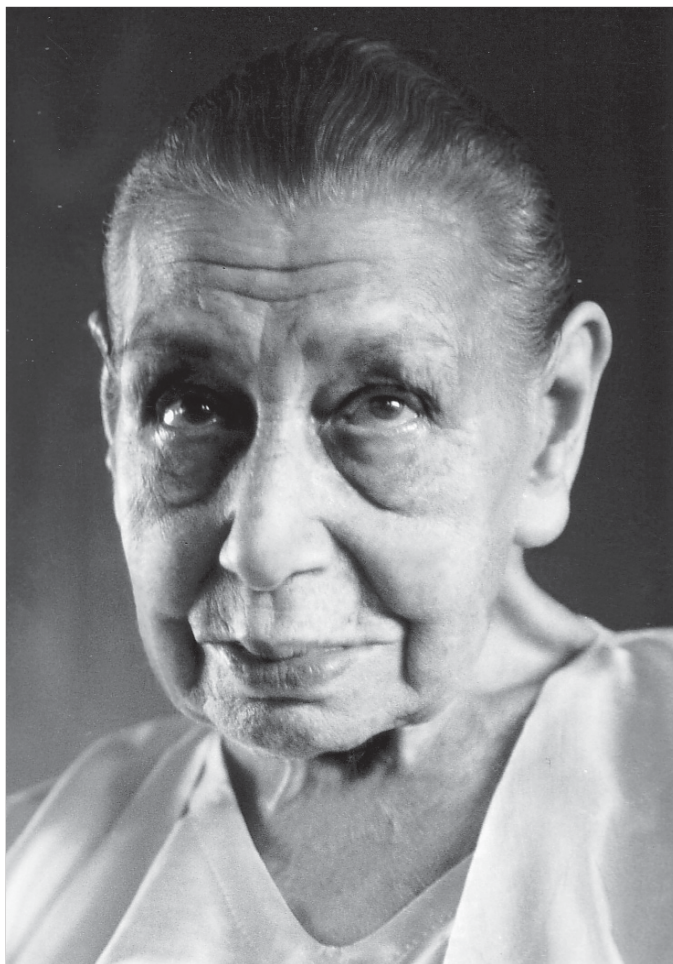
to which one is in relation with the psychic being, one faces the circumstances of life in an altogether different way and with a kind of inner freedom which makes one capable of withdrawing from a circumstance and not feeling the shock in the ordinary way. You can face the difficulty or outer things with calm, peace, and a sufficient inner knowledge not to be troubled.³²

Thus, with the development of the psychic being, the sensitivity of the being grows. And with the growth of sensitivity, there is also the growth of the capacity for suffering.

After that experience, does one become a holy person?

The bursting forth of the psychic being is a definite landmark in the spiritual progress, but all the cellular residues are still quite present and living. The actions and reactions are still very often governed by the instinct. The psychic presence is not permanent, even if there is the possibility, at any moment, to feel it again, sometimes too late, after we have reacted! Actions and reactions may take place before the psychic being is consulted. The Mother warns in 1952:

It is difficult for a human being to keep up a constant contact with his psychic. As soon as he settles down and the freshness of the new experience fades away, the old person comes back to the surface with all its habits, preferences, small manias, shortcomings and misunderstandings.³³



The Mother was the first to explain in detail the nature of the psychic being. (Photo courtesy Sri Aurobindo Ashram)

Even, sometimes, the being follows willingly the ordinary nature rather than the psychic indication. For all those who do not know their psychic being, it may appear as a sacrilege or such a waste of the grace which has been received. But for all those who have tasted it, they know how difficult it is to remain constantly within the psychic vibration.

How a lost contact with the psychic being is renewed: bursting forth or progressive?

For the clarity of the experience, we have to distinguish the contact with the psychic presence, which is at will after the first preliminary experience, and the direct perception of the psychic being. We have not met (yet) anybody who underwent two

burstings! If we refer again to the hatching of an egg, it looks as if the shell can be broken only once!

The psychic being may come back in front from time to time but it is no longer through a sudden experience. It comes back in a manner which is not dramatic: one discovers, one day, that the awareness of the psychic being is quite living. In the same manner, we usually discover one morning that the psychic has become less living . . . and the full awareness is definitely lost, for some time.

The following narration illustrates how concrete is the awareness of the psychic being. A visitor, who experienced a sudden bursting of his psychic being on 2 January 1968, lost it some months later but, lacking the proper knowledge, he did not identify how it went. He entered again, gradually, into the living psychic awareness on 9 September 1973; it lasted eight months, up to 30 April 1974, on which date he had an action which contradicted this psychic presence; the next morning it had gone. Quite

later, in December 2001, he discovered one morning while cycling that the awareness of the psychic being was again there. He nurtured it very carefully but he lost it on 25 March 2002 after receiving a violent verbal abuse which shook his whole body; the next morning the living awareness and plenitude had vanished. What is permanent is the capacity to contact it at will for reference.

4. Statistics of the Survey

Among the 38 people with whom this matter was discussed, it has been considered that 13 of them came to know their psychic being after a sudden bursting of the veil, an experience which can be differentiated from a psychitized higher emo-



tion. Two of them stated that they know their psychic being since their childhood, a knowledge which seems to have been always present. It was an informal discussion since we were not (yet) prepared for a systematic review of the subject. At a later stage, if an interest is shown, we may start a second round of discussion, covering each aspect with each past interviewee and enrich the survey with new participants. In spite of the limited number of elements which have been produced, it is possible to start to gather some features on the bursting forth of the psychic being.

Features of the bursting

a. A sudden happening: all the interviewees could describe with precision the circumstances, place and time when it occurred.

b. A great joy without cause: all the interviewees have described this joy: maximum, intense, overwhelming, a bursting of joy, like an explosion of joy.

c. A certitude of “knowing” one’s psychic being: when the bursting happened, some of the interviewees did not know anything about the psychic being and could not identify what had happened. All the interviewees are presently part of the Sri Aurobindo and Mother’s family and have become acquainted with that concept. All of them state with certitude that they know their psychic being.

d. A flow of light: Five interviewees described seeing much white light, a strong white light, a red light, an ocean of light, or a light in the heart center that was incredibly brilliant.

e. A knowledge of something immortal within oneself: Six interviewees mentioned there was a new knowledge and certitude of something immortal in them.

f. A new individual entity within oneself: Four persons mentioned that the psychic being has been perceived as an individual entity, distinct from the body.

g. Other sensations described by more than one person: an outstanding peace, love, richness, plenitude, an increased consciousness.

After-effects of the bursting

a. Disappearance: for most people it is difficult to explain what has happened between the bursting which brought the psychic awareness and the moment when they suddenly became aware it had gone. For those who are aware of the reasons of the disappearance, details were rarely asked although it is felt now that more could be shared.

b. Permanent reference: the psychic area becomes the permanent reference. Even if the permanent awareness of the psychic being has gone, it is always possible to connect, at will, to the psychic area which has a special vibration and warmth and sweetness, to a variable degree.

c. Discrimination between emotional and psychic feelings becomes easier: this was mentioned by seven people who have “tasted” the psychic vibration.

d. Circumstances are arranging by themselves: this was mentioned by four people.

e. Continuation of the feeling of immortality? Yes, for six persons.

The survey on the after effects of the bursting has been weak since it was not originally covered. The five above features should have been presented for appraisal and feedback, but at that time, it was not yet known what would be relevant. Some other features have been signaled here and there, one or two times. More information will be gathered if it is decided to enrich this initial survey. In the next paragraph, information on the circumstances of the bursting was easier to gather, although it too has not been collected in an organized manner.

Circumstances of the bursting

a. In which year? In the 1960s (3), in the 1970s (2), in the 1980s (2), in the 1990s (1), after 2000 (2). Three of the persons were not asked this question. To be noted: five of 10 outbursts happened between 1965 and 1973.

b. At what age? Below 20 (0), below 30 (5), below 40 (3), below 50 (1), below 60 (1).

Three were not asked. It is hoped that this article will not draw people above 40 into a depression!

c. Contact with Sri Aurobindo’s and Mother’s writings before? yes (10). Seven out of 12 had seen the Mother before, two persons knew only their names, one person only knew the name of Sri Aurobindo and one person did not even know his name (two weeks later he would see *The Life Divine* in a bookshop and purchase it because of the title!)

d. Inner discipline before the bursting? Serious inner discipline (8), some spiritual discipline (2), no discipline but psychotherapy (1). The bursting is not limited to people who have done a concentrated sadhana. It has also happened to people who have been taken by surprise and did not know anything about it, whether they know the Mother and Sri Aurobindo or not.

e. Yearning for something else? A little for one, very much for all others. All the people who experienced the bursting were yearning for something else, were strongly aspiring for it, often without knowing what they were aspiring for.

f. In which psychological state? Only two were in a depressed mood.

g. Alone or with company? Alone (5), not alone (4), with the Mother (1), not asked (3).

h. Where did it happen? In their reading-room (2), just lying on the bed (1), in the Mother’s room (1), in the operation theatre (1), in an office with people (1), at a wake (1), outside in the nature while meditating (1), on a Paris boulevard (1). We remember that the Mother was crossing a boulevard. No places are privileged.

i. Was doing what? Meditating (2), doing pranayama (1), looking into the Mother’s eyes (1), reading Sri Aurobindo’s letters (1), musing on one’s bed (1), lying almost unconscious on one’s bed (1), standing in front of a revered person (1), looking at a dear deceased cousin (1), delivering a child (1), walking on a boulevard (1)—a kaleidoscope of situations. Although meditation may be a useful tool, only one was actually meditating.

j. Any signs announcing this experi-



ence, which was for everybody one of the most important moments of their life? Fore-runner signs have not been identified, if any occurred. In other words, any aspirant is a potential candidate for the crack of the shell which allows the psychic being to come out.

k. More Indians or more foreigners? Among the 13 people who spoke of their psychic bursting, nine were foreigners and four were Indians. The two persons who did not lose their psychic contact since their childhood were Indians. Among the 38 interviewees, 22 were foreigners and 16 were Indians.

Author's note: An organized survey would certainly confirm but also deny some remarks and statements contained above. Some readers may like to share their own experience of this bursting forth of the psychic being, may have reservations on some of the statements made, or may like to add some additional findings or comments. Whether a survey will be organized in order to enlarge the scope of this essay depends on the feedback received from the readers. The writer of this study will be glad to answer to each e-mail sent to alaing@auroville.org.in.

5. How to find one's psychic being

Is there any specific method or process to trigger the bursting forth of the psychic being? At the end of this survey, is it possible to recommend some method or process to find one's psychic being, to identify with it? In the *Science of Living*, published in 1950, referring to the psychic being, the Mother defines a gradation in the development of knowledge of the psychic being in four phases. "It is . . . of capital importance to become conscious of its presence in us, to concentrate on this presence, until it becomes a living fact for us and we can identify ourselves with it."³⁴

Identification is the last phase, "we do not reach it little by little, it is not through a little constant and regular effort. It is something which arrives suddenly," as it was

earlier mentioned. By which method do we know it? The Mother said,

In various times and places many methods have been prescribed for attaining this perception and ultimately achieving this identification. Some methods are psychological, some religious, some even mechanical.

In reality, everyone has to find the one which suits him best, and if one has an ardent and steadfast aspiration, a persistent and dynamic will, one is sure to meet, in one way or another—outwardly through reading and study, inwardly through concentration, meditation, revelation and experience—the help one needs to reach the goal.³⁵

In fact, the Mother highlights here two common psychological conditions—*aspiration and will*. She considers that the inner or outer tools are many and each one must find those tools which are the most appropriate.

Practice of concentration is a basic tool.

Sri Aurobindo wrote in some letter: "The first necessity is the practice of concentration of your consciousness within yourself . . . The concentration in the heart opens within and by following this inward opening and going deep one becomes aware of the soul or psychic being."³⁶ Another person received the following letter: "It is by concentration of whatever kind and the experiences it brings that one opens and becomes aware within and the new consciousness and nature begin to grow and come out."³⁷

During one of the evening gatherings with the disciples, the Mother gives one practical method:

But those who have the power of concentrating with images, well, they have one more facility.

To sit in meditation before a closed door, as though it were a heavy door of bronze . . . and to pass to the other side; . . . the whole concentration, the whole aspiration is gathered into a beam and pushes, pushes, pushes against this door, and pushes more and more with an increasing energy until all of a sudden it bursts open, and one enters. It makes a very powerful impression. And so one is as though plunged into the light and then one has the full enjoyment of a sudden and radical change of consciousness, with an illumination that captures one entirely, and the feeling that one is becoming another person. And this is a very concrete and very powerful way of entering into contact with one's psychic being.³⁸

A strong craving for contact seems to be an indispensable condition.

Among the prime conditions to know one's psychic being, it seems that a strong yearning, a strong aspiration is an indispensable condition. Among the people who participated in the survey and spoke of having a sudden psychic experience, all of them had a strong aspiration. It is as if it sucks the psychic being out of its shell, makes it grow, and is a call to it which accelerates the moment when it bursts.

The Mother mentioned something similar in 1955 when she said that "if one intensifies his aspiration, there is a moment when the pressure is so great and the intensity of the question so strong that something turns over in the consciousness."³⁹ Later, in 1969, she said that "to become conscious of the psychic being one must want to do so, make one's mind as silent as possible, and enter deep into the heart of one's being, beyond sensations and thoughts. One must form the habit of silent concentration and descent into the depths of one's being."⁴⁰



The action of scrupulously following any psychic indication received is an important step forward.

In 1959, the Mother wrote: “in order to strengthen the contact and aid, if possible, the development of the conscious psychic personality, one should . . . take great care, each time that one receives an indication from it, to follow it very scrupulously and sincerely.”⁴¹ But how are we to identify indications we receive as coming from the psychic being? In 1971, the Mother gave a key piece of information on this: “Communications from the psychic do not come in a mental form. They are not ideas or reasoning. They have their own character quite distinct from the mind, something like a feeling that comprehends itself and acts.”⁴²

When you are faced with a problem and wonder what to do, one can ask the Mother, Sri Aurobindo, one’s angel, the higher grace for an indication, a solution, but the psychic being is not to be asked. It is only when one has a solution, an orientation, an indication for action, that they can be put in front of the psychic being which may give an answer through encouragement or discouragement. This distinction is very important: “The psychic has the true knowledge, an intuitive instinctive knowledge. It says: ‘I know; I cannot give reasons, but I know.’”⁴³ “It is a sort of inner certitude which makes you do the right thing at the right moment and in the right way, without necessarily passing through the reason or mental formation.”⁴⁴ The Mother explained that it also discourages you with this “kind of capacity for foresight, but not in the form of ideas: rather in the form of feelings . . . For instance, when one is going to decide to do something, there is sometimes a kind of uneasiness or inner refusal.”⁴⁵ And its way of expressing itself is quite subtle, “the tiny, very quiet indication of the soul which



The Mother discovered the link between the psychic being and the supramental being. (Photo courtesy Sri Aurobindo Ashram)

says: ‘Don’t do it.’”⁴⁶

Other processes / methods for finding the psychic being.

Sri Aurobindo and Mother have basically highlighted these three methods: the practice of some concentration, a development of the aspiration, and an active obedience to indications received from the psychic.

One Aurovilian, who had followed a 10-day course of Vipassana, was wondering if the wonderful tool for concentration developed in this method could not be useful for people who are really concerned about their psychic being. In the Vipassana philosophy, the soul or the psychic being does not exist; everything is impermanent. The practice of concentration is used to rid ourselves of our *samskaras*, our past negative actions. The practitioner is advised to concentrate successively on all

parts of his being from top to bottom and from bottom to top, without stopping on the way. However, this method could probably be used in a fruitful manner to concentrate on the psychic space and become aware of any psychic feeling which comes to the surface, such as any psychic uneasiness or any psychic encouragement.

One Ashramite has organized some one-week workshops, conducted in residence without leaving the campus. The focus on the psychic being is outstanding, and the teaching includes some practical exercises. The feeling of the psychic presence and the aspiration for it must have increased within each participant, as well as some knowledge of how to identify it. Unhappily, the return into the normal life seemed too abrupt, even aggressive. It may be advisable during the second part of the workshop to return for some hours into one’s social and working environment in order to learn how to keep the concentration on the psychic space in the midst of the normal life.

An Ashramite once said, “You must have a very strong aspiration, otherwise, no chance!” Here, we do not resist quoting again this narration by the Mother:

To have it (just to give you an idea) took me a year of exclusive concentration on finding that within myself. . . I did nothing but that, thought of nothing but that, wanted nothing but that . . . I was entirely concentrated on that. I was in Paris, and I did nothing else but that; when I walked down the street, I was thinking only of that.

One day, as I was crossing the Boulevard Saint-Michel. . . suddenly, for no apparent reason—I was neither more concentrated nor anything else—poof! It opened.⁴⁷



The first part of this essay has dealt with the growth and the life of the psychic being within oneself. The second part will explain how this psychic being is meant to transform itself into the next species which will appear on this earth.

6. The psychic and the supramental

According to the Mother, the psychic being is going to “materialize” itself and become the supramental being. How will the next species, the supramental body, be created? Is it a progressive or a sudden transformation of a developed human body? Is it a creation out of something else? This issue is still not very well-known, although relevant information has been published in *Notes on the Way*, a compilation of extracts from the Mother’s conversation with Satprem.

On 1 July 1970, while “seeing with open eyes” a disciple’s psychic being, the Mother had an experience: “I said to myself, ‘But it is the psychic being, it is that which will materialise itself and become the supramental being!’ . . . One understands: the psychic being materialises itself . . . and that gives continuity to evolution.”⁴⁸

What then is the process by which the psychic being becomes materialized? For many years, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have been exploring how the new race, the supramental race, would appear on earth, how the first supramental being would appear. As Sri Aurobindo writes in *Essays in Philosophy and Yoga*, the process of animal procreation which entails physical heredity and karma did not seem a proper process.

The necessity of a physical procreation could only be avoided if new means of a supraphysical kind were evolved and made available . . . If there is some reality in the phenomenon of materialisation and dematerialisation claimed to be possible by occultists and

*evidenced by occurrences many of us have witnessed, a method of this kind would not be out of the range of possibility . . . A soul wishing to . . . form for itself a body and take part in a divine life upon earth might be assisted to do so or even provided with such a form by this method of direct transmutation, without passing through birth by the sex process or undergoing any degradation or any of the heavy limitations in the growth and development of its mind and material body inevitable to our present way of existence. It might then assume at once the structure and greater powers and functioning of the truly divine material body which must one day emerge.*⁴⁹

In 1957, the Mother had spoken of Sri Aurobindo’s conception of creation of the new being:

*The supramental being as he conceived of it, is not formed in the ordinary animal way at all but directly, through a process that for the moment still seems occult to us, but is a direct handling of forces and substance in such a way that the body can be a “materialisation” and not a formation according to the ordinary animal principle.*⁵⁰

Then, in 1966, while discussing with Satprem, she already hinted that the process could be original.

*This would be a transformation infinitely greater than that from the animal to man; this would be a passage from man to a being who would not be built in the same manner, who would no longer function in the same manner, who would be like the condensation and concretisation of “something” . . .*⁵¹

What is that ‘something’? The answer may be found in the talk of 1 July 1970 quoted in the beginning of this section. It may be the condensation or materialization of the psychic being.

If we retain such an assumption, it may be interesting to study how this precursor of the supramental being, the psychic being, is coming into existence, growing, developing, from its birth up to its present state in this 21st century.

7. The process of crystallization

In each thing in the universe there exists a spark of the Divine which comes out and crystallizes to become the psychic being through our life experiences. The various stages of development may be gathered from several statements.

The psychic being takes its mature shape through a process of crystallization.

As the Mother said in 1953:

*the psychic starts by being only a kind of a tiny divine spark within the being and out of this spark will emerge progressively an independent conscious being having its own action and will... For a long time, in most human beings the psychic is a being in the making.*⁵²

Even earlier, in 1931, the Mother had written: “it is the psychic presence which little by little becomes the psychic being.”⁵³ Later, in 1962, the Mother describes to Satprem, in a very living manner, the process of growth of the psychic being:

this divine flame exists inside each human being, and little by little, through all the incarnations . . . a being takes shape around it . . . And when the psychic being reaches its full development, it becomes a kind of bodily or at any rate individual



raiment (revêtement corporel) of the soul . . . through all the incarnations, whatever has received and responded to the divine Influence progressively crystallizes around . . . This is what we call the “psychic being.”⁵⁴

Can this “crystallization” be assisted by our human endeavor?

The human being can consciously assist the development of the psychic being by obeying its indications. Which actions or attitudes or behaviour develop the psychic individuality? Sri Aurobindo gives some indication in a letter to Dilip Kumar Roy:

[The psychic being] grows in the consciousness by Godward experience, gaining strength every time there is a higher movement in us and, finally by the accumulation of these deeper and higher movements, there is developed a psychic individuality,—that which we call usually the psychic being.⁵⁵

It looks as if an analogy can be drawn with a muscle which grows with practice: the psychic being grows whenever its envelope follows a higher psychic movement.

The psychic being is quite different from the soul.

One important difference is that the soul does not evolve while the psychic being evolves during its terrestrial incarnation and reincarnations. It is meant to become the next species on the earth after several incarnations. In 1960, the Mother wrote:

The soul is the divine spark . . . in man. The psychic being is formed progressively around this divine centre, the soul, in the course of its innumerable lives in the

terrestrial evolution, until the time comes when the psychic being, fully formed and wholly awakened, becomes the conscious sheath of the soul around which it is formed.⁵⁶

We may wonder why, in Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy, the soul, that divine spark in man, is called ‘psychic being’ and not, for instance, ‘oversoul’ or ‘super soul’, once it has developed into a concrete form and shape.

In fact, the emergence of this “independent conscious being” is often perceived as a separate entity within our human frame through an unexpected and sudden experience, when the psychic being “bursts out of its veil.” At that time, we become aware of an entity which has always existed and we did not know it, which will always exist beyond the death of the physical body. We become aware that this entity is in fact the real Peter or Paul, more real, more physical than the physical body which is then felt as transient.

Thus, the psychic being is experienced as a living “being,” and it is a being which has emanated from the soul, which is called “psyché” in Greek. This individual entity is in fact the being of our psyché, our psychic being.

8. The nature of the psychic being

Being the fetus of the next species, the psychic being is developing an individual “body” within our human frame. The psychic being is evolutionary and many features of an evolved psychic being can be individualized.

It is a being different from the human being!

During the 1 July 1970 conversation with Satprem, the Mother described a sadhak’s psychic being, seen with open eyes: “...it was clearly a being which was neither man nor woman, having the combined characteristics of both.”⁵⁷ Yes, a being, as it was mentioned earlier, defined by

the Mother as: “an organised entity, fully conscious of itself, independent, and having the power of asserting itself and ruling the rest of the nature.”⁵⁸

This being has a form.

Some shape is described in the Katha Upanishad in which we can read about the Chaitya Purusha, that Sri Aurobindo identifies with the psychic being: “The Purusha, the Spirit within, who is no larger than the finger of a man is seated for ever in the heart of creatures.”⁵⁹ But later he will write to a disciple that it is an image: “That of course is a symbolic image. For usually, when one sees anybody’s psychic being in a form, it is bigger than that.”⁶⁰ The Mother also said in 1951 that: “the psychic being is an entity which has a form . . . and having a form it has a dimension, but a dimension of another kind than the third dimension of the outer consciousness . . .”⁶¹ When it is fully formed, the psychic being has a distinct form which corresponds to our physical form.⁶²

It looks as if the psychic being grows and becomes bigger and bigger. Indeed, on that day, 1 July 1970, when the Mother saw a disciple’s psychic being she told Satprem: “I saw her psychic being, dominating over her by so much (gesture indicating about twenty centimetres) taller . . . It was an unsexed being, neither man nor woman . . . There was hair on the head . . . I had my eyes open.”⁶³

This being develops a material density.

The process of materialization is described by the Mother in this manner in a letter to Shyamsundar on 1 February 1967: “The soul is in fact like a divine spark which puts on many states of being of increasing density, down to the most material... These states of being take form and develop, progress, become individualised . . . and form the psychic being.”⁶⁴

In *Savitri*, Sri Aurobindo used the word ‘substance’ when he described what happened to Aswapathy when his soul was released, which we understand to be



the moment Aswapathy discovered his psychic being: "In the transient symbol of humanity draped / He feels his substance of undying self."⁶⁵

This being has a colour.

The Mother described on 1 July 1970 how she saw the disciple's psychic being: "I saw her psychic being... It had this colour . . . which if it became quite material would be the colour of Auroville [orange] . . . I had my eyes open."⁶⁶

This being has a location within the body.

Sri Aurobindo wrote to Dilip Kumar Roy: "Its central place is... behind the heart, rather than in the heart."⁶⁷ The Mother located it in the solar plexus, in a letter to Shyam-sundar in 1967: "It is inside the body, within the solar plexus, so to say."⁶⁸ Two years later, the Mother wrote to another sadhak: "Generally it is in the heart, behind the solar plexus, that one finds this luminous presence."⁶⁹ And to the following question: "Is the psychic being in the heart?" she replied: "Not in the physical heart, not in the organ. It is in a fourth dimension, an inner dimension. But it is in that region, the region somewhat behind the solar plexus, it is there that one finds it most easily."⁷⁰

A medical book will tell us that the solar plexus is located behind the stomach and 'innerves' the viscera of the abdomen. Could it be that the Mother would locate the solar plexus in the region of the physical heart, which is higher than its physiological location? Anyway, whatever the conclusion, the Mother mentions also clearly that it is in the region of the heart that one finds it most easily.

This anthology (sections VI–VIII) on the growth of the psychic being according to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother raises the

issue which is addressed in the following final section.

9. The advent of the supramental being

Is it possible to propose a chart for the advent of the supramental being? What follows may be considered just a personal perception by the author. Nevertheless, it is felt that it is worthwhile to express these views as one possibility in the process of the advent of the new species, the supramental being.

Has the psychic being started to "crystallize" during the 20th century only?

The growth and development of the psychic being is an original concept. In

osophy of Sri Aurobindo.

We are presently inclined to think that the psychic being has developed some maturity in the 20th century only. Many people all over the world have surely experienced the bursting out of their soul and have had a full or partial contact with their psychic being, without having the opportunity to identify this new being with some of its characteristics since it was not described in their spiritual and psychological map. It looks as if the Mother has been the first person to describe the features of this "being" and its outstanding place in the evolutionary pattern.

Unless a person who has the psychic sudden bursting knows the characteristics of the psychic being and can grasp the ones he has experienced and individualized during the period of identification, there is a great chance that later he will forget many of its

features except the sudden un-triggered great joy, the blazing light, the special vibration and warmth at the heart level. He will remember that one day, in a

It looks as if the Mother has been the first person to describe the features of this "being" and its outstanding place in the evolutionary pattern.

which other religious and spiritual traditions can we find mention of this specific "being," a concrete and real individualized being which guides us and evolves? Some mention of a shape is found once, only one time, in the Katha Upanishad with a reference to a thumb. In the Christian tradition, the soul looks more like a theological description; it seems as if the soul is more a matter of faith than an individual concrete experience. Buddhism states that the soul does not exist, that there is nothing permanent in man; the concept of earthly evolution is foreign to it while emphasis is put on escape from worldly existence. Of all the esoteric traditions of humanity, only two speak specifically and in detail of a divine soul that specifically evolves and grows through successive reincarnations. These are the Theosophy of Madame Blavatsky and the Integral Yoga and Phi-

specific place, at a specific time, something very important has manifested itself in the region of the heart, but the "being" as an individual entity may be forgotten, the "shape" also may be forgotten unless it has been recorded in writing during the moment when the experience was living, its "substance" may remain a vague memory since it has no point of recognition with known substance; the "blazing light" may be taken for ordinary physical light as it is sometimes during spiritual experiences. This may explain why the psychic emergence is an experience which is not yet on the geographical map of spiritual seekers belonging to other traditions.

Therefore, we may wonder if the 20th century is not the period during which the future species, the supramental being, has manifested a new step in its development. What can be the next steps?



Due to his occult powers, the future superman, the ‘surhomme’, may be the creator of the supramental being.

The advent of the superman, an intermediary being between the human being and the supramental being has been announced by the Mother in 1958:

It can be asserted with certainty that there will be an intermediate specimen between the mental and the supramental being, a kind of superman who will still . . . belong in his most external form to the human being with its animal origin . . . one can foresee that it will discover the means of producing new beings without going through the old animal method.⁷¹

Therefore, one possibility is that a superman, that is, a human being who has transformed part of his human nature, may discover occult means to materialize a developed psychic being. Already, some known persons like Satya Sai Baba are undoubtedly materializing physical objects within the physical space. It has earlier been mentioned that Sri Aurobindo wrote about the “phenomenon of materialisation and dematerialisation claimed to be possible by occultists and evidenced by occurrences many of us have witnessed.”⁷² Therefore, it may be conceived that the superman will elaborate a materializing process within the psychic space.

Today, we may wonder if any human being has reached the stage of superman. A beginning of an answer is found in the Mother’s comment published in “On Thoughts and Aphorisms” and dated 30 August 1969:

The superman is now in the making and a new consciousness has very recently manifested on earth to bring this process to perfection. But it is unlikely that any human being has yet arrived at this fulfillment, especially since

it must be accompanied by a transformation of the physical body, and this has not yet been accomplished.⁷³

Epilogue

This essay on the growth of the psychic being and its becoming will be concluded with this talk given by the Mother on 25th September 1957, in the Playground of the Ashram, in front of a gathering of residents and guests of the Ashram.

As we are, we have been created in the ordinary animal way, and therefore, even if we transform ourselves, there will remain something of this animal origin. The supramental being as he [Sri Aurobindo] conceived of it, is not formed in the ordinary animal way at all but directly, through a process that for the moment still seems occult to us, but is a direct handling of forces and substance in such a way that the body can be a “materialisation” and not a formation according to the ordinary animal principle.

It is quite obvious that intermediate beings are necessary, that it is these intermediate beings who must find the means of creating beings of the supermind, and, undoubtedly, when Sri Aurobindo wrote this he was convinced that this is what we must do.

I think—I know—that it is now certain that we shall realise what he expects of us. It has become no longer a hope but a certainty. Only the time necessary for this realisation will be longer or shorter according to our individual effort, our concentration, our goodwill . . . and the importance we give to this fact . . .

It is for you to know whether this interests you more than everything else in the world . . . There comes a moment when the

body itself finds that there is nothing in the world which is so worth living for as this transformation; that there is nothing which can have as great an interest as this passionate interest of transformation. It is as though all the cells of the body were athirst for that Light which wants to manifest; they cry out for it, they find an intense joy in it and are sure of the Victory.

This is the aspiration that I am trying to communicate to you, and you will understand that everything else in life is dull, insipid, futile, worthless in comparison with that: the transformation in the Light.⁷⁴

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Source Material

On the development of the psychic being

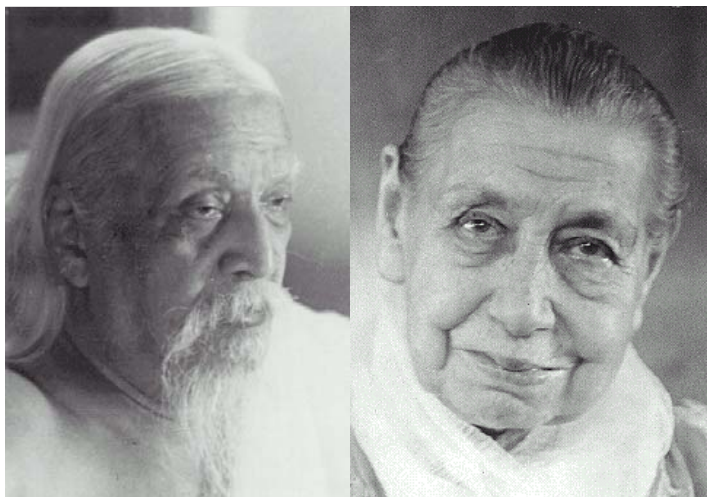
by Sri Aurobindo

As the evolution proceeds, Nature begins slowly and tentatively to manifest our occult parts; she leads us to look more and more within ourselves or sets out to initiate more clearly recognisable intimations and formations of them on the surface. The soul in us, the psychic principle, has already begun to take secret form; it puts forward and develops a soul-personality, a distinct psychic being to represent it. This psychic being remains still behind the veil in our subliminal part, like the true mental, the true vital or the true or subtle physical being within us: but, like them, it acts on the surface life by the influences and intimations it throws up upon that surface; these form part of the surface aggregate which is the conglomerate effect of the inner influences and upsurgings, the visible formation and superstructure which we ordinarily experience and think of as ourselves. On this ignorant surface we become dimly aware of something that can be called a soul as distinct from mind, life or body; we feel it not only as our mental idea or vague instinct of ourselves, but as a sensible influence in our life and character and action. A certain sensitive feeling for all that is true and good and beautiful, fine and pure and noble, a response to it, a demand for it, a pressure on mind and life to accept and formulate it in our thought, feelings, conduct, character is the most usually recognised, the most general and characteristic, though not the sole sign of this influence of the psyche. Of the man who has not this element in him or does not respond at all to this urge, we say that he has no soul. For it is this influence that we can most easily recognise as a finer or even a diviner part in us and the most powerful for the slow turning towards some aim at perfection in our nature.

But this psychic influence or action does not come up to the surface quite pure or does not remain distinct in its purity; if it did, we would be able to distinguish clearly the soul element in us and follow consciously and fully its dictates. An occult mental and vital and subtle-physical action intervenes, mixes with it, tries to use it and turn it to its own profit, dwarfs its divinity, distorts or diminishes its self-expression, even causes it to deviate and stumble or stains it with the impurity, smallness and error of mind and life and body. After it reaches the surface, thus alloyed and diminished, it is taken hold of by the surface nature in an obscure reception and ignorant formation, and there is or can be by this cause a still further deviation and mixture. A twist is given, a wrong direction is imparted, a wrong application, a wrong formation, an erroneous result of what is in itself pure stuff and action of our spiritual being; a formation of consciousness is accordingly made which is a mixture of the psychic influence and its intimations jumbled with mental ideas and opinions, vital desires and urges, habitual physical tendencies. There coalesce too with the obscured soul-influence the ignorant though well-intentioned efforts of these external parts towards a higher direction; a mental ideation of a very mixed character, often obscure even in its idealism, sometimes even disastrously mistaken, a fervour and passion of the emotional being throwing up its spray and foam of feelings, sentiments, sentimentalisms, a dynamic enthusiasm of the life-parts, eager responses of the physical, the thrills and excitements of nerve and body,—all these influences coalesce in a composite formation which is frequently taken as the soul and its mixed and confused action for the soul-stir, for a psychic development and action or a realised inner influence. The psychic entity is itself free from stain or mixture, but what comes up from it is not protected by that immunity; therefore this confusion becomes possible.

Moreover, the psychic being, the soul-personality in us, does not emerge full-grown and luminous; it evolves, passes through a slow development and forma-

tion; its figure of being may be at first indistinct and may afterwards remain for a long time weak and undeveloped, not impure but imperfect: for it rests its formation, its dynamic self-building on the power of soul that has been actually and more or less successfully, against the resistance of the Ignorance and Inconscience, put forth in the evolution upon the surface. Its appearance is the sign of a soul-emergence in Nature, and if that emergence is as yet small and defective, the psychic personality also will be stunted or feeble. It is too, by the obscurity of our consciousness, separated from its inner reality, in imperfect communication with its own source in the depths of the being; for the road is as yet ill-built, easily obstructed, the wires often cut or crowded with communications of another kind and proceeding from another origin: its power to impress what it receives upon the outer instruments is also imperfect; in its penury it has for most things to rely on these instruments and it forms its push to expression and action on their data and not solely on the unerring perceptions of the psychic entity. In these conditions it cannot prevent the true psychic light from being diminished or distorted in the mind into a mere idea or opinion, the psychic feeling in the heart into a fallible emotion or mere sentiment, the psychic will to action in the life-parts into a blind vital enthusiasm or a fervid excitement: it even accepts these mistranslations for want of something better and tries to fulfil itself through them. For it is part of the work of the soul to influence mind and heart and vital being and turn their ideas, feelings, enthusiasms, dynamisms in the direction of what is divine and luminous; but this has to be done at first imperfectly, slowly and with a mixture. As the psychic personality grows stronger, it begins to increase its communion with the psychic entity behind it and improve its communications with the surface: it can transmit its intimations to the mind and heart and life with a greater purity and force; for it is more able to exercise a strong control and react against false mixtures; now more and more it makes itself distinctly felt as a power in the nature. But



Sri Aurobindo and the Mother (Courtesy Sri Aurobindo Ashram)

even so this evolution would be slow and long if left solely to the difficult automatic action of the evolutionary Energy; it is only when man awakes to the knowledge of the soul and feels a need to bring it to the front and make it the master of his life and action that a quicker conscious method of evolution intervenes and a psychic transformation becomes possible. . .

But, for this change to arrive at its widest totality and profound completeness, the consciousness has to shift its centre and its static and dynamic position from the surface to the inner being; it is there that we must find the foundation for our thought, life and action. For to stand outside on our surface and to receive from the inner being and follow its intimations is not a sufficient transformation; one must cease to be the surface personality and become the inner Person, the Purusha. But this is difficult, first because the outer nature opposes the movement and clings to its normal accustomed poise and externalised way of existence and, in addition, because there is a long way from the surface to the depths in which the psychic entity is veiled from us, and this intervening space is filled with a subliminal nature and nature-movements which are not by any means all of them favourable to the completion of the inward movement. The outer nature has to undergo a change of poise, a quieting, a purification and fine mutation of its substance and energy by which the

surface. There must grow up within us or there must manifest a consciousness more and more open to the deeper and the higher being, more and more laid bare to the cosmic Self and Power and to what comes down from the Transcendence, turned to a higher Peace, permeable to a greater light, force and ecstasy, a consciousness that exceeds the small personality and surpasses the limited light and experience of the surface mind, the limited force and aspiration of the normal life-consciousness, the obscure and limited responsiveness of the body. (*The Life Divine*, pp. 893-905)

The psychic being's direction of the life

by the Mother

This is what happens. Let us take a divine spark which, through attraction, through affinity and selection, gathers around it a beginning of psychic consciousness (this work is already very perceptible in animals—don't think you are exceptional beings, that you alone have a psychic being and the rest of creation hasn't. It begins in the mineral, it is a little more developed in the plant, and in the animal there is a first glimmer of the psychic presence). Then there comes a moment when this psychic being is sufficient-

many obstacles in it rarely, drop away or otherwise disappear; it then becomes possible to pass through to the depths of our being and from the depths so reached a new consciousness can be formed, both behind the exterior self and in it, joining the depths to the

ly developed to have an independent consciousness and a personal will. And then after innumerable lives more or less individualised, it becomes conscious of itself, of its movements and of the environment it has chosen for its growth. Arriving at a certain state of perception, it decides—generally at the last minute of the life it has just finished upon earth—the conditions in which its next life will be passed. Here I must tell you a very important thing: the psychic being can progress and form itself only in the physical life and upon earth. As soon as it leaves a body, it enters into a rest which lasts for a more or less long time according to its own choice and its degree of development—a rest for assimilation, for a passive progress so to say, a rest for passive growth which will allow this same psychic being to pass on to new experiences and make a more active progress. But after having finished one life (which usually ends only when it has done what it wanted to do), it will have chosen the environment where it will be born, the approximate place where it will be born, the conditions and the kind of life in which it will be born, and a very precise programme of the experiences through which it will have to pass to be able to make the progress it wants to make.

I am going to give you quite a concrete example. Let us take a psychic being that has decided, for some reason or other, to enter the body of a being destined to become king, because there is a whole series of experiences it can have only under those conditions. After having passed through these experiences of a king, it finds that there is a whole domain in which it cannot make a progress due to these very conditions of life where it is. So when it has finished its term upon earth and decides to go away, it decides that in its next life it will take birth in an ordinary environment and in ordinary conditions, neither high nor low, but such that the body which it will take up will be free to do what it likes. For I do not tell you anything new when I say that the life of a king is the life of a slave; a king is obliged to submit to a whole protocol and to all kinds of ceremonies to keep his prestige (it is perhaps very



pleasant for vain people, but for a psychic being it is not pleasant, for this deprives it of the possibility of a large number of experiences). So having taken this decision, it carries in itself all the memories which a royal life can give it and it takes rest for the period it considers necessary. (Here, I must say that I am speaking of a psychic being exclusively occupied with itself, not one consecrated to a work, because in that case it is the work which decides the future lives and their conditions; I am speaking of a psychic being at work completing its development.) Hence it decides that at a certain moment it will take a body. Having already had a number of experiences, it knows that in a certain country, a certain part of the consciousness has developed; in another, another part, and so on; so it chooses the place which offers it easy possibilities of development: the country, the conditions of living, the approximate nature of the parents, and also the condition of the body itself, its physical structure and the qualities it needs for its experiences. It takes rest, then at the required moment, wakes up and projects its consciousness upon earth centralising it in the chosen domain and the chosen conditions—or almost so; there is a small margin you know, for in the psychic consciousness one is too far away from the material physical consciousness to be able to see with a clear vision; it is an approximation. It does not make a mistake about the country or the environment and it sees quite clearly the inner vibrations of the people chosen, but there may happen to be a slight indecision. But if, just at this moment, there is a couple upon earth or rather a woman who has a psychic aspiration herself and, for some reason or other, without knowing why or how, would like to have an exceptional child, answering certain exceptional conditions; if at this moment there is this aspiration upon earth, it creates a vibration, a psychic light which the psychic being sees immediately and, without hesitation it rushes towards it. Then, from that moment (which is the moment of conception), it watches over the formation of the child, so that this formation may be as favourable as possible to the plan it has;

consequently its influence is there over the child even before it appears in the physical world.

If all goes well, if there is no accident (accidents can always happen), if all goes well at the moment the child is about to be born, the psychic force (perhaps not in its totality, but a part of the psychic consciousness) rushes into the being and from its very first cry gives it a push towards the experiences it wants the child to acquire. The result is that even if the parents are not conscious, even if the child in its external consciousness is not quite conscious (a little child does not have the necessary brain for that, it forms slowly, little by little), in spite of that, it will be possible for the psychic influence to direct all the events, all the circumstances of the life of this child till the moment it becomes capable of coming into conscious contact with its psychic being (physically it is generally between the age of four and seven, sometimes sooner, sometimes almost immediately, but in such a case we deal with children who are not “children”, who have “supernatural” qualities, as they say—they are not “supernatural”, but simply the expression of the presence of the psychic being). But there are people who have not had the chance or rather the good fortune if one may call it that, of meeting someone, physically, who could instruct them. And yet they have the feeling that every step of their existence, every circumstance of their life is arranged by someone conscious, so that they may make the maximum progress. When they need a certain circumstance, it comes; when they need to meet certain people, they come; when they need to read certain books, they find them within their reach. Everything is arranged like that, as if someone was watching over them so that their life may have the maximum possibilities of development. These people may very well say: “But what is a psychic being?”, for no one has ever used these words in speaking to them or they have not found anybody who could explain to them all that; but for them often just one meeting is sufficient, just one look, in order to wake up; one word suffices to make them remember: “But I knew all that!”

This is exactly what happens to a psychic being which has reached the last stage of its development. After that, it will no longer be bound by the necessity of coming upon earth, it will have completed its development and will be able to choose freely either to consecrate itself to the divine Work or go elsewhere, that is, in the higher worlds. But generally, having come to this stage, it remembers all that has happened to it and understands the great necessity of coming to the help of those who are yet struggling in the midst of difficulties. These psychic beings give their whole existence to the divine Work—this is not absolute, inevitable, they choose freely, but ninety times out of a hundred this is what they do.

But in ordinary lives—and by that I mean the life of a certain *‘elite’* of sufficiently well-developed people—the contact between the external being and the psychic is quite intermittent; it is the result of certain experiences or certain inner needs. At that moment the psychic being is “in front”, as Sri Aurobindo says, that is, it comes to the surface of the consciousness, it is in direct contact with material circumstances, with forms and words and sounds, etc., for a very short time; so it records all that like a photograph or a cinema, but it is just a minute, a few moments in a lifetime. These moments may repeat themselves several times, but they do not last; and it is this the psychic being remembers; and when you have real psychic memories, sincere, spontaneous, not fabricated by the mind or the vital, that is, purely psychic, exact, your memory is *intermittent*. And it is often very difficult to locate your past lives, to say: “I was this or that.” It is only when the psychic experience has taken place at a very important moment of your life and a whole set of circumstances gives you, so to say, the key to the story (dresses, spoken words, customs or an environment giving you the key) that you can say: “Oh! That life, I have lived it.” But if someone comes and narrates to you all his previous lives from the monkey onwards, with a mass of details, you may be sure that he is a humbug! (*The Collected Works of the Mother*, Vol. 4, pp. 143-148)



The poetry room

The problem of pain¹

“Was then the sun a dream because there is night?
Hidden in the mortal’s heart the Eternal lives:
He lives secret in the chamber of thy soul,
A Light shines there nor pain nor grief can cross.
A darkness stands between thyself and him,
Thou canst not hear or feel the marvellous Guest,
Thou canst not see the beatific sun.
O queen, thy thought is a light of the Ignorance,
Its brilliant curtain hides from thee God’s face.
It illumines a world born from the Inconscience
But hides the Immortal’s meaning in the world.
Thy mind’s light hides from thee the Eternal’s thought,
Thy heart’s hopes hide from thee the Eternal’s will,
Earth’s joys shut from thee the Immortal’s bliss.
Thence rose the need of a dark intruding god,
The world’s dread teacher, the creator, pain.
Where Ignorance is, there suffering too must come;
Thy grief is a cry of darkness to the Light;
Pain was the first-born of the Inconscience
Which was thy body’s dumb original base;
Already slept there pain’s subconscious shape:
A shadow in a shadowy tenebrous womb,
Till life shall move, it waits to wake and be.
In one caul with joy came forth the dreadful Power.
In life’s breast it was born hiding its twin;
But pain came first, then only joy could be.
Pain ploughed the first hard ground of the world-drowse.
By pain a spirit started from the clod,
By pain Life stirred in the subliminal deep.
Interned, submerged, hidden in Matter’s trance
Awoke to itself the dreamer, sleeping Mind;
It made a visible realm out of its dreams,
It drew its shapes from the subconscious depths,
Then turned to look upon the world it had made.
By pain and joy, the bright and tenebrous twins,
The inanimate world perceived its sentient soul,
Else had the Inconscient never suffered change.
Pain is the hammer of the Gods to break
A dead resistance in the mortal’s heart,
His slow inertia as of living stone.
If the heart were not forced to want and weep,
His soul would have lain down content, at ease,
And never thought to exceed the human start
And never learned to climb towards the Sun.”

—Sri Aurobindo

O my heart²

Like a star in the sky, like a flower in May
You bloom, O my heart, in the deep,
Like a shell which bears the pure pearl play
In an ocean of vigilant sleep.

You have your colours, you have your brush
And a canvas eternally wide;
In a trance you dance with the luminous hush
Bearing Time’s silent tide.

You are moulding the clay to an angel’s eye,
And moving the thorn as a pen
You change the black veil with a golden dye
And break the blind dark den.

Consciousness grows in the Mother divine,
You laugh on her lap in your dream;
Your thoughts are bright with her red sun-wine
And your words in her silver moonbeam.

Sleep, sleep, O my bird, in your glorious nest
Like a pearl in the deep’s delight,
Like a star of the sky in its radiant rest,
Like a flower on a timeless height.

—Nishikanto

Seekers of fire³

There is a long way yet to go,
O you who have received the call!
Where is the end? I do not know
If there be such a thing at all!
I only know the fire burns
Somewhere, beyond our shadowed ken,
And that a something sweetly yearns
Deep in the loneliest hearts of men.

There is a way that winds and goes
Towards the lover, through the mists
Of centuries, and no one knows
For certainty if he exists.
But when we dream such dreams and taste
Such sweetness in the heart, he must
Bloom like a rose beyond the waste
Of doubt’s unyielding desert-dust.

O soul! move on from age to age,
Move on, my God-enchanted soul!
Making your every goal a stage
In some forever-distant goal;



And may each end be but fulfilled
Into beginning; nor forget
The spiral process he hath willed
For feet that need to travel yet.

Be still, O travelling soul! be still!
Even in movement learn to rest!
Unite your will unto his will
And then, throughout your lonely quest,
You will discover that you are
The self-same master whom you seek
From evening-star to evening-star,
From mountain-peak to mountain-peak.

The light is brimming in your eyes,
Your breath has scented all the wind;
In every footfall hidden lies
The goal that you are out to find.
The emptiness of time and space
Grows to a fullness sudden-sweet,
Each step becomes a resting place
For the once-weary travelling feet.

—Harindranath Chattopadhyaya

Who were you?⁴

What did you mean, O God, to me,
You whom the world's great scriptures quote?
—One sitting in lone majesty,
So agonisingly remote.

Not all my longing ever could reach
Or touch you; nor heart's deepest cry,
Nor any power of thought or speech
Pierce through those cold walls of your sky.

You might as well have been a Mask;
“Existence pure” or “Peace,” maybe—
What do with these? I could but ask
Your wrath to blast my blasphemy.

But no; instead you left your throne,
As though you'd seen my anguished eyes,
And how senseless all my days had grown;
You rose at last and smashed your skies...

And so you took me from this hell
Of pained confusion's soot and smoke;
Upon my ways your beauty fell,
And all my heart to you awoke.

Had you not come, O Love Divine,
With human face and hands and feet,
What would have been this life of mine,
What meaning made its moments sweet?

Now all with your rich love is filled,
And every thought's a flame of rose,
And every breath a joy distilled. ...
—But your deep sacrifice who knows?

—Thémis

Kalki⁵

I await day and night
the triumphant sound
of the galloping hoofs
of Thy horse, radiant white
with its golden mane
dancing in the supernal air
Thou ridest in the silent vasts
of my longing soul.

Thou comest without fail
to delight my heart
and enticing me sweetly
with Thy magic call
lurest me to sit by Thy side.

My soul enraptured,
heart enamoured,
eyes adoring and
mind silent at Thy feet
I forget all rites of worship
and glide softly by Thy side.

So drunk are my senses
with the elixir of
Thy exalted presence,
I am soaked in the perfume
of Thy entrancing Beauty,
thrilling with its transmuting touch
every limb, tissue, nerve and cell,
and its luminous peace descending.

What heavens of Light,
Beauty and Bliss ineffable
I visit with Thee by my side,
over the rainbow bridge
of magnificent hues,
day after day of sunlit effulgence,
night after night of starlit splendour.



For, when I am with Thee
I see only Thee,
everywhere only Thee
in Thy majesty
of miraculous Power
which reigns supreme,
creating realms of Beauty
and immaculate Bliss
with its Love, many-splendoured,
transforming all into
the light of Thy glory!
—leaving my soul in
Rapture singing:
'Glory to Thee, my Lord!
Victory to Thee, Mother sweet!'

—Kailas Jhaveri

From Emulating a Great Sage⁶

O Master of all moods and rays woven
in the cosmic tapestry of existence,
Artist supreme who play with
all colors and shades on
The canvases of ever
birthing and dying
universe! Free me
from this entanglement
that bears only suffering!
Dost not leave me to perish
in Thy negligence. O how could
it be, Mastermind of every escapade?
Do not further twist already corrupted
thoughts, but allow the mind to soak
in a vibrant field of Thy grace,
o Arunachala, the womb
of all powers!
Kindly accept my plea and
let me serve Thee in any
mode and form
Thou have
conceived
for this being.
Just let me know
beyond any doubt
what is my role in
Thy play; what
stations and movements
Thou have assigned to me on
the world stage of Thy Self-display,
o great Orchestrator of all destinies!

—Dhyaanavati

From The artist before dawn and the dream of victory⁷

The inward and outward movements
Found their balance forever.
What was always known to be
Behind the veil, was shown:
The future leaped into view
Like blossoms opening in a garden
And the ancients who cared for them
From the first, watched their children grow.

And they gathered ever after
Around the table of the Master
To share with him
The nectarous drink of life
And wandered in the woods
Where strolled in magnificent beauty
The Mother, his mate
And they would listen to her mighty
Words of love
And receive her glorious gift of light
That poured from her beautiful eyes
And revealed all to sight.

The chariots charged ahead
To deliver the conquerors
Unto the conquered land
To offer in Truth
Its riches to the Lord.

—Rod Hemsell

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Apropos

You who feel Her stirring within you, fling off the black veil of self, break down the imprisoning walls of indolence, help Her each as you feel impelled, with your bodies or with your intellect or with your speech or with your wealth or with your prayers and worship, each man according to his capacity. —Sri Aurobindo

But if one *wills*, if one really *knows* that *this* is the thing, and truly wants this, and if one is *oneself* entirely concentrated in the will, I say that there is *nothing* in the world that can prevent one from doing it, from doing it or being obliged to do it. —The Mother.

Each of us literally chooses, by his way of attending to things, what sort of universe he shall appear to himself to inhabit. —William James

Your task is not to seek love, but merely to seek and find all the barriers within yourself that you have built against it. —Rumi

The curious paradox is that when I accept myself just as I am, then I can change. —Carl Rogers

Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough, and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos into order, confusion into clarity.... It turns problems into gifts, failures into success, the unexpected into perfect timing, and mistakes into important events. Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today and creates a vision for tomorrow. —Melodie Beattie

As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them. —John F. Kennedy

The future belongs to those who give the next generation reason for hope. —Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

We do not grow absolutely, chronologically. We grow sometimes in one dimension, and not in another; unevenly. We grow partially. We are relative. We are mature in one realm, childish in another. The past, present, and future mingle and pull us backward, forward, or fix us in the present. We are made up of layers, cells, constellations. —Anais Nin

Life is meaningless only if we allow it to be. Each of us has the power to give life meaning, to make our time and our bodies and our words into instruments of love and hope. —Tom Head

Keep love in your heart. A life without it is like a sunless garden when the flowers are dead. The consciousness of loving and being loved brings a warmth and richness to life that nothing else can bring. —Oscar Wilde

Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement. Nothing can be done without hope and confidence. —Helen Keller

A small body of determined spirits fired by an unquenchable faith in their mission can alter the course of history. —Mohandas K. Gandhi

Love many things, for therein lies the true strength, and whosoever loves much performs much, and can accomplish much, and what is done in love is done well. —Vincent van Gogh

As a man is, so he sees. —William Blake

The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong. —Mohandas K. Gandhi

Faced with the choice between changing one's mind and proving that there is no need to do so, almost everyone gets busy on the proof. —John Kenneth Galbraith

Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change that we seek. —Barack Obama

There are no prescriptive solutions, no grand designs for grand problems. Life's solutions lie in the minute particulars involving more and more individual people daring to create their own life and art, daring to listen to the voice within their deepest, original nature, and deeper still, the voice within the earth. —Stephen Nachmanovitch

We frail humans are at one time capable of the greatest good and, at the same time, capable of the greatest evil. Change will only come about when each of us takes up the daily struggle ourselves to be more forgiving, compassionate, loving, and above all joyful in the knowledge that, by some miracle of grace, we can change as those around us can change too. —Mairead Maguire

The most important thing to remember is this: To be ready at any moment to give up what you are for what you might become. —W. E. B. Du Bois

People seem not to see that their opinion of the world is also a confession of character. —Ralph Waldo Emerson

Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, vision cleared, ambition inspired, and success achieved. —Helen Keller

What man actually needs is not a tensionless state but rather the striving and struggling for some goal worthy of him. What he needs is not the discharge of tension at any cost, but the call of a potential meaning waiting to be fulfilled by him. —Victor Frankl

Parents can only give good advice or put them on the right paths, but the final forming of a person's character lies in their own hands. —Anne Frank

It isn't what you have, or who you are, or where you are, or what you are doing that makes you happy or unhappy. It is what you think about. —Dale Carnegie