

Collaboration

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Vol. 37, No. 1



Interview with Mona Pinto: Manager of Golconde by Anie Nunnally

- **The grace of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother: Some reminiscences by K.D. Sethna**
 - Seven guidelines for spiritual living by Larry Seidlitz
 - Sri Aurobindo's perspective on Reality by Martha Orton
 - On the reading of *Savitri* by Richard Pearson
- **Current Affairs • AV Almanac • Source Material • Poetry • Apropos**



About the cover

This photo of Mona Pinto at Golconde was taken in August 1992. It was included in an Ashram exhibition on her husband, the late Udar Pinto, as well as in a DVD and a book that were based on the exhibition, "Udar: One of Mother's children." (Photo courtesy Gauri Pinto)

The authors

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K.D. Sethna (1904-2011) was a long-time member of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, a prolific writer, and the editor of *Mother India*, an Ashram journal. He was one of the Ashram's greatest intellectuals, who wrote numerous books and articles on varied topics, and was a gifted poet who learned poetry under Sri Aurobindo's guidance.

Kumar Sharma (kssharma@mail.com) is the Boston-based coordinator of Savitri Yajna 2012. He is the author of *The Age of Ananda: Conscious Evolution to the Life Divine* (2011; www.ageofananda.net).

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From the office of Collaboration

In this issue we feature two articles in our chronicles section dealing with the remarkable lives of two Ashramites, K.D. Sethna (a.k.a. Amal Kiran) and Mona Pinto. The first article was originally published in K.D. Sethna's book, *The Vision and Work of Sri Aurobindo*, published by the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. It deals with some of the significant turning points in Sethna's life that were quite obviously aided by the Grace of the Divine. I found it interesting and enjoyable both for the light it sheds on his life and work and on the ways of the Divine's Grace. The article helps us appreciate that the successes in his life and work were largely a result of the Grace.

The second Chronicles article, by Anie Nunnally, is about the life and work of the late Mona Pinto, long-time manager of Golconde residence and guest house. We are publishing this interview now in honor of Mona's birth centenary which occurred late last year on 11.11.11. Mona was highly respected in the Ashram for her dedicated and meticulous work for more than 50 years running the Golconde residence and guest house, perhaps the Ashram's most prestigious residential facility. The house is known for its exceptional spiritual atmosphere and quiet efficiency, simple yet elegant, and its mix of Ashram residents and guests.

We follow these articles with three essays. The first by me, Larry Seidlitz, discusses seven basic attitudes important in the practice of the Integral Yoga. I partly wrote this article to complement an earlier one I published in *Collaboration* on practices in Integral Yoga, which primarily dealt with external activities. This article focuses on the subjective side of the sadhana, which is more central. The seven attitudes I chose, which seemed to me essential and complementary, are: aspiration, quietude, equality, sincerity, faith, harmony and beauty, and patience and perseverance. I have reflected on some of the important aspects of these attitudes, and their relations with other qualities and each other.

The second article is by Martha Orton and deals with Sri Aurobindo's spiritual philosophy, in particular, his perspective on the nature of Reality. This term "Reality" is the one Sri Aurobindo often used as a translation of the Sanskrit term "Brahman." It is clearly central to Sri Aurobindo's philosophy and to Indian spiritual philosophy in general, and is importantly related to other key concepts such as Sachchidananda, the Divine and its relation to the world, involution and evolution, and the manifestation of a divine life on earth. This article presents in a relatively simple and direct manner many of the essential points of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy and their interrelations.

The third essay is a relatively short one by Richard Pearson that discusses some essential points to keep in mind regarding the reading of *Savitri*. Most of these have been culled from the conversations of the Mother in her classes, but there are also some beautiful anecdotes from Richard's own experiences.

In addition to these, we have several articles in our Current Affairs about upcoming events in the yoga in the US, activities at various US centers, and an ongoing web-based *Savitri* reading. In AV Almanac, we have an in-depth article on a health and healing center that was established for villagers and the Auroville community by Ruth Lamb, Bridget Horkan, and Muthu Kumari. Ruth is a Canadian nurse who is bringing energy healing into mainstream health care in Canada, treating patients and training practitioners, and has brought her work to Auroville by establishing a healing centre there. This article gives an account of the process of establishing the health center in a Tamil village on the outskirts of Auroville, and is instructive on many levels.

In our source material we have selected several pieces from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother regarding the Divine Force and Yogic Force, their nature, and helpful hints on opening to the Divine Force. In the poetry room, we have a fine selection of spiritual poetry, and we conclude with some inspiring quotations in *Apropos*.

Collaboration patrons needed

To meet its expenses, Collaboration is in need of more patron subscribers who could contribute \$50-\$500 annually. We also ask current subscribers to consider making a gift subscription in behalf of others who may enjoy the journal. We are trying to expand the number of subscribers, and ask for your assistance and support.

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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 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 projects related to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Auroville, and Integral Yoga activities in America. Current members: Lynda Lester, president; John Robert Cornell, secretary; Kalpana Patel, treasurer; and Margaret Phanes. Collaboration volunteers include Vishnu Eschner and Lucie Seidlitz.

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 2012: Roots and branches

Dates: June 21st-24th, 2012

Venue: Sirius Community, Amherst, MA

This year's gathering of friends around the vision of Sri Aurobindo and Mother focuses on Auroville and student exchange. For years Living Routes has facilitated young people experiencing Auroville and supervising volunteer work throughout the community for college credit. The root is Auroville and its vision, the branches are the Auroville Internationals and the living nourishment are the flows of visitors and Aurovilians back and forth who have or grow into a deeper connection. The gathering will be experiential and include Awareness Through the Body, Hatha Yoga and Pranayama along with panel discussions including Skyped-in speakers.

Our host in Amherst is the Sirius Community where Auroville exchange students helped work on their main hall, members have a long connection with Findhorn (celebrating its 50th this year) and Auroville.

Make your travel plans now with arrival Thursday 6/21 afternoon and departure Sunday 6/24 after lunch. Sirius is closest to Bradley International Airport in Hartford which often has the best prices as well. Boston's Logan and Albany and New York City airports can be considered based on all the considerations (if you plan to rent a car). Use Kayak to check airline times and prices. We will help as much as possible to find rides and overnight accommodations on Sunday night so you can stay through lunch and fly Monday. Directions to Sirius are at this link.

Per person rates for three days including vegetarian meals:

- Commuters (includes lunch and dinner) \$150.
- Camping on site (bring your own equipment) \$240.
- Shared room \$340.
- Private room* \$420.

Please pay by check payable to Matagiri and mail it to: Matagiri, PO Box 676, Woodstock NY 12498.

Housing at Sirius is limited. Rooms will be allocated in the order checks are received. Refunds less 5% until May 31st. Donations to Matagiri in support of the AUM are needed and welcome and are tax deductible.

We hope some scholarships will be available. Please let us know if you need financial aid in order to attend.

*Private rooms will be in U Mass dorms ten minutes away. Four private rooms share two baths. If you require a private room with a private bath please check out local motels and B&Bs in Amherst.

Donate via credit card to Matagiri:
<http://www.razoo.com/story/Matagiri-Sri-Aurobindo-Center>

The 2012 Integral Yoga Retreat

The Sri Aurobindo Center South East is pleased to host the 2012 Integral Yoga Retreat this July 18-22 at Furman University. We invite you to participate in a valuable opportunity to learn more about the many aspects of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's Integral Yoga. The conference offers valuable insights for people of all ages through activities, discussions, and lectures. The retreat will also include daily physical fitness, meditation and experiential sessions. With powerful speakers from India and the United States, attendees will be richly rewarded with a better understanding of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo's teachings and its practical application to our everyday lives. For registration and additional details, visit www.sriarobindoyogaretreat.com or call: 864-248-1571.

Confirmed Speakers: Dr. Alok Pandey, Sraddhalu Ranade, Dr. Dilip Sarkar, Narad (Richard Eggenberger).

Registration Options:

Adult Occupant (Housing, Meals, & Conference Fee): \$299/person (No daily rate available; average cost per day: \$60)

Student Occupant (Housing, Meals, & Conference Fee): \$199/person (No daily rate available; requires a student ID; average cost per day: \$40).

Commuter Only (Meals and Conference Fee): \$99/day (Three meals per day); \$199/2 days or more.

Children 12 and under are free.

Payment: Pay online or send a check to: Sri Aurobindo Center Southeast, Inc., 60 Pointe Circle, Greenville, SC 29615.

Institute for Wholistic Education

The Institute for Wholistic Education has begun showing DVD sessions of talks by Sri M.P. Pandit commenting on Sri Aurobindo's teaching on a regular basis on Saturday evenings this spring. Friends gather for dinner, viewing and a brief meditation thereafter. Those interested to attend may contact the Institute to be put on the list for updates as new dates and times are arranged.

The Institute has added articles, audio talks, and chanting of mantras by M.P. Pandit to the website www.mppandit.com

The systematic daily blog review of *The Life Divine* is proceeding and has now reached the chapter "The Ascent Towards Supermind." There are close to 900 organized blog posts now available for anyone who would like to follow up on this paragraph by paragraph, chapter by chapter review either in whole or in part. The blog is posted at <http://sriarobindostudies.wordpress.com> *The Life Divine* should be completed by mid-summer. Thereafter we propose taking up the six chapters of *The Mother*, and thereafter *The Synthesis of Yoga*. This blog represents a systematic study guide to these writings.

Contact: Institute for Wholistic Education, 3425 Patzke Lane, Racine, WI 53405, USA; 262-619-1798; www.wholisticinstitute.org; santoshk@msn.com



Savitri Yajna 2012: The year of reading *Savitri*

by Kumar Sharma

To shine the transformative light of Sri Aurobindo's magnum opus poem on the world at a time of great stress and strain, followers of the Master and the Mother have been reading *Savitri* since the Winter Solstice on 12/22/2011, at the rate of about two pages per day. Their pre-recorded *Savitri* readings are posted at the website www.SavitriYajna2012.net as an inspirational resource for all those who are interested in the knowledge and practice of Integral Yoga. The yajna will continue till 12/21/2012 to complete the reading of the poem.

You are invited to participate in this Yajna and submit your voice recording of *Savitri* for posting at the website, along with an (optional) brief profile. For more information and a Sign Up form, please visit the website. Volunteering readers can choose their birthdays, anniversaries, or other special occasions for their two-page reading to be posted. We will try to assign you the date(s) of your choice on a first-come, first-served basis. Please indicate your date preferences, if any, from July 1st to December 21st this year, in the Sign Up form.

So far, thirty readers from India, the United States, Germany, and Colombia have taken part in this seva, some of them veteran readers for decades, and others discovering and reading *Savitri* for the first time through this initiative. It would be great if we can expand our network, especially to underrepresented continents and countries, so that we will have a truly global range of voices during the second half of The Year of Reading *Savitri*. Kindly refer this message to your friends in uncovered places who might be interested to read.

With sincere thanks to all current readers, and requesting new voices to participate in The Year of Reading *Savitri* for a global audience. Coordinator: Kumar S. Sharma, kssharma@mail.com; www.SavitriYajna2012.net

Savitri Immersion

by John Robert Cornell

The week of the spring equinox a small group of devotees gathered in the yurt on the property of Sri Aurobindo Sadhana Peetham in Lodi, CA, to immerse ourselves in *Savitri*. Vishnu and Mateo received the inspiration and organized the gathering of 18 participants. The ashram offered generous support, encouragement, and participation.

We read together around an inner circle, one at a time, between Wednesday afternoon and Sunday morning, for about 33 hours. There was also an outer circle just for listening. We



During a break of the *Savitri* immersion: Mateo Needham, Savitri Joy, Vishnu Eschner, and Lucie Seidlitz. (Photo courtesy Lynda Lester)

tried to read for hearing, so that listeners could enter the sound and silence of the epic without needing to read to themselves if they wanted. Hearing happened on several levels. There was the bare perception of the words, clear or indistinct, slow or speedy, dramatic or plain; the veil of the individual reader thinning or thickening; the vast caravan of worlds transmitted by the poetry.

Reading in a sustained collective setting like this makes for an unusual intimacy. Characteristic patterns of each reader stood out crisply for a while against the majestic backdrop of Sri Aurobindo's poetry. A voice might seem to massage the words or hurry past them like a speeding car on the freeway. A voice might be slow and determined while another was clear and soft and settled in the folds of the epic's rhythm. One might struggle with comprehension or slow into a clear reverence. As the reading progressed, the personal patterns seemed to thin or dissolve. Gradually some greater presence began to wear through our outer personalities, the version of ourselves that we wear to front the world, the habits of thought, the rigidities of attitude and assumption, the bricks and footers of our habitual worldview.

Something vast grew above and around us, some other world, some cosmic trance. We found ourselves in a tremendous cone of sound, a limitless cave of vision, of terrain and beings, silence and other worlds. Inside the cone there was royalty, vastness, great distances and stunning intimacies. We were inside Sri Aurobindo's yoga in poetic form, his pressing out into English rhythms and sounds the uncreated and unimagined into images and creating-sounds and scenes. The words fell around us like soft rain or thunder. Lightning lit the skies and mountains of subtle worlds. We kept seeing new tellings of evolution's impossible ride. We rode to Himalayan altitudes, were privileged to gaze on immortal goddess eyes again, remembering vaguely that strange and breath-taking as they were, they were also strangely familiar. We slipped into the depths of darkness and perversion, and hostility surrounded us with him. And we rode the rocket



of Savitri's birth and growth. Love came to us, too, in the forest, and the grief and despair of loss. And then with her we went as far inside as we could go to find our soul, which lay in our chest like a happy newborn.

While it lasted we sat with and were the high beings and scenery of the worlds and of the vague between places. They came alive in us, broke into our dullness, drew other readers and listeners, sustained our attention. We sat in the theater of creation, listened to the gods and heroes of old again, became kings and princesses and devouring death and tempting God. To some extent we faded away a little and Aswapati and Savitri and Satyavan became the real for a while. We were that to the degree of our capacity to receive and let go. They lived among us in daylight.

We heard anew the majesty of Sri Aurobindo's lines and our own limitations. It was an initiation, and a new hearing of Savitri all-at-once. New, new, new. Wide... Deep... heights and depths. We were in his presence again, looking with his eyes, speaking his words, seeing his seeings, echoing his energy and his cry, stunned by his realizations, thinning into He and She.

And then it was over. We passed back from the timeless trance to the mortal round of day and night, work and play, life and death, with the echoes still alive, and then receding back into the depths. And we brought back home what we could, and more than we know.

Auromesa activities

by Tizia O'Connor

At Auromesa, Wednesday night meditations start at 7 p.m., following a potluck dinner at 6:00 p.m. This year's broad topic is Transformation. We focus on the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother with themes relating to The Triple Transformation—Psychic, Spiritual, and Supramental; Transformation of the Nature, of the Mind, of the Vital, of the Physical, of the Subconscious; Experiences in Transformation.

Also, on May 26 - 27, 2012, 8 a.m. Saturday - 5 p.m. Sunday there will be a weekend Re-Treat: Human Relationships in Yoga. As a Karma Yoga project we will give our magical touch to the Airstream. We'll create a rock garden in front, finish the latilla fence, clean, paint, wall-paper, and add our artistic touches—nothing heavy, but a good way to spend time together. Bring work clothes, work gloves, hat, swimming gear. Those coming from far away, arrive before dinner on Friday, May 25th. Please register with Kelly. \$33 to cover food. Checks payable to Auromesa. Mail to: Kelly Pasholk, PO Box 153, El Prado NM 87529.

On August 20 - 24, 2012, we will have a Savitri Immersion with Rod Hemsell. Please register with Kelly a.s.a.p. as we need to plan for space.. \$160. Checks payable to Auromesa; mail to: Kelly Pasholk, PO Box 153, El Prado NM 87529. Please include your contact information, and let us know if you'd like overnight accommodations.



Retreat participants explore the spiritual significance of flowers at SASP. (Photo courtesy Bhagavati Merz)

SASP retreats focus on the psychic being

by Lynda Lester

A collective retreat generally attended by 20–30 participants from northern California is held on the third Saturday of each month at Sri Aurobindo Sadhana Peetham (SASP) in Lodi, CA. The last three gatherings focused on “Introduction to the Psychic Being,” “Emergence of the Psychic Being,” and “Living in the Psychic Being.”

The aspiration of the retreats was for attendees to experience psychic awareness throughout the day. Activities included talks, small-group discussions, participatory exercises, guided meditations, a multimedia presentation on the psychic flame, cooperative inquiry (a process fostering group coherence that led to the creation of two collages and a play), working with the spiritual significance of flowers, and listening to music that evoked the psychic being. As part of the youth program, the children gave a performance called “The Jumping Mouse,” showing how psychic consciousness can lead to transformation.

Briefs

The Seattle Sri Aurobindo Circle meets weekly on Thursdays at 7 p.m., usually in Lake Forest Park, WA. We have occasional longer retreats on some Sundays. Visitors are always welcome. Our program incorporates easy movements taken from tai chi, yoga, chi gung and mudra chi; reading and discussion of works on yoga (Integral Yoga and others); *Savitri* reading; and meditation. Since schedules and meeting places sometimes change, please contact Bill Leon for the latest plan: 206-364-6665 or 206-914-6663; email: billleon@geoeducation.org.



AV almanac

Reclaiming health—A new beginning: Edayanchavady Healing Centre

by Ruth Lamb, RN, MScN, PhD., Bridget Horkan, BA, and Muthu Kumari, BA

The beginning

In 2006 a small team of Canadian nurses were completing a series of internships in North India. This was part of a six year Integrative Energy Healing internship project in Dharamsala. Here the Integrative Energy Healing practitioners worked with nuns from five nunneries under the auspices of Rinchen Khando, His Holiness the Dalai Lama's sister-in-law. There they taught clinic nuns a three year part-time foundational program in Tibetan Buddhist Integral Healing. The aim was to promote wellness while utilizing the maximum self-care strategies and the minimum invasive or pharmaceutical approaches. Just as they completed in the North, Ruth who had been visiting the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and Auroville for a number of years, met Aurovilians Kathy Walking and Bridget Horkan, Manfred, and Joseph Vrinte, the latter who was working with Auroville's health unit. They all decided, along with Ruth's academic institution in Canada, that if the Canadian students were interested, an internship focusing on women and children in the villages around the Auroville could be arranged.

In 2007 Ruth coordinated a group of Canadian interns who ran the first Integrative Energy Healing internship based out of Auroville working in three Tamil villages. When the internship was over, and the interns had returned to Canada, Heather Taylor, Judith Ann Donaldson and Ruth, the registered nurses, who had worked in Dharamsala stayed for three more days. When the five young men who were hosting a Tamil Cultural day discovered they were still there they invited them to attend. Delighted, they accepted.

They arrived at Edayanchavady at 0830 and were welcomed at the Thamarai door and blessed. Joining many others they observed a slide show as one of the young men spoke about Tamil cultural traditions. They were then entertained by youth showing rather challenging yoga positions, followed by young girls singing traditional songs and moving to the rhythm in traditional dance postures. Street theatre, dynamic and fun to watch came next. Just prior to a delicious Tamil lunch served on palm leaves on the floor, they are shown ancient pots and cooking utensils. For example, a large granite rolling pin that, when used, gives off micro-particles of granite adding minerals to the diet.



Sunlight streams into the airy courtyard of the healing center; covered alcoves in the back and sides provide comfortable places for treatments, counseling, or other activities. (Photo courtesy Ruth Lamb)

After lunch the village tour is magnificent, a rare opportunity to glimpse village life: most villagers live in very small two room houses with grass roofs. No furniture. They have a cupboard for clothes and pots containing grains and rice stacked up against a wall. The houses have no or few windows but a door that is almost always open. A number of houses had precarious looking electric wires poking through the grass roof to power the television and maybe a small fridge. Cooking is done outside on an open fire in a small hut covered by an awning. A few out-houses are visible; most villagers use the surrounding woods for this function. There is a village well, no running water in the houses. Near the Ganesha temple women wash clothes at a pond that used to be the village's sole water supply prior to the well. Intermixed with cows, calves and dogs, and much laundry hanging over fences and shrubs, they saw a few flourishing kitchen gardens, and some medicine gardens developed by the village children.

The village children obviously enjoy all the attention their village is receiving and readily pose for pictures and take many of their own. (They received an album of pictures as a gift.)

Members of the tour are introduced to two of the seven male village elders, keepers of the Tamil traditions. They learn a little about how western ways have led to disrespect and disregard for Tamil customs. And, worse, how the western pharmaceutical chemical treatment regimes have become primary even replacing proper diet regimes. Western pills, and better, injections, are the treatment of choice reports the Tamil physician.

After meeting the elders the tour includes the main village temple, an impressive structure, then the village school, and next, everyone is invited to enter a sad looking abandoned building. They are told that the building, made of giant granite blocks, is 1000 years old. It initially was an old way-station for travelers. Noting the ancient feel of the building and appreciating the centre square in the middle opening to the sky Ruth thinks, "hmmm,



This building could be a healing centre.” Interestingly, a week earlier Heather had told Ruth that she would like to donate \$2000 to a project. So after this thought, Ruth went up to Heather and asked if the villagers agreed, would she donate her money to turning this old way-station into a healing centre, and if so, Ruth also would donate \$2000. Heather readily said “Yes.” Naively both thought \$4000 was a magnificent sum and would be fully adequate. Going on this misassumption, they ask Kathy and Bridget, the Auroville team who work with the village if they all could gather to discuss an idea for a few minutes at the end of the day. Kathy and Bridget agree as do the young men. Shortly everyone meets in a small room at Thamarai, the Auroville-Edayanchavady community centre. The idea is shared. The young men from the Village Youth Group immediately respond affirmatively. They agree to take the suggestion to their village elders and the village council. They were asked to include a Vastu elder and the ladies who had taken workshops with the interns.

Of these five young men, several are attending university, and all of them are working hard to preserve Tamil culture in their village while supporting modernization within limits.

The final aspect of the tour included a motorcycle ride to the village protector temple and to the Shiva temple several kilometers away placed in an idyllic setting amongst rice paddy fields. Holding on rather carefully as the motor cycle maneuvers a path with many obstacles, Ruth asked the young man whose bike she was on what he thought about the healing centre idea. He responds telling her that some of the young men had already made this suggestion, but it had been turned down. He says, everything was just waiting for the interns to come. Ruth asked him what his mother and father would think of the idea for the village, he smiled and said that they are illiterate and live in one of the grass houses—and he believes they would agree.

After visiting the temples, seeing the beauty and intricacy of the Tamil sculpture, and noting the devotion paid to deities, the Canadian team is humbled. This is so different from the Western way.

By the next morning when Kathy and Bridget arrive to have breakfast, Ruth, Judith Ann and Heather have drafted a mission statement for the healing centre. Kathy and Bridget were asked to edit it and share it with the Village Youth Group and the village elders. The nurses then leave for the airport. From there on it is for Kathy and Bridget and the village young men to follow up coordinating the village–Auroville decision-making processes.

Three months later the Canadian team received an email to say the village was in agreement. A few months on, some villagers had more questions and were unsure. Ruth asked them to fully follow all village cultural decision making processes as it was fine if the centre

was not to be, or to be elsewhere. Later they received a letter from the village elder council, the panchayat, stating that they are committed to developing the “Old Traditional Building” into a healing centre. The Tamil Vastu elder has approved the building and told them that it had yogi energy. The village was in agreement.

Two building reconstruction quotes were sought. The quote chosen was for \$12,000 Canadian. This was much more than Heather and Ruth had anticipated so—the fund raisers among our students got busy. Funds were raised from the students registered in the Integrative Energy Healing Program, a three year 700 hour part-time academic and clinical practitioner program, from graduates of that program, from faculty and staff at Langara College in Vancouver, British Columbia. Doug Soo, dean of Continuing Studies and Penny Soo generously hosted a fund raising barbeque at their lovely home overlooking a designer sunset that evening; and a gracious appreciation to Sharlene Oliver, program

assistant at Langara College, who on her own time organized a fund raiser dance party and silent auction in November. Thanks also to Canadian family and friends who contributed to this vision.

When Ruth left for

the next internship in 2008, the team had \$14,105.92 Canadian to deposit in Auroville accounts on behalf of the healing centre construction and employment of a nurse coordinator.

On Ruth’s arrival in South India in February 2008, the Village Panchayat requested a meeting. Satya from the Youth Group, who had been involved since the first day, was the translator. This evening meeting led to a sense of greater rapport between Bridget who represents Auroville, Ruth in a rather unique role, the Panchayat who represent the village, and Satya and Satyamurthy two young men who have championed the idea and who provide youth leadership in the village.

Following this meeting two estimates for renovation costs were reviewed, a builder was selected, and an agreed upon amount, \$12,000, that could not be exceeded was set. The builder selected had done construction for Auroville and came highly recommended by the Panchayat. Subramani has proven to be an excellent builder and, with Satya’s assistance, has saved as many of the ancient building architectural features as possible.

Prior to Subramani being able to start construction, the site needed to be cleaned, a many hour early Sunday morning project for 17 interns from Canada, Bridget, Satya and Satyamurthy, plus village youth. This done, everyone was rewarded by chai at a local tea shop. Here the group chatted, laughed, and examined the cows walking by the shop entrance. Next, a puja was required before the construction could start. The village astrologer provided the day. At 7 a.m. those who wished to participate from the

Set in the middle of a Tamil village, the Edayanchavady Healing Centre focuses on health and healing as a process of living from the sacred center, from a place of human unity in diversity, and from a place that honors and supports the planet.



Canadian group assembled at the Tamil temple across the street from the Healing Centre. Bridget joined us as did many youth from the Youth Group. The priest conducted a ceremony and prayer in the temple and then moved us all to the Healing Centre. Here he completed the Puja in the Healing Centre now crowded with onlookers.

When the Puja was complete the Canadian group went and sat by the village water pond to meditate for a time.

The Process

When Ruth and a new group of interns arrived in 2009 the Edayanchavady Healing Centre was open. Subramanu the builder had done an excellent job. What was once an abandoned building, a catchment for village garbage, had become a welcoming healing centre.

The first step before the Canadian team left Auroville following the successful initial meeting with the young men was to develop a mission statement. Here is a slightly revised version of the Mission Statement that reflects more of what is actually happening at present.

Edayanchavady Healing Centre Mission

Remembering:

The Mother said: The Tamil people have a role to play in the evolution of consciousness;

Sri Aurobindo said: East and West will join together to create unity in diversity;

A Tamil story notes: People from foreign lands will make the desert green again—Auroville.

Set in the middle of a Tamil village, the Edayanchavady Healing Centre focuses on health and healing as a process of living from the sacred centre, from a place of human unity in diversity, and from a place that honors and supports the planet. In its clinical and educational endeavors, the Centre integrates, traditional Tamil healing practices, yogic science, integrative energy healing, and complementary biofield or life force approaches to health, and, where applicable, the new science and research that promotes self-mastery and self-care from the East and West.

However, the Centre's primary aim is to promote natural healing modalities and provide wellness-based primary health education for children, adults and the elderly. Where possible, efforts will be made to include the healing wisdom gifted to the planet by the Tamil people and to re-establish ancient Tamil healing practices.

Immediately after developing the mission statement the nurses drafted a vision statement, purpose statement, job and role description for the nurse coordinator and a description and contract for volunteer commitment, and a time-line for construction completion and program development. The original Vision Statement follows.

Edayanchavady Healing Centre: Original Vision Statement (2007)

May we join together in responsible co-creation to honor ancient Tamil healing practices while acknowledging the new science and the evolutionary nature of healing processes as we look to the future of our children's children;

May we find ways to embrace the wisdom of the Tamil Elder Healers, providing a space for sharing and learning;

May we combine East and West, past and present, and future evolutionary ideas to co-create careers that serve the natural healing and inner wisdom of the body, emotions, mind, and spirit, in addition to protecting this beautiful Earth;

May we all share – including the children – in renewing this granite building of over 1000 years and contribute our love and our labor;

May Tamil peoples, and people from all cultures, from baby to elder, be welcomed and provided with a range of healing options designed to support their innate healing potential, their karma and dharma;

May we serve the Mother through our wise and loving discernment, appreciation of harmony and sacred geometry, respect for vision and detail, and through our courageous action; and

May we serve Sri Aurobindo and the Auroville mandate by awakening our conscious awareness, deepening our connection with soul, and realizing the Truth of an evolution of consciousness that positively serves the planet and all humanity.

Original Canadian Team: Ruth Lamb, RN, MScN, PhD; Heather Taylor, RN, BScN, MSN; Judith Ann Donaldson, RN, Nurse Midwife. All registered nurses and certified practitioners of Integrative Energy Healing or faculty in the program, a program based in yogic science. Auroville Team: Thamaria Coordinators, Bridget Horkan and Kathy Walking. Edayanchavady Youth Club: Sathyamurthy, Sathya, Velu and others.

By 2008 infrastructure was being set in place, for example: formal village permissions received; construction plans, contract, start and completion dates set; discussions on the Centre administration and mandate occurred; an advisory committee selected and meetings with subcommittees established; an excellent half-time Tamil health care provider, Muthu was hired; a village health needs assessment had been started with the assistance of village women's groups; a list of Tamil Elder healers had been started; donations of a stereo and tapes, etc. had been gratefully accepted from Aurovilians; some draft policies and procedures had been developed and communication with other health agencies were in process. Many other aspects of the project have been responsibly shepherd through by Bridget, Purani, Satya, Satyamurthy and Lourdes. Manfred from Auroville's health centre graciously agreed to share Muthu who was his employee with us. And nurses who used to provide teaching under a tree in the village due to lack of space, would use the centre.



By 2009 the work included establishing infrastructure with culturally and professionally appropriate policies and procedures and standards for the Centre; analyzing the village health needs assessment and determine how the Centre can respond; determine initial programs; develop a time-line for program starts; interview village woman and men's groups to ensure they are aware of the Centre mandate, and hear what they feel is important for themselves, their families and the village; interview Tamil Elder healers—one of the reasons for the Centre's existence is to develop a sustainable curriculum that shares these world views bringing health promotion practitioner programs forth as well as smaller courses. This is how the advisory committee hopes to provide ongoing funding for the Centre—by having teachers volunteer and those who are non villagers pay a fee for program attendance.

Thamarai, the Healing Centre's more established sister association, played an enormous role in assisting in the development of the Healing Centre. Here is an excerpt from the Thamarai January 2010 newsletter, it speaks to the Thamarai mission and to the Healing Centre, here called the Health Education Centre:

Thamarai

"Thamarai aspires towards the ideals of Human Unity and Evolution of Consciousness by providing spaces and opportunities that support relationship building, progressive learning and growth" between Auroville and the surrounding villages.

Thamarai Community & Learning Centre

Founded in November 2006, offers daily play group sessions for preschool children, after school programs for school children and special weekend programs including educational tours and exchange programs for children, youth and women. The lively Centre, hosted in a restored traditional Tamil house, is also a meeting place for Aurovilians and village groups.

Thamarai's Health Education Centre

Now a year old, offers daily health education and yoga classes and basic healing facilities in its own premises. Both Centers are run on donation basis and activities are offered by a team of 30 volunteers from the village and Auroville as a co-creative, cross-cultural learning adventure. Muthu-kumari has admirably steered Thamarai's health education & healing centre through its first year. A qualified yoga teacher and assistant nurse, she provides daily health education.

Muthu Kumari, the Edayanchavady Healing Centre nurse coordinator, has been instrumental in ensuring the success of the centre. By late 2009 and 2010 she had developed a primary health teaching series for school children; she also offers herbal massage; health education; nutritional courses and herbal remedy courses, for example making teas and herbal remedies for designated health problems; provides regular yoga classes; a



Two of the Canadian interns provide energy healing treatment to a client from the local village. (Photo courtesy Ruth Lamb)

menstruation course for fourteen year old girls who are also learning how to make cloth pads; there is also a course for younger girls on doll making and story-telling. The elderly come for massage and health teaching, village women come for yoga, and once a year the Integrative Energy Healing interns come to offer biofield-based health teaching and Integrative Energy Healing treatments with self-care teaching. They also include the children in teaching them biofield-based wellness and health building strategies. The medicine garden and kitchen garden projects are being initiated.

By 2010 Muthu was ready to add a full curriculum on children's primary health care which covers the topics of understanding the body system, hygiene, nutrition, first aid, common ailments and diseases, natural remedies, yoga and concentration techniques, energy body, practices to maintain physical, emotional and mental health and environmental health.

By 2011 the children's program had been offered to 120 children on a regular basis from the Edayanchavady school. What is more, teachers from another village requested the same curriculum for their school children. In 2011 when the Canadian interns arrived at the Healing Centre they conducted daily children's wellness and health building programs as well as healing clinics for adults and the village elderly, plus for guests from Pondicherry and Auroville.

As we write this update for 2011 the following programs are well developed: Health education, and basic healing techniques for children and adults; yoga and breathing techniques including energy healing; acupuncture; stretching exercises; steam ball massage; and nutritional and herbal courses for children. Muthu completed the Perfect Eye Sight Ashram Program in Pondicherry and has brought her new-found knowledge about eye therapy to the Healing centre. She has checked the eyesight of children who attend classes as well as the adults who come for treatments. Of the 96 children who received eye examinations,



15 discovered that they needed eye exercise therapy. The children are now coming to the Healing Centre for 30 minute eye therapy sessions to begin improving their vision. These sessions are enjoyed and appreciated by all.

Muthu reports that the headmaster of PUMS, S. Ponnannanthan, and teacher, S. Ayyanar, wish to continue the connection with Healing Centre for the benefit of the children and village. The BRTE (Block Resource Teacher Educator), Lakshmanan, from BRC (Block Resource Center) in Vanur Block, came to observe the children's activities in the Healing Centre. He was happy with what he witnessed and wished for the connection between PUMS and the Healing Centre to continue. Lakshmanan also wants other government schools to have the same opportunities for health education. In a local newspaper, it was advertized that PUMS had connections with the Healing Centre. The article revealed the pride of that connection.

Several volunteers from Auroville came to visit the healing Centre to learn about the village-Healing Centre connection, educational and clinical programs. They observed the activities offered for about two hours.

Plus our newest programs: Child Protection class: Each Saturday Suryagandhi and Selvi come to talk to the children about protection issues and are introducing the

"be true not violent" program. Nutrition Class: Muthu takes a class of 12 teenagers on Saturday mornings for Nutrition classes that promote the use of low cost, freely available ingredients and reinforces awareness of the benefits of good nutrition. Dental Treatment: The dental clinic continues to hold their service for cleaning and check up each Friday morning. Alcohol Awareness: Muthu has started training with the AA association in village action headquarters once a month, and several patients with alcohol problems present to the Healing Centre for advice on health.

As can be seen there are innumerable creative options for promoting natural healing, wellness-based and health-building strategies to villagers, and the villagers and students, plus their teachers are all avid promoters of this wellness initiative.

Reflections

From the very start, the Young Men's Village Youth Club has been instrumental—without their efforts this endeavor would not have been initiated or sustained. The co-creative efforts of Kathy Walking and Bridget Horkan from Auroville provided the infrastructure support and tone that supported the vision, and the success of Thamarai gave them the insight into how three

very diverse groups can work together to co-create a new vision. Muthu, herself from a Tamil village provided professional support and multifaceted programming—all increasingly valued and advancing to new educational offerings.

In 2010 when new members were accepted on the village Panchayat, not everyone agreed with the Healing Centre. There was a lobbying effort to close it and use the building for other village uses. This created conflict in the village and probably within the Panchayat. By late spring 2011 when Ruth arrived with the interns she was invited to meet with the Young Men's Youth group, with delegates from the group, and then with the village Panchayat and village men for an early morning meeting in the Temple. The outcome from her perspective needed to be a village outcome. Either the original agreement was respected or not, for her it was a lesson in multicultural co-creation—for the village it was to use the funds for a Healing Centre as agreed by leadership groups, or to subvert the original agreement depriving the village of much needed growing effort to promote natural Health and self-care and self-mastery strategies within the village for villagers of all ages. The incident ended peacefully as the elders did not

press the matter and the centre continues to thrive on the original agreement that the building is offered rent free as the village's contribution to its existence.

There are innumerable creative options for promoting natural healing, wellness-based and health-building strategies to villagers, and the villagers and students, plus their teachers are all avid promoters of this wellness initiative.

Future Prospects

The spring of 2013 brings another phase of the program forward. The original three nurses and perhaps an internship team from Canada will initiate a three year part-time train the trainer Integrative Energy Healing program for villagers hosted from Irumbai Village Action Centre. Anbu and Morris, the coordinators of the Action Centre, have worked with Ruth and the Canadian interns for five years, several educational days have been held, and numerous Integrative Energy Healing clinics—these experiences have led to this new initiative. The three-phase program is being specifically designed for village men and women who wish to learn basic Integrative Energy Healing techniques, and are willing to present these techniques to interested villagers living within the bioregion. A children's program will be held at the Healing Centre.

Meeting villager needs and providing tools for self-care and self-mastery from a Natural Healing health building perspective hopefully will become part of a global initiative—one that can embrace village and city in the East and the West: Together Unity in diversity can build a better health-focused future for us all.



Chronicles

The Grace of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother: Some reminiscences

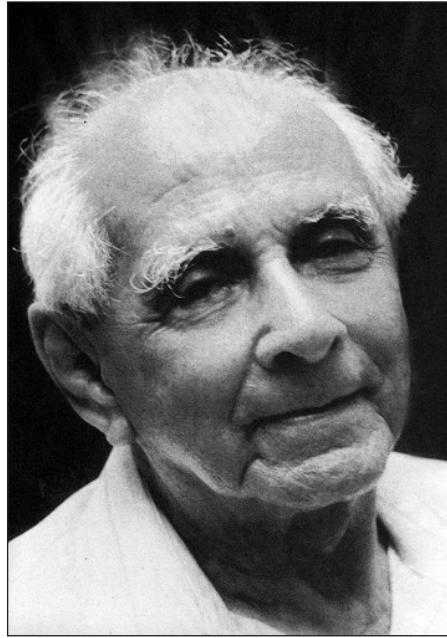
by K.D. Sethna

This article is reprinted from the author's book, The Vision and Work of Sri Aurobindo (second revised and enlarged edition, 1968/1992, published by the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, pp. 136-152). Special thanks go to Shyam Kumari for suggesting the article, and for providing it in electronic format.

There is a lot of "I" in these reminiscences. But that is an unavoidable accident. For, they are penned not because of the person to whom certain things occurred: they are penned because of the things themselves. And if the person has any significance it is that he serves to set off all the more the incalculable play of Grace from the Karmic Law of Deserved Returns.

Part I

It all goes back to the very beginning of my spiritual search. Something had awakened, of which I had never dreamt in my ultra-modern philosophy. And as a result I who had always kept my head intellectually high and looked down with a cool superior smile at the heat and hurry of that strange thing called "God-intoxication" —I looked around hungrily in the mundane twentieth-century city of Bombay for those flitting figures out of the past, clad in ochre robes—the sadhus and sannyasis. Several of them I caught in various corners of the metropolis and questioned about the Unknown that had come like a wind out of nowhere into my life and blown away all my worldly wits.



The late K.D. Sethna (a.k.a. Amal Kiran) in his later years. (Photo courtesy Sri Aurobindo Ashram)

I thus learned a few methods of meditation but the central self in me remained unsatisfied.

Then—of all persons—a Theosophist broke the name of Sri Aurobindo to me. That I should bump into a Theosophist who should speak of what he termed Sri Aurobindo's Cosmic Consciousness and not preach to me of the "White Lodge" and the "Great Masters" and the Isis-unveiling Madame Blavatsky—this was a touch of Sri Aurobindo's Grace already. What made it the more Grace-ful was that the Theosophist told me: "Nobody except Sri Aurobindo will satisfy the complex problem that you are, particularly the side of you which on the one hand is poetic and on the other philosophic."

A little later I came across a booklet in which there was a picture of Sri Aurobindo. I do not remember what the booklet was entitled or who its author was. Two memories have stayed with me: Sri Aurobindo was credited with the power of being in several places at once and he was described as a great linguist, having Greek and Latin as his tongue's tip and knowing French like a Frenchman—apart from being, of course, a master of English. I don't

know which of the two siddhis—multipresence and polyglottism—appealed to me more. Perhaps the latter struck me as the more unusual in a Yogi. But neither drew me into any Virgilian stretching of hands for love of the other shore. I must have been especially dense: many have become Aurobindonians at a slighter pull.

I continued my quest. But there was also the ordinary life and its material needs. One day I noticed that my shoes looked rather shabby. So I drove myself to visit the market for a new pair. I never thought the Gods could have anything to do with such a locality, though I had read of Bacon's *idola fori*, "idols of the market-place." I bought the shoes I had wanted and the shopman wrapped the box up in a newspaper sheet. When, at home, I unwrapped it, the part of the sheet that fell over right in front of me bore the headline in bold type, "The Ashram of Sri Aurobindo Ghose." It was like a sunburst. A visitor had written a long article. I devoured it and when I got to the end and understood how the Ashram of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga stood for a new life not rejecting but transforming the main activities of man (including perhaps even the market-place), I rose up with the conviction that I had found what I had been seeking. Soon after, I wrote to the Ashram asking for permission to come. I got the permission and some months later—in December 1927—I reached Pondicherry. The shoes I had gone to buy were meant by Sri Aurobindo to be those of a Pilgrim!

Grace in the next ten and a half years during which I was an Ashramite—with the name 'Amal Kiran' given by Sri Aurobindo and explained by him as "The Clear Ray—is a story apart. I shall not deal with its abundance now. I pick up the thread from when I went back to Bombay for a long stay, keeping in contact inwardly, as well as by correspondence, with Sri Aurobindo and the Mother but outwardly unable to return and resume my life in the Ashram. Of course I used to make short trips. And one of them was for the darshan of November 24, 1950.

It was reported that Sri Aurobindo



was not keeping well. I knew that he had complete control of the physical being. So whatever illness might be his would be something which he had consented to for some inscrutable purpose—had consented to and yet would fight against in order to work out some paradoxical victory. But there was a little tremble in my nerves. Everything, however, seemed to go right when as usual we saw the calm magnificence that was he—grand and gracious at the same time, sitting beside the radiant Mother.

From the other end of the long room across which we were going up to both of them I saw the Mother glance ahead and then lean a little to one side and say something to Sri Aurobindo. His face broke into a smile and he kept looking and smiling. My wife who was just behind me said afterwards that he was smiling until I disappeared into the next room through which we had to pass out again. Such a thing he had never done with me before.

On the night of December 3, I caught the train for Madras on way to Bombay. The Mother was to meet us before we left, but owing to a slight turn for the worse in Sri Aurobindo's condition the meeting was said to be cancelled. Then suddenly news was brought that she would see me. I rushed to the Ashram courtyard and at the bottom of the central staircase she came and sat in a chair while I sat at her feet. Cool and "translucent" she was as ever and we talked of several things connected with my work.

A day or so before fixing my departure I had had a vague feeling that I should stay on. But I gave no importance to it. I reached Bombay in the afternoon of December 5 and before I could leave the station a telegram by a friend in the Ashram was brought to me from my house that Sri Aurobindo had withdrawn from his body early the same morning.

In the midst of this news that shook me to my foundations and still shakes me somewhat after all these years of understanding why Sri Aurobindo took so drastic a step, I remembered how he had shed that wonderful sustained smile. The thought of it is always a quenchless light

in the deepest darkness that may try to cover me.

But the whole afternoon and evening of December 5 in Bombay were a cry to get back to Pondicherry and see once more the countenance which had granted that sweet parting grace. I requested the sister of a friend of mine, whose efficiency I admired, to manage somehow a seat for me on the night-plane. She herself and another Aurobindonian who had returned with me from Pondicherry wanted also to come. So I said, "We must have three seats." The air-office declared that no seats were available. There was the additional problem of securing accommodation at Nagpur where our plane would touch down and people not only from Bombay but from Delhi and elsewhere would catch another plane to reach Madras. It might become possible to go up to Nagpur; but what then? My friend's sister would accept no defeat. She pleaded with the officials to keep inquiring in all directions. After anxious hours we heard that just three seats could be found right up to Madras owing to sudden cancellations in several places.

We arrived at Madras early next morning and took a taxi to Pondicherry. By 11 we were in Sri Aurobindo's own room, standing beside the glorious body with the face on which there was not merely the far look of peace that one often finds when the soul has gone out: here was the look of a victorious tranquillity, a power that with no effort, with no loss of peace, was radiating itself and breaking through all obstacles in the earth's consciousness. Never in all our years in the Ashram had there been such an overwhelming experience of what Sri Aurobindo himself had called in a line of poetry—"Force one with unimaginable rest." With a thundering intensity, as it were, from above our heads the presence and power of Sri Aurobindo plunged down to the depths of the heart. Sri Aurobindo had never done anything so stupendously creative as his own passing from the body!

Later I learned from the Mother that the moment he had left his body what he had termed the Mind of Light, the physical mind receiving the supramental Light,

had been realised in her. The strange golden light that many saw upon his body that lay without a touch of discolouration or decay for five days was a sign of the triumph that he had wrested for the earth by sacrificing his own physical frame.

Deep within, each of us felt the glory that looked outwardly a tragedy. But the little human heart in us, the outer emotional self, could not always share in the sense of this glory. And I who had depended so much on Sri Aurobindo in all my writing work—when he had woken to inspiration the labouring poet, stirred to literary insight the fumbling critic, shaped out of absolute nothing the political commentator—I who had almost every day despatched to him some piece of writing for consideration felt a void at the thought that he would not be in that room of his, listening so patiently to my poetry or prose and sending me by letter or telegram his precious guidance. A fellow-sadhaka spoke to the Mother about my plight. On December 12 the inmates of the Ashram met her again and each received from her hands a photograph of Sri Aurobindo taken after his passing. It was dusk, as far as I recollect. She must have seen a certain helplessness on my face. Smiling as she alone could do, she looked me in the eyes and said, "Nothing has changed. Call for inspiration and help as you have always done. You will get everything from Sri Aurobindo as before."

This was simultaneously the Grace of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, the crowning touch to all that they had done in those three weeks from November 24 onwards for a poor aspirant whose dependence on them was abject.

I went back to Bombay with the prayer within me that soon, very soon the Mother might help me and my wife to be near her. At least the second Pilgrimage became a possibility. As if from something above the head, some uplifted luminous watching Will, as it were, the decision seemed to come in February 1953. When it was conveyed to the Mother, she confirmed its authenticity. But to make the decision practicable in terms of rupees, annas and



pies was not easy. During one of my short visits, I laid before her all the difficulties. At that time I was somewhat hard-up and I said, "Mother, I must have Rs. 500 to settle a few matters and pay for a thorough migration with my wife and our dog." The Mother replied, "You must have Rs. 500."

I went back and fixed the time of the second Pilgrimage a few months ahead. Weeks rolled by, but there appeared no prospect of those Rs. 500 materialising in a lump sum. In the December of the previous year an American journalist, Harvey Breit, had come to Bombay with a scheme of the Ford Foundation for a special India-supplement to the Atlantic Monthly. I met him and he commissioned an article on Sri Aurobindo and his Ashram. I wrote my piece, 2000 words or so. It was approved. I asked hesitatingly whether there would be any payment. "Of course," was the answer, "we'll write to you from the States."

But even after months there was no sign of payment. Now the September of the next year was approaching, the month in which I had fixed my return to Pondicherry. Within a fortnight of D-Day (Divine Day, of course) I got a letter from America. It said that a cheque was enclosed on the Ford Foundation's account in an Indian Bank. I unfolded the cheque. There, unbelievably, was an order for Rs. 500. Not a pie more, not a pie less.

But the story of the Grace does not end here. A week later I received another letter. It was apologetic, saying that owing to certain unavoidable circumstances the supplement had to be cut down considerably and that though my article was much appreciated it could not be used. This did not mean the withdrawal of the payment. The payment would be made and I was even told that the compilers claimed no right on my article: it could be sold by me anywhere else.

So my article went all the way from India to the United States and came back to

me with a gift of the exact amount which I had mentioned to the Mother and which she had confirmed. And, to take me to the Ashram of Sri Aurobindo, it had to be appropriately an article on Sri Aurobindo and his Ashram!

In connection with my second coming home there is the extraordinary incident of the house in which I was to be put. Although I got those Rs. 500, I could not carry out the migration as planned. A few months earlier I had heard from the Ashram Secretary that a certain flat had been selected for me with the approval of the Mother. But the negotiation fell through. A man in Pondicherry stepped in and took away the flat. The Secretary wrote to me that the house-problem remained

The Mother's Grace is a tactician of unthinkable accuracy... The Mother's Grace is just the Mother herself—unexpected in turn and attentive to the smallest detail.

unsolved and was difficult to solve. He suggested that I should myself make a trip and help in the solution.

I arranged to come for the darshan of November 24 and stay on till December 9. I rang up a travel agency and made sure about my ticket. A day before leaving Bombay I went by bus to the agency office to collect it. The bus stops a little way off from the office. I got down and was about to walk towards the office when somebody hailed me from the bus stand. It was a young man I had been introduced to in Pondicherry, a merchant. After the mutual "Hullo," I was asked where I had been hurrying. Mentioning the office, I said, "I am preparing to go away to Pondi. I shall settle there."

"Where will you be putting up?"

"God knows! Nothing fixed. I'll have to hunt for a flat."

"But why? I have a flat there. And as my business is not at all looking up I am clearing out. Why don't you take the place over?"

"Well, it must suit me. Will you give me the address and write to the landlord about me?"

He scribbled the address down—13 rue Ananda Rangapoullé—and I went with it to Pondicherry. When I showed it the Ashram people they were surprised. It was the very flat that the Mother had approved of but had been snatched away at the last minute. Aided by a sadhak who knew the landlord well, I got the place transferred with ease, and moved into it in February 1954.

The Mother's Grace is a tactician of unthinkable accuracy. It seemed to withdraw, as it were, during the first negotiations. But that was evidently a matter of "reculer pour mieux sauter"—drawback

for a better leap forward." And when it leaped, it was with an infallible aim. The number of factors combining to bring me my destined flat on a platter is quite

big. The man who had butted in must be known to me: his business had to force him to leave Pondicherry: he had to be present at a particular place at a precise minute: he had to catch sight of me: he had to bring up the subject of my settling in Pondicherry. The Mother's Grace is just the Mother herself—unexpected in turn and attentive to the smallest detail.

On February 29, 1956, I left for Bombay on account of my grandfather, 98 years old, who had been threatening to expire for quite a long time. The Mother had told me that I should be back before March 29. It was the year in which great things were expected. I left by the morning train, reached Madras in the evening and caught the night mail to Bombay.

I went to sleep in the compartment and had a dream. I saw a wide open place, with the Mother seated at one end and people going to her to make pranam. I was at the very boundary of the place. It seemed I might miss the chance of the



pranam. So I tried to hurry. But in the hurry I somehow could not get my feet out of my slippers and in the excitement I woke up. When I opened my eyes I saw, against the opposite berth and the facing wall of the compartment, the Mother standing. Her body was in shadow, her face was in moonlight and both were transparent so that through them I could see the woodwork and a part of the upholstery of the berth. I kept gazing for some time. Not believing my eyes, I shut them and opened them again. It made no difference to the vision. There still stood the transparent form of the Mother, the face softly shining. After looking for a quarter minute I once more shut my eyes. When I reopened them the form was gone.

On reaching Bombay I wrote to the Mother about this mysterious apparition. I got no reply, but after a time I received letters from my wife in which it was said that the Mother wished me to return soon. From a friend I got the hint that something wonderful had happened. I came back as soon as I could. What had happened was the long-awaited Manifestation of the Supermind as a universal Force in the earth's subtle-physical atmosphere. And it had happened on February 29, late in the evening, during the collective meditation with the Mother, in the spacious playground of the Ashram.

Word got round that the Mother had remarked, "Only five people knew what took place, two in the Ashram and three outside." To get some clarification I took the report to the Mother. She said that she had not referred to people's knowing what had taken place: she had meant that something extraordinary had been experienced by five people as a result of the Manifestation: they might not at all have been aware of the true nature of the event. And she added, "Among those outside, I counted you. You wrote to me of your experience in the train on the night of February 29. Well, I had come to inform you. Don't you remember that many years ago, when you went to Bombay and the



Amal Kiran, "the clear ray," in his younger years as the editor of Mother India, "Sri Aurobindo's journal." (Photo courtesy Sri Aurobindo Ashram)

Supramental Manifestation was expected here, I promised you that I would let you know at once? I came to you now in fulfilment of my promise."

I was absolutely overwhelmed. The promise had been kept after no less than 18 years! I could only stammer out, "Mother, you came to inform me, a person like me? Oh, I feel so grateful, so grateful..."

Perhaps after this, everything would read like an anti-climax. But the Mother's Grace has a variety and a versatility that cannot but be marvellous. I have already spoken of my grandfather who had been long a-dying and making fools out of the best doctors who, night after night, kept predicting the worst within hours, only to find that the next morning he would be heartily munching his breakfast. In the middle of April, 1957, he seemed to get over his troubles very markedly. He was enjoying the best health he had known for months. But just at that time the Mother suddenly called me to say, "You must go to Bombay soon. I have a strong impression

that your grandfather will pass away shortly."

It was rather important that I should be in Bombay when he would die: the family situation and the financial problems demanded my presence there to take charge of everything. So I took the Mother's words as again a visitation of her Grace. But it proved difficult to book a berth from Madras. None was available till May 8. I told the Mother that I would be able to leave only on May 7 from Pondicherry. "Will this be all right?" She smiled and said, "Yes." Then she added, "I have been packing you with power all these days."

The train was delayed a little and I reached Bombay towards 4 p.m. on May 9. Everybody was surprised at my sudden appearance. Grandfather had unexpectedly taken a bad turn. The doctor was pessimistic, but, wise with past experience, did not dare to make any prediction. In the course of the next morning grandfather breathed his last. And, strange to say, I who had come from a 1000 miles away happened to be the only member of the family present to see him die. Nobody else, in spite of living in the same house, could appear in time for it when summoned by his secretary.

In the management of grandfather's affairs I was amazed how the several factions in the family disappeared and all worked as one. Whether I was directly thinking of the Mother or no, something seemed to move irresistibly as if the power which she had "packed" into me unfolded itself automatically and brought success everywhere. The most impossible-looking things became child's play.

Announcing grandfather's demise to the Mother I wrote jocularly of my new status as the eldest male survivor in the family. She replied, to my astonishment, "You say as a joke 'Now I am the grand old man of the family!'—but it is not a joke, it is true; for all in your grandfather that was turned towards the good and the right went straight into you when he left his body." Of course the good and the right,



acting as if in tune with grandfather's own will, were much needed by me in managing his estate to everyone's satisfaction. And the Mother's remark showed clearly that she had been occultly watchful over all the results of the working of her Grace.

Part II

February 21, the birthday of the Mother, is also the day on which Mother India was born, 71 years later. And the day of its birth in 1949 had behind it a special outbreak of the Grace of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

The journal was in several senses a desperate venture. It was the idea of a businessman, K.R. Poddar, but conceived without any narrow concern for business: it sought to make current the gold of a spiritual light at any material expense, and there was no calculation made about the length of time it might take for that celestial coinage to be accepted. It was because Sri Aurobindo and the Mother had taken interest in the project and blessed it that the journal was launched in the form of a fortnightly in the midst of that very centre of frantic business, the commercial capital of India, Bombay, where the word "Spirit," if it meant anything at all, might connote simply what Prohibition puts out of the way of celebrating or relaxing businessmen. The desperateness of the publication and its sheer need of Grace from the Divine was well hit off by the message (dated January 29, 1949) received from Aldous Huxley for the first issue:

I wish you all success in your venture. You will, of course, be a voice crying in the wilderness. But if a few individuals pay attention, something will have been accomplished.

A further point added to the apparent quixotism: *Mother India* had, as part of its aim, the object of plunging into political problems with a spiritual vision. It strove to look at national and international situations from the height of Sri Aurobindo's thought. In the hubbub of political slogans it brought a standard of judgment that was non-political. In general this standard may be summed up by saying that in every field of activity the aim was to criticize whatever militated against humanity's instinct of an evolving divinity within itself and to give the utmost constructive help to all that encouraged that instinct. Without flinching, *Mother India* spoke forth on many political subjects in direct contradiction of official or popular ideas.

In everything our guide was the vast and impartial yet dynamically precise wisdom of Sri Aurobindo, and we did not care whether we found favour with persons or institutions, whether our circulation soared or slumped as a result of our unconventional views.

Those were the days when Stalin overshadowed, almost overawed, the world, especially the Asian world. But Mother India, while never advocating stark individualism or boosting rank capitalism, never hesitated to expose the sham of the Stalinist sociology and its rigid negation of the two beliefs or intuitions that are the authentic stamp of homo sapiens: the key-importance of the creative individual in the evolutionary process, the presence of a secret Godhead who can inspire and enlighten the consciousness of the individual. *Mother India* went all out in support of the American intervention in Korea, regarding as it did the attack of the communist North Koreans as inspired by Mao and Stalin and as the first step of communism towards conquest of all Asia, including our own country. *Mother India*, again, refused to accept any right of Red China's to invade Tibet: the historical suzerainty of China over Tibet could only be accepted

if at the same time the equally historical internal autonomy of Tibet were granted. Our uncompromising protest, argued out at great length, created a bit of stir in Indian parliamentary circles. Perhaps even more disturbing to current thought was the protest, voiced in three slashing editorials, against recognition of Red China—a protest based on an all-round survey of the situation. We also spotlighted the delusion that there could be real cultural bonds between India and any country wedded to totalitarianism, or that a China gone Red and furiously working for world-communism would have no aggressive intentions against India. In regard to Pakistan there was the same attempt on our part to look into the heart of the matter and

judge issues from insight into the psychological and occult forces at work behind the scene of the immediate physical event: India, however varied, is indivisible and her

wholeness must somehow return if her full destiny is to be fulfilled: partition, a product of perverse or panicky politics, violated the country's essential oneness of being, it cut up the bodily symbol, as it were, of the single Goddess-Spirit by whose presiding genius this manifold nation had been enabled to live its history of cultural synthesis and diverse approaches to the Infinite. In everything our guide was the vast and impartial yet dynamically precise wisdom of Sri Aurobindo, and we did not care whether we found favour with persons or institutions, whether our circulation soared or slumped as a result of our unconventional views. Did we not have the blessings of the Mother to make us a success in the sense of being a force that made its mark?

The blessings of the Mother: thereby hangs a tale, particular no less than general. But before we come to it a glance may be thrown at the peculiar case of the



Editor of *Mother India*. He was in love with poetry and deeply attached to literary criticism; he was a fast friend of philosophy and on fairly intimate terms with science; he could even have a close relationship with history; but politics was his *bête noire*, politics gave him the shivers. So when the privilege of editorial appointment came his way, he stood at once delighted and dazed: it was an honour indeed to fight with the pen for the Aurobindonian ideal, but the foreignness of the field, the disagreeableness of the ground, on which battle was to be waged, gave him

pause. He was expected to write thousands of words on various political themes in a manner that would be clear, cogent, exact, penetrating, widely informed, easily authoritative. Here was a feat the poor fellow could not have performed even in his wildest dreams. But he had learnt from experience as well as observation that the Mother was no chaser of rainbows: if she put him in the Editor's Chair, it was surely to get solid results out of him in that position. Trusting in her wonderful practical flair, he unburdened his mind of fears to her. "Mother, I have to be an expert political thinker and writer. But I have no turn for politics, no touch on politics." She smiled a cool sweet smile and answered, "Neither have I." I got a start. "Well, then what shall I do?" Again the imperturbable sweetness and then the reply, "There is Sri Aurobindo. He will guide you in everything." A sudden flood of power swept over me. "Oh yes," I said, "Sri Aurobindo will do the impossible." And he did. Out of absolute nothing he created a prolific commentator on political questions. Articles simply streamed forth and it was



Amal Kiran receiving the Mother's personal darshan and blessings, with Champaklal attending. (Photo courtesy Sri Aurobindo Ashram)

most amazing how their author was called in by people for views on this, that and the other burning topic, as if he were a political oracle! And the wonder was that he successfully acquitted himself like one. His hearers thought that it was but natural he should talk with expertness and farsightedness: he alone knew that the Grace of Sri Aurobindo did all the talking.

This Grace, fashioning a new mind from poor or no materials, worked in many modes at its job which was like that of Napoleon who was said to have made generals of genius out of mud. Sri Aurobindo not only put from afar his mighty spiritual force to the task of "politicising" the Editor's grey cells. He also got every editorial, however lengthy, read out to him before publication and sent a telegram of approval or modification or rejection. Matter for *Mother India* received preferential treatment among the sundry calls on the precious time of the Avatar of Supermind. And his interest in it had a directly personal touch. On one occasion, when a sadhaka's sceptical attitude to the opinions expressed in the fortnightly was reported to him, he said, "Doesn't he know

that *Mother India* is my paper?" Here was Grace in abundance and without stint—initiating, fostering, shaping, supporting, championing.

The presence of both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother was felt constantly in all the turns of the editorial activity in Bombay. In fact, there would have been no such activity at all if this presence had not openly taken charge of things. And here what I have called the particular tale of the Mother's blessings falls into place. Let us go to the period of preparation before the first issue saw the light. We

were about to launch a fortnightly without any experience of the brass-tacks of such an adventure. When the office was set up we had only six or seven weeks to go before the date fixed for the opening number. We had no materials in reserve except for two or three issues. One day a veteran journalist dropped in and told us that we were heading for the rocks: unless we had six months' matter in hand it was foolhardy to start by February 21. We said that our opening number would be a brilliant one and it was a shame to suppress it. A warning finger was wagged in front of the novice Editor's nose, "It is better to lie quiet for some months than go up a rocket and come down a stick." We suggested that we would work frenziedly and keep going. "Impossible! All journalistic experience is against you. Mass your forces sufficiently—six months' stuff in hand—and then make your entrance."

We were in a quandary. To commence and then flop—this was an unbearable thought. The editor had at times the apparently irrational feeling that if hard-pressed he could write the whole journal



single-handed. But could one rely on such delusions of grandeur? Not to be published according to the original plan was galling. Yet he could not involve everything in a rapturous risk. He thought it best to consult the Mother. So he sent her an urgent note, "All journalists advise us to postpone publication for some months. They say we are doomed otherwise. My own instinct is that of Foch at the Battle of the Marne. When he was asked by his superior at the headquarters for a report from the field, he sent the message, '*Mon centre cède, ma droite réculé, situation excellente, j'attaque!*' [My centre is giving way, my right wing is in retreat, situation excellent, I am attacking!]" But what do you say?"

On January 27, 1949, I received the telegram, "Stick to the date, Live on faith. Blessings, —Mother." With a whoop we went into action—and our faith in the Mother's Grace has kept us in action up to now.

Both the Editor and the Associate Editor, S.R. Albless, experienced again and again in their day-to-day movements in the office and at the press the blessing and guiding hand of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. Difficulties rose up of various kinds—psychological, physical, technical. But all got solved and never was *Mother India* late by even a few hours. Occasionally there was a sudden dearth of contributions. An appeal would go forth to the secret presence. Not only would the immediate need be answered but also "God's plenty" would pour in, making possible a sumptuous Special Number close on the heels of an ordinary issue that had seemed hard to fill. On some occasions the Editor would have a relapse into his old non-political self. A helplessness would settle like a cloud over him and he would be afraid that the deadline might find him unready. But a deep inner aspiration at night cried out to the Master. "After all, *Mother India* is your concern. I am only your instrument. You have to look after it and see that everything is in order. Please get an editorial written tomorrow morning." And the next dawn would break on the early-risen

Editor thumping away on his typewriter in a gust of inspiration.

When matters other than political were treated—and there were a lot of them, since Mother India touched on politics as only one side of its multiple Aurobindonian work—the situation of standstill in any sense was non-existent. For, there the Editorial Staff was in its own element. But here too the enlivening stream of inner help from Pondicherry was clearly felt. And, paradoxically, the most intense experience of it came after the Master had left his body! I had flown to the Ashram on getting the heart-shattering news. As already recounted, the Mother had assured the appalled disciple that nothing had really changed and that he would get as ever the fullest help possible from Sri Aurobindo. But now the greatest challenge was to be faced: what must be written about the mystifying event that had just taken place? All the readers of *Mother India* would be looking up to the Editor for enlightenment.

Before leaving Pondicherry I was granted an interview by the Mother. She said, "The whole event is quite clear to me. But I will not tell you anything. You must write on it all by yourself." I meditated with the Mother for a while and then left the same night for Bombay. All through the railway journey to Madras and the flight from there to Bombay, I kept inwardly invoking Sri Aurobindo and the Mother to make me do well the job which seemed the greatest my life could confront me with—namely the reading of at least some part of the spiritual secret that was behind what looked so mighty a tragedy, the secret which would reveal in this apparent tragedy a triumph in accord with all the earth-divinising Yoga taught and lived out by Sri Aurobindo.

Bombay held nothing of interest for me. I would hardly go even out of my room lest the concentration on the hidden light should flicker for a moment and my search fall short of its goal. I said to myself, "What use my whole career of writing if now I cannot bring forth words aglow with God's own truth?" And the prayer rose up, "O Mother, O Sri Aurobindo, if I

could now see into the heart of this mystery and draw out of its depth the speech of revelation, I should be content to drop the pen for ever. I do not care whether I write anything else after it: but here let me not fail." Once again the old appeal took shape in my mind, "My Master, *Mother India* is your concern after all. Will you not save it from failure, from frustration?"

Slowly through the empty days and the hopeless nights a mass of light was felt invisibly moving towards expression. I had the urge to write. But something told me to control it. Not till I felt absolutely surcharged with that mass should I put pen to paper. I waited. Then at last came the feeling that now I should find utterance. For several days I went on writing—at times sitting at my typewriter hour after hour, producing nothing rather than let anything unworthy of the colossal theme take form. A long essay progressed towards its end—perhaps the longest editorial I had written. I had the sense that the Grace had worked, bearing me through my supreme trial as a writer.

I posted my composition to the Mother. It was entitled: "The Passing of Sri Aurobindo: Its Inner Significance and Consequence." It was read out to her in two sittings. The Ashram Secretary sent me on December 27, 1950, the telegram, "Your Passing of Sri Aurobindo admirable. Fully approved by Mother. Nothing to change. —Nolini." My Associate Editor who was still in Pondicherry wrote to me what the Mother had said to our Manager Yogendra Rastogi on December 28. Her words were, "I have read Amal's article. It is excellent. Tell him I am extremely satisfied. I would like to have it printed in booklet form. He can get it printed in Bombay, if he wants. Otherwise I shall have it printed here." A little later my Associate Editor again reported her as having remarked, "It is quite the best thing Amal has written. I would like to print 15,000 copies of it."

Face to face with all this, I could only bow my head with inexpressible gratitude. *Mother India* had found its fulfilment through the Grace of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.



Interview with Mona Pinto: Manager of Golconde dormitory and residence

by Anie Nunnally

We publish this article in honor of Mona Pinto, whose birth centenary occurred on 11-11-2011. After a full life of dedicated service to the Mother, Mona passed away on 21 May 2004 at the age of 92.

Ethel Lovegrove and Laurence Marshall Pinto first met under the Big Clock at Charing Cross Station in the "City of Spires" (London) on 27th April 1932; one day after "Laurie's" 25th birthday. Charing Cross Station is one of the oldest undergrounds in London situated in a charming area of the city surrounded by antique bookstores. Ethel (Mona) was just 20 years old then. They were, of course, properly chaperoned by Mona's sister, Ivy, and a fellow Indian student and friend of Laurie's from Goa, Frank Moraes. Frank was an Honor Society Student at Oxford and Laurie was studying engineering at London University. Mona worked at the Gas and Light Company as a secretary (her co-workers nicknamed her "Mona" because she was always "moaning" about the draft in the office. The name stuck.) The girls were busy trying to sell tickets for a benefit performance of Gilbert and Sullivan's "Trial by Jury" that her company was producing for charity and a friend had some contacts with Indian students. Mona called Laurie about purchasing tickets and he liked the sound of her voice so much that he asked her to meet him personally to sell the ticket; they both agreed to wear red roses for identification. They were smitten and a most unique destiny was about to be forged between these two very attractive young people.

Mona was born to Ethel May and Augustus Charles Lovegrove on 11-11-11 (the Mother had spoken about this auspicious and unusual birth date in a volume



Anie Nunnally. (Photo courtesy Anie Nunnally)

of *The Agenda*). The Lovegroves lived in the Poplar section of London and were members of the Anglican Church. Augustus was an electrician and eventually went to fight in the First World War leaving Ethel May behind to care for three small little girls. He fought in the famous 1916 Battle of Dardanelles (ancient name, Hellespont) on the border of European and Asiatic territory. He cut a handsome figure as a young man and can be seen in a photo in the family album in full military regalia mounted atop a camel! During the war period he was missing after a battle for some time and there was no communication with his family. The British Government was unhelpful in the situation (as was the case with many) and the young mother suffered and often went without food for herself to be certain her children were fed. She learned the millinery trade and became a milliner in order to survive and earn enough money to care for her children. Finally, Augustus was found and returned home from the war to be reunited with his family. Eventually three more children were born. All the children adored their mother and set her up as the prime example of everything good that they had learned in life. Mona had been smart, winning scholarships at school and although her father was strict the family was quite open and less conservative than the Pinto family. Mona's father, however, always insisted that she marry an Eng-

lishman only! Their plans to marry were therefore a disturbance to both families and it was only possible for Mona to leave England after her father passed away. It was unthinkable for the Pinto family who were wealthy, (Mr. Pinto bought and sold properties) upper class Catholics from Hubli near Goa, to let their son marry a non-Catholic girl. Mona had to agree to convert to Catholicism in order to marry Laurie.

Mona set sail on S.S. "The Viceroy of India" in January of 1937. Laurie had set up a business in Pondicherry three years earlier (a gelatin business in partnership with Monsieur Gaebele from one of the oldest French families to settle in the former colony). Mona was only 25 and had left behind all that was familiar to her for her marriage and new life in India. The British Raj still ruled and it would be another ten years before India would see its independence. On the journey to India she was chastised by some Englishmen aboard the ship for her decision to marry an Indian and move to India. She had brought along her beautiful, white wedding gown and had expected that there would be many guests attending her wedding which took place on 6 February 1937 at Pondicherry's Notre Dame Des Anges Catholic Church. However, only one member of the Pinto family attended . . . a brother. No jewelry nor family money was given to the bride and groom and when it came time for the wedding photo Laurie had to set up the camera and then dash back into place next to his bride for the picture. It is even said that an uncle had suggested to Mr. Pinto that he send a telegram to Mona in England saying "the wedding has been called off" and sign Laurie's name to it! Of course he could not bring himself to do this. In any case, these were the conservative times and traditions were strong.

In the beginning her new life in India was not as she had anticipated. It was not altogether the romantic land of jasmine, roses, elephants and peacocks that she had always read about in books. Mona said, "India has the best and the worst of everything." She further stated "it is sad that India was not allowed to rise to its



greatest heights.” Mona told me that India should have accepted the Cripps Proposal (Sir Stafford Cripps, an English Statesman, was a Minister in the national government under Churchill during the war. His proposal was that India should accept to become a member of the British Commonwealth, allowing for self-government without full independence, rather, a stepping stone toward ultimate full independence). Mona said that Sri Aurobindo had encouraged the Indian government to do this, even sending Doraswami as a representative from the Ashram, but she said “India would not listen to its great minds, and if they had done so there would be no Bangladesh, no Pakistan, no massacres and no famine today.”

In any case Mona made the best of everything and Laurie’s business was doing well. They had many friends from the Ashram and entertained them frequently in their home. When Mona was six months pregnant Amal Kiran arranged a darshan for them with Mother and Sri Aurobindo. Mona had been educated in a Catholic convent in England and all the talk about the “Divine Mother” in Pondicherry gave her a preconceived idea of a Reverend Mother and the mental image of a Mother Superior or someone who looked like a nun. She told me she was absolutely stunned when she saw the Mother for the first time looking so gracious and beautiful and wearing light makeup. This was August 1937 and their baby girl, Judy Ann, (later to be named Gauri) was born 16 November 1937. By this time there was no question that Laurie had turned inwardly to Mother and Sri Aurobindo and all of their lives were about to be forever changed (Laurie would eventually give all his money to the Mother, become a full-time Ashramite, begin his work for Harpagon and have his name changed to Udar).

Mona Pinto had told me before I began the interview not to ask her any questions



Mona Pinto. (Photo courtesy Sri Aurobindo Ashram)

about the yoga or sadhana. She said, “I do not practice sadhana, I just came to Pondicherry to marry an Indian!” I reminded her, however, that she had been telling me this story for nearly 35 years! Of course, I consider Mona to be one of the most dedicated karma yogins that I have ever met. One only has to look at a photograph of Mona handing something to the Mother or receiving something from the Mother. Her body and her gestures speak the language of love, devotion, giving. Mona said to me, “I didn’t have to talk about nor analyze anything. I just accepted it.”

As destiny would have it, the Mother was planning the building of Golconde as a place for sadhaks to live in a meditative and peaceful atmosphere. She needed someone to organize and manage this project. Datta (Dorothy Hodgson, the Englishwoman, whom Mother met in Japan and who would become her good friend and accompany her to Pondicherry (had seen the home of Mona and Udar. She told the Mother how immaculately clean

everything was in their home. The Mother arranged an interview with Mona. Later, after seeing Mona, the Mother said to Datta, “Are all Englishwomen as pretty as Mona Pinto?” Mona, a stunningly beautiful, slender, porcelain-skinned young Englishwoman so impressed the Mother that she was given the job as manager of Golconde. She was in her early 30’s then and even at her current age of 89 she is still managing Golconde with as much enthusiasm as if the work had just been handed to her. She goes there on a daily basis in the mornings to attend to all the details and I saw her at her desk in the afternoons at home pouring over and balancing the account books for Golconde. Her energy is remarkable, indefatigable. Her self-effacing humility and sense of duty are most inspiring. She told me that she is her happiest when she goes to Golconde. She said, “I served the Mother and I am still serving her and am very happy to do so, but it was so much easier

when the Mother was here, so much easier. I used to go once a fortnight to clean Mother’s refrigerator. When Mother was here it was quite a different Ashram. She worked like no one else could work. She built the ashram herself.”

Mona told me that in the beginning she was reluctant about the work. She had a problem after delivery and Udar had to carry her upstairs most of the time. She said in those days, however, Golconde only had one floor. She began the work and soon got better and in time could run up and down the stairs. She personally trained all the young ladies who were to work with her. Mona said that the Mother told Satprem, “Mona Pinto likes to do things and do them well. I never have to worry about Golconde. Things always go well there and I don’t worry.” Mona said, “I was a proper Englishwoman who knew how to serve tea, how to set a proper table, when to use the right dishes, etc. Mother knew she could rely on me for all these things.”



I asked Mona to tell me some of the experiences she had with the Mother. She told me that after her baby was born her chronic back pains worsened. One day she was suffering terribly with the pain in her back. She said the Mother ran her fingers very slowly down her back and after that there was never any more pain. The same thing happened, she said, when her arm was riddled with pain and she could not even lift it. The Mother massaged the arm and “poof,” Mona said, “Gone. No more pain!” The Mother told Mona not to speak too freely about the healings. She said that there were always mischievous spirits in the atmosphere ready to play their tricks and so to just be quiet about it. Mona said, “I had a practical, down to earth relationship with the Mother. We spoke in an earthly way with one another about the work and often times just as one woman to another. She was the most gracious and beautiful lady I ever knew.”

Anie: How did the tradition of celebrating Christmas develop in the ashram?

Mona: One year Udar and I set up a Christmas tree in our house (the Red House). Nishta (Margaret Woodrow Wilson) and other westerners came. Nishta made a large star and Udar put it on the top of the tree. Later people went to the Mother and told her about it. She said, “Could it not be done for all the children?” The Mother said that Christmas had come from very ancient traditions. The wise men of the time observed that the days were growing shorter and shorter. People became worried that they would be



Mona, Gauri, and Udar Pinto. (Photo courtesy Sri Aurobindo Ashram).

engulfed in darkness. Then they began to notice that around the end of the month the days had begun to grow longer and that there was a return of the light. Christ's birth ultimately became fixed to this time of the year as a symbol of the return of the light.

So, the children began to come to our home in 1943. Games were set up in our garden and prizes were given out, hats were made and everyone wore a paper hat. All were made by Golconde residents. Even special crowns were made for Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Dyuman used to come out in the streets and blow a trumpet on Christmas day and a special hat was also made for him. Finally the tradition moved to our current house on Rue St. Gilles and then to the playground and on to the Theatre when it was built. The Mother went to the Theatre and sat in a chair and distributed gifts to everyone. The event remains a joyous celebration in the Ashram and each Christmas day a tree is set up and decorated by the staff of Golconde. Gifts are distributed to all ashramites and guests of the Ashram. The Mother's chair remains in the spot where

she always sat.

Anie: Did you see Sri Aurobindo in his Mahasamadhi?

Mona: Yes, in the end I was working in the Mother's room. I went to see Sri Aurobindo. He was surrounded by a light and a golden aura. I saw it myself the same as everyone else had seen it. The Mother announced that after five days the light had begun to recede and she told Udar to make arrangements to inter Sri Aurobindo's body.

Udar did not want to do this but of course he followed the Mother's instructions.

Silence...

After this brief interview with Mona Pinto, it wasn't possible for her to give me any more time. Christmas day was fast approaching and her responsibilities were mounting in preparing all the gifts and decorations and details for the event.

Mona and Udar Pinto, in their inspiring journey of the soul, played a most vital role in helping to establish the Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's Ashram. In the beginning their youthful energy, organizational skills, education and expertise, on so many levels, were essential elements in helping to frame the very foundations and infra-structure that were necessary for building a solid base for all the sadhaks who were arriving and for the work and life that was forming there. They will always be remembered with great affection and love by many in the Ashram and around the world.



Essays

Seven guidelines for spiritual living

by Larry Seidlitz

How does one do Integral Yoga? Most other spiritual paths have a fairly clearly defined set of practices or techniques. In the Integral Yoga, there are specific techniques that may be used if one wishes, but they do not form the core of its approach. While I do not deny that various kinds of yogic techniques can be valuable aids in the Integral Yoga, I want to focus here on seven psychological methods that I believe are more essential. There are other psychological methods that also are important, but these seven seem to complement each other and together form a strong, balanced discipline. These are relatively simple and straightforward things that anyone can understand and practice, though it is not easy to develop them to a point of perfection. Indeed, each of these psychological qualities can probably be developed more and more to an always higher level until the point that they lead us into the higher spiritual consciousness and the transformation of our nature.

Aspiration

The first attitude that we must foster is aspiration to the Divine. We must ardently seek the Divine if we are to find, unite with, and manifest the Divine in our life. Indeed, this must become our overriding aim and endeavor in life, our number one priority, the focus of all our efforts. We must not only aspire in rare moments, when confronted with insurmountable obstacles or when we are peaceful and alone, but often and then constantly, and with an intensity that is always increasing.

There are various aspects of aspiration, various ways to aspire. Aspiration is essentially a call to the Divine. We must call the Divine down into ourselves. We must



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recognize that ultimately the Divine must make the change in us and in the world, that our human powers in themselves are insufficient. Thus, this aspect of aspiration presumes that we have a certain spiritual humility that recognizes we are powerless without the Divine. The Divine Mother is the Power of the Divine, we aspire to the Divine Mother to lead us to the divine Realization. We must ask her, pray to her, implore her to deliver us from the falsehoods and limitations in which we live and lead us to our divine fulfillment. We may put it into words as in a prayer, or it may be a silent unformulated yearning of our heart and soul, but essentially it is this, "take my life just as it is, good and bad, I offer it all to you, transform me, lead me to the Divine Life."

Whereas this side of aspiration is closely allied with surrender, another side of aspiration emphasizes personal effort. Ultimately, in the long course of the yoga, personal effort must melt away into surrender, but in the beginning and for a long time effort is very much needed. If we overemphasize surrender in the beginning there is a dangerous likelihood that it will be a passive and inert surrender, which actually is not surrender at all. If we say in the beginning, "the Divine is doing the yoga for me, I will wait patiently for the Divine to take care of it," then we are likely to delude ourselves and simply give in to and accept our lower nature just as it is, precluding any possibility of real change. We must resolutely put ourselves on the

side of the Divine, we must be warriors for the Divine, we must stand and fight against the impulses and ignorance of the lower nature. Yes, we must recognize that the Divine Power is there behind our efforts supporting and leading us to victory, but we must be the willing and obedient instruments of our own transformation.

What must we fight against? We must fight against greed and selfishness, lust and seeking after vital pleasures, anger and hatred, fear and worry, laziness and unwillingness to change, doubt and narrow-mindedness, arrogance and pretension. We must fight against the enemies of our own inner progress. These things are natural accompaniments of the lower life in the ignorance, so we need not be ashamed of finding them within us. Indeed, we must learn to see them clearly for what they are, but our whole aim is to establish a Divine Life where these things are expelled from the nature and replaced. They are to be replaced with divine peace, light, harmony, love, strength, and ananda. They are not to be accepted but rather rejected from the nature. We must not be discouraged if the process of rejecting these from ourselves takes time, as it must, but at the same time we must not become complacent and allow them to remain indefinitely. We must exercise a steady and persistent will for their elimination, and maintain it against all resistance, however long it takes.

We must also use our efforts to develop the positive side of the discipline. The three main limbs of the discipline, in addition to the purification and perfection of the nature, are (1) the offering of our work and action to the Divine, (2) concentration on the Divine, and (3) the cultivation of love and devotion for the Divine. Part of aspiration is to use our will and effort to put these three things into a living and eventually a constant practice. Service to the Divine is an essential side of the discipline that we must develop. We should aspire that each of our activities becomes an offering to the Divine. We can begin by making an offering of our food when we eat, consecrating it, seeing it as coming from the Divine and being offered to the Divine within us. Similarly, before



starting our work, we can make an offering of it to the Divine, seeing that it is the Divine Force within us that enables us to do it, and asking the Divine's guidance and power to do it efficiently and in service of the Divine's will. Secondly, we should also aspire to concentrate more and more on the Divine. It is the aim of the yoga that we are always concentrated on the Divine, but in the beginning it is very useful to set aside some time to exclusively focus on this concentration. This can take different forms. One of the simplest is to read something by Sri Aurobindo or the Mother for a short time, and then either quietly contemplate on it, or allow oneself to go within towards the source of those words and thoughts. One of the most effective methods of concentration is to quietly stand back from one's thoughts and feelings, and any outward sounds or activities that may be happening around, and simply observe them without becoming caught up in them. Yet another form of concentration is to focus in an upward aspiration to the Divine in the heart center, and if desired, this can be accompanied by repeating a mantra. Concentration on the Divine, with or without a mantra, can be gradually extended into one's normal activities as well. And third, we should aspire to develop a feeling of love and devotion to the Divine. This can be developed during periods of meditation, as well as when we make offerings of our work and other activities. This can also be fostered through prayer, whether by repeating formal prayers, or simply talking within to the Divine. Other ritualistic activities such as burning incense, offering flowers, or contemplating the photos of the Divine can also be helpful. Gratitude to the Divine for his gifts of beauty and delight, for his help and protection, and for his promise of spiritual growth and eventual realization, is also very helpful for developing a deeper devotion and closeness to the Divine.

Quietude

A second great need in this yoga is quietude of the mind and vital. If the mind and vital are always churning, creating

noise and disturbance, leading us down a myriad dead-end roads, heaping obstacles on our path, we will not make effective progress. While it is desirable in this yoga that the mind should fall silent, what is important as a first step is to free the mind of restlessness and disturbance. One of the great abilities of the mind is that it can imagine situations in which things are better than they are now. Indeed it is this ability that enables us to aspire towards a divine life. If this tendency would confine itself to showing us a better way it would be alright, but unfortunately the flip side of this is that it also can find an endless number of things to regret or be dissatisfied with and complain about. Similarly, while it can show us greater possibilities of the future to strive towards, it can also imagine an unlimited number of dangers or catastrophes that may befall us. Complaints about the past and present and worries about the future create disturbances in the mind which makes it difficult to open ourselves to the Divine or to receive anything from the Divine. It is like a swirl of disturbing energy turned in on itself which can neither give itself to the Divine nor receive from the Divine. One possible aid for this kind of problem is to focus on the present moment, on what one is actually doing in the present moment, doing it carefully and with full consciousness as an offering to the Divine.

While an unquiet mind can retard progress, an unquiet vital can be still more upsetting. The vital is the center of our passions, desires, emotions, and dynamic energies. It carries in it tremendous energy for both good and evil, and while properly it should be an obedient servant of our higher reason or deeper soul, more typically it acts according to its own ignorant and erring will and desire, leading to emotional upheavals and destructive behaviors. Quarrels, interpersonal strife, anger, jealousy, despondency, desire and hankering after food, drink, money, power, sensual pleasure and sex are its common activities. It is evident that this type of continual or repeated agitation of the consciousness makes spiritual progress slow and difficult. These types of vital disturbances

must be quieted down; there must be an active will to dampen them as much as possible, to refuse to give in to them when their impulses threaten to overwhelm us.

The power of the intelligent will must be exercised to bring the vital under control. At first, our will may be weak and be swept aside by the sheer power of the vital impulses and their ability to cloud the mind or subvert it to their aims, but through continual efforts that are not discouraged by failure, the intelligent will gets stronger and is able to bring the vital under greater control. In addition, it is important to keep the intelligence free or relatively free from the vital influence. It should not justify the lower vital propensities and become a servant or accomplice in their actions. It should maintain an objective perspective, see these things for what they are and not only from the viewpoint of our egoistic preferences or desires. It should look on such vital disturbances as an agitation of the outer consciousness which should be discouraged from happening again and which should be brought back into quietude and harmony as soon as possible. This is not to deny that things may happen to us or people may do things which are not right, but in place of vital agitation and conflict there are quiet, intelligent, more effective ways to deal with such wrongs.

In addition to using the intelligent will to constrain unwanted movements, it is necessary to shift our psychological center or poise deeper within, away from the surface consciousness where this agitation has greater power. In part, this means concentrating the attention within, preferably in the heart center, and from there keeping up a closer inner connection or remembrance of the Divine. We must learn to concentrate within and feel the peace and protection of the Divine which is there within us. We should become less preoccupied with minor outward things that have little importance in a wider or deeper view of things. What is vitally important is our spiritual growth, the development of our aspiration to the Divine and our growing conscious inner relation with the Divine; this will have a much more profound posi-



tive influence on our life than minor outward incidents of everyday life. We must learn more and more to keep our poise deep within, and not be swept away by outside waves of emotion or sensual attractions on the surface of our consciousness.

Equality

Quietude develops hand in hand with a related psychological quality called equality. Equality means to remain unmoved within regardless of what happens or whatever conditions one may have to face. One must learn to face events, people, circumstances with a perfect calm and peace. However disagreeable people may be to you, however unpleasant the circumstances in which you must live or work, however terrible the events that may befall you, you must learn to remain quiet, calm, detached, unaffected. Similarly, you should not become elated, overjoyed by pleasant things that may happen to you. One must learn to be centered within on the Divine, quiet, peaceful, calm, taking joy only in the Divine, and not be dependent on the vagaries of outside events or people.

Naturally this is not at all easy to establish in its fullness, but it is an ideal that we can all work towards everyday in our life. Especially, our interpersonal relations with others present frequent opportunities for us to develop, work at, and deepen our equality. Sri Aurobindo has emphasized the development of equality in his yoga, devoting several chapters to it in *The Synthesis of Yoga*, as well as a number of letters. His explanation of it in one of his *Letters on Yoga* cannot be surpassed, so I would like to quote some of the relevant portions:

Equality means a quiet and unmoved mind and vital, it means not to be touched or disturbed by things that happen or things said or done to you, but to look at them with a straight look, free from the distortions created by personal feeling, and to try to understand what is behind them, why they happen, what is to be learnt from

them, what is it in oneself which they are cast against and what inner profit or progress one can make out of them; it means self-mastery over the vital movements,—anger and sensitiveness and pride as well as desire and the rest,—not to let them get hold of the emotional being and disturb the inner peace, not to speak and act in the rush and impulsion of these things, always to act and speak out of a calm inner poise of the spirit...

Equality means another thing—to have an equal view of men and their nature and acts and the forces that move them; it helps one to see the truth about them by pushing away from the mind all personal feeling in one's seeing and judgment and even all the mental bias. Personal feeling always distorts and makes one see in men's actions, not only the actions themselves, but things behind them which, more often than not, are not there. Misunderstanding, misjudgment which could have been avoided are the result; things of small consequence assume larger proportions. (pp. 661-662)

And it is not only with respect to others or to outside things that we must develop an equal attitude; we must also develop it in regard to our own actions and inner movements. Sri Aurobindo continues in the same letter:

The first condition of inner progress is to recognize whatever is or has been a wrong movement in any part of the nature,—wrong idea, wrong feeling, wrong speech, wrong action,—and by wrong is meant what departs from the truth, from the higher consciousness and higher self, from the way of the Divine. Once recognized it is admitted, not glossed over or defended,—and it is offered to the Divine for the Light and Grace to descend and substitute for it the right movement of the true Consciousness. (p. 662)

We must learn not to be shocked or ashamed by the wrong movements that

occur in ourselves, we must learn not to hide them from ourselves or deny them, but to look at them squarely and objectively, without distortion, without dressing them up or excusing them. Yes, it is natural that we find such things in ourselves, but if we have taken up the yoga in earnest, that means that we must use our will to reject them from our nature, and call to the Divine Light and Power to help us overcome and transform them. We should try to maintain an objective view of our difficulties, not attribute to them a greater power over us than they really have, and at the same time we can always hold them up before the Divine to eliminate or transform. In reality, the Divine Power can do everything, eliminate every obstacle, lead us to the heights of spiritual realization, but it requires our consent and our active aspiration and collaboration in its action. To the extent that we give this consent and collaboration, our progress will be more swift and smooth.

Sincerity

If we are to succeed in our aspiration to unite with the divine consciousness and to make ourselves fit instruments for a divine life on earth, then our aspiration must not only be ardent but also sincere. This means that our aspiration must be wholehearted, integral. This integrality, however, takes time to establish. To begin with, we must have a central sincerity. This means that the central part of our being, the part which we call "I," truly wants the Divine and is willing to undertake the necessary discipline and surrender, however long it takes. We must be able to honestly say, "I want to unite with the Divine, I want to surrender all of myself to the Divine, I accept to undergo the necessary discipline to reach the Divine and transform my nature." If we wish to undertake the Yoga, we should sincerely ask ourselves whether this is what we really want and whether we are willing to undertake the necessary discipline, however difficult it may be and however long it may take to do it. It is fine and good if we recognize that presently we are unable to fulfill all the requirements,



that we have weaknesses and defects in our nature, but we must be willing to commit our life to sincerely working towards the fulfillment of the requirements of the Yoga. If we are not ready to make this commitment, we can still put ourselves under the Light, Protection, and Influence of the Divine, but we are not yet on the path of Integral Yoga.

But this is only the beginning, and this is where the real work of sincerity begins. Once we have accepted the aim of the Yoga as the aim of our life, then we must get to the work of fulfilling the conditions of the Yoga. And the fundamental condition of the Integral Yoga is that we must make an integral offering and surrender of ourselves to the Divine. This work must proceed from the center of our being, that which has fundamentally surrendered and accepted to undertake the discipline and spread to all the rest of the parts of our

nature. Here we will find that although a central part of us accepts the aim of the Yoga, other parts of our nature do not accept or accept only partly or sometimes. We will find that there are many different personalities in us with their own agendas that may not be in agreement with our central resolve or with themselves. This means that we have conflicts in our nature which need to be made conscious and reconciled. Each of the different personalities and tendencies within ourselves has its own will and is very reluctant to surrender it. They are part of who we are and in this yoga we don't simply want to cut them all off, but rather we must convert them to the central aim and commitment. For example, the mind may have certain interests and activities which it wants to pursue independently of the search for the Divine. Similarly, there are many tendencies in the vital nature which will seek their own fulfillment regardless of what our central aspiration is. Some other yogas proceed by silencing all these activities by becoming inactive, but this does not lead to a full divine life but to a very restrict-

ed inner existence with little power for outward expression. The great difficulty of this yoga is to align all these different parts of the nature with our central aim, and thus to transform them into effective instruments of a divine living.

One of the most formidable obstacles to this alignment of the parts of the nature around the central aim is mental dishonesty, mental self-deception. This is almost a universal failing, and it requires a preserving self-discipline to overcome. One of the chief occupations of the mind is to find justifications and excuses for the indulgence of the vital nature's desires. A part of the mind is typically a servant of the vital, rather than an objective witness or master of it as it should be. Instead of seeing that a mistake is being committed

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and should be corrected, it gives a little excuse for it and thus a free pass for it to continue. It is necessary to courageously and deeply examine these excuses for our vital indulgences and expose this mental insincerity. We may justify the indulgence of our desires with such thoughts as, "it is okay, nobody will find out," "this isn't so bad, everybody does it," "I worked hard, now I'm entitled to some indulgence," "I will deal with this overcoming this desire later," "this is my weakness, everybody has some weakness; I cannot control it." But when we probe such excuses more deeply, we will find they do not stand up to scrutiny. It does not matter if we can keep our mistakes hidden from others, it is the Divine with whom we must deal. If we profess to aspire to truly lead a spiritual life, then other people's failings cannot be a justification for continuing our own. In the spiritual life, desire must be eradicated from the nature and replaced with surrender and self-offering to the Divine—indulgence of vital desires is in contradiction to our aspiration. Postponing dealing with a defect of our nature is simply a ruse

to allow it to continue; at some point it must be faced and it may as well be now as later. The problem with "later" is that later never comes. Years may be wasted, even lifetimes, waiting for this "later" to come. And it is not true that our desires cannot be overcome; they can be overcome if we face them honestly and courageously, and if we ardently and persistently call on the Divine Force and Grace to help us. For the Divine Mother, nothing is impossible.

Faith

This requires another quality: faith in the Divine and its Power and in the possibility of the Divine to overcome our difficulties and lead us to spiritual realization and the transformation of our nature. Essentially faith comes from a knowledge of the soul that is at first hidden deep within us, but which comes out in

the course of our spiritual progress. Deep within us, our soul or psychic being, is itself a portion of the Divine and knows the Divine as like knows like. But usually the soul is hidden at first by the activities of our mind and vital, only sending up sometimes jets of intuition or experience while also putting a general pressure on the mind and vital to seek out in life truth and goodness and beauty. Such intuitions or early soul experiences provide an initial basis for our developing faith; they suggest to us that there is something more to life than the mundane and checkered existence we see around us, that there are greater possibilities, that somewhere there is something that is perfect, whole, fulfilled which we can feel and touch and perhaps become. We also have the living examples of others who have already travelled the spiritual path before us, and the words of our Teachers and of others' Teachers who have explained the possibilities of spiritual experience and realization.

But we may say, "Oh this is alright for great Avatars and saints, but I am a simple person, I cannot realize the Divine, I can-



not transform my nature.” Another, apparently more reasonable form this takes is that “this yoga will take many lifetimes, one should not expect to change right away or in the near future.” But these are tricks of the mind and vital to hold onto its limitations and avoid the difficulty of change. The mind and vital nature are full of such ruses and continually try to snare and trip us in our aspiration for the divine life. We must learn to detect and avoid them. Indeed, much change can take place immediately if we set our mind and heart to it and insist upon it. We should not underestimate the power of human will, every day it achieves miracles, great achievements, by ordinary people who are not doing yoga. When we apply our will wholeheartedly to the sadhana, calling in to support it the Power of the Divine Mother, it can achieve even greater miracles; at least we should not decide beforehand that it cannot achieve much. It is better if we keep to the faith that if we have been called to this path of yoga by the Divine, then the Divine is with us and leading us on it, and if we cling to the Divine, he will surely lead us to the goal as quickly as possible. Remember, it is the Divine Power which does this yoga in us, not simply our personal will; we must have faith in that Power. We should not be impatient, but we also should not expect failure or little visible progress. Especially when we learn to keep quiet and centered within, concentrated in our aspiration to the Divine, we will find our difficulties and obstacles can quickly melt away.

We must learn to rely on this Divine Grace and Power more and more for all things in our life. Normally people rely on their own ego, their own strength and ability, as well as on other people, to achieve whatever needs to be done. People rarely rely on the Divine. It is precisely this transition that must be made in the course of the Yoga. Even when our own abilities, or those of others are instrumental, we must learn to see that it is really the divine Power behind that is responsible. All power ultimately comes from the one Divine Power, it is simply that in our egoistic ignorance we claim it as our personal

property or attribute. As we turn consciously to the Divine Grace for our needs, then we will find that the Divine provides all that is truly necessary for our progress, often through intermediaries. The right person or opportunity may come along at the right moment, providing the very thing that we required. If we are in danger, in illness, or in distress, we should turn to the Divine for help, while being wise enough to be receptive to the help given, which may well come through the hands of another person. When we must make a difficult decision, we must learn to seek guidance from the Divine, and become attentive to receive the guidance which often may come in inner feeling or intuition in our heart center. When we must do a difficult task, we must turn to the Divine to support and help us through the endeavor. On the opposite side, whatever we receive in life, we should have faith, and develop the vision, that it comes from the Divine. Even our difficulties we should see as coming from the Divine in order to help us to make a needed progress. When Sri Aurobindo was in jail, he saw even the bars of his cell and prison guards as forms of Krishna. In this way, all of life, even our difficulties, will be welcomed as a gift of the Divine to help us grow and progress and will become full of delight.

Harmony and beauty

A great help in preparing ourselves to be receptive to the Divine Grace is to create within and around us an atmosphere of harmony and beauty. We should more and more cultivate the harmony and beauty of our mind, our heart, our vital nature, our body, our actions and physical movements. We should do the same with regard to our physical environment in which we live and work. We should keep them in order, peace, harmony so that the Divine may consent to dwell in us and with us. This could be called the cultivation of refinement.

Let us keep our mind and thoughts pure and noble and beautiful. On one side this means refusing to entertain thoughts that are low, vulgar, cruel, mean-spirited, selfish, refusing to argue or forcefully

impose our viewpoints on others. On the other side it means learning to communicate and express our thoughts and ideas clearly, with precision, harmoniously, and with a kind consideration of different points of view. It also means learning to see and appreciate the expression of harmony and beauty in others, in nature, in the world around us. We must make a conscious effort to open our eyes to the beauty that is there, or we can go through life oblivious of the wonders around us. We can also develop our appreciation of beauty in literature, poetry, art, music, dance, film, photography, architecture, crafts, and other creations of the human mind and soul. Cultivating such appreciation elevates the mind and helps it from falling into inertia or vulgarity.

We should strive for harmony and beauty in our interrelationships with others. This means treating others with love and respect and compassion, whatever shortcomings we might perceive in them. All human beings have limitations and defects in their nature, but all human beings also have a divine soul at their center, they also are forms of the Divine. We should be more concerned with overcoming our own limitations and defects than in pointing out the defects of others. Let us rather be patient and tolerant of other people's weaknesses, and more severe with our own. Each individual has a unique relationship with the Divine, a unique karmic history, a unique set of strengths and weaknesses, a unique role to fill in the world, a unique trajectory of personal and spiritual development. Usually we cannot know all these things about another human being—it is difficult to know this even about ourselves—so we should not be prone to judge or advise others. Rather, let us be supportive of the positive elements in other people, and in this way foster the growth and the expression of their inner psychic being as well as our own.

We must also cultivate harmony and beauty in our emotions and in the flow of our vital energies. We must learn to control our emotions and vital energies so that they do not lead us into ignorant, violent,



disturbing, or unwholesome acts. Anger and lust are perhaps the two most common and difficult challenges of the lower vital that disturb the peace and harmony of the being. Pride and arrogance are also common obstacles associated with the vital ego, and should be controlled with the idea that before the Divine we are as nothing and that it is only the Divine within us that gives our life its significance. Desires for alcoholic drinks, tobacco, or drugs may affect some people and can be dangerous, often disturbing the health of the body and tending to create or exacerbate other personal and interpersonal problems. In others, desires for food, comfort, or luxury can create disturbances in the life and become obstacles on their spiritual path. In such cases, the will may need to be strengthened through repeated efforts to stop these activities, calling in the support of the Divine Power and Grace, until we are able to reject these unhealthy habits.

We should also work to establish and maintain harmony and beauty in our physical surroundings. In part, harmony translates in this sphere to order. We must learn to keep our things in order, in places that are assigned for them, such that they can be easily found when needed and do not disturb the beauty and harmony of our living space. At the same time, we should keep our things clean and in perfect working order and condition. When things are damaged or broken they should be quickly repaired if possible or replaced and not left in an unusable or dysfunctional condition. We should treat things not merely as material possessions, but as instruments of the divine manifestation for which we are the trustees. Indeed there is even a consciousness within physical things which responds to the care or unconsciousness with which we use them, and as we develop a greater consciousness in our use of things, we begin to see more and more the Divine within things. In addition to material things, we must also strive to be in harmony with the Nature of which we are a part, being conscious and considerate of the other living plants and animals around us, the air and water and earth which sustain us.

Patience and perseverance

Finally, this yoga requires patience and perseverance. One should not expect quick results. I think it is necessary to embark on this path with the attitude that we will proceed to the end however long it takes; it may take one's whole life and it may take more than one life. It is not that we should not expect to see any changes or growth; growth does come, but it may not be very dramatic. For example, over time, strong upheavals of the vital may become less severe and less frequent. This may not be much for one who is seeking realization of the Self, but it is an important gain from the point of the view of the transformation of the vital nature, an essential aim of the Integral Yoga. Similarly, one may find the mind and vital becoming calmer, one may see oneself growing in equality, or growing in understanding of oneself and others, one may find oneself growing in devotion, or even simply a stronger sympathy, empathy, or love for others. One may simply feel a stronger sense of purpose and direction in life, a stronger sense of the meaning of life. One may have fleeting experiences in dream or while meditating, which although temporarily uplifting, leave one feeling pretty much the same. All these kinds of changes, while not dramatic, are yet significant and point to real and lasting progress.

Actually, I believe it is difficult to really gauge progress in this Yoga because of its character and aim of transforming the nature. It is as if the Yoga Force was working on many different parts of oneself at once, or in no apparent order, sometimes on one thing, sometimes on other things. It may also raise various difficulties in our nature, forcing us to deal with them. In such cases, during such periods, we may feel as if life is more difficult, not less. In addition, through learning more about the yoga and through growing in consciousness about our nature, we may see more clearly or experience more vividly defects which are there. As we struggle with these defects in our nature, it feels as if we are not making progress, or even regressing to a lower level. But in actuality, this greater

awareness, this facing more acutely the defects in our nature is a great progress. But it doesn't necessarily feel that way.

Another reason it is difficult to gauge our progress is that progress may be taking place on the inner parts of our being of which we are not aware. Sometimes, if we have some conscious access to the inner consciousness, for example, through dreams, we may see there signs of our inner progress. Such progress in the inner consciousness may not manifest immediately in the outer consciousness, or may not do so in an obvious way. When certain difficulties become less frequent or disappear, we may not notice it. But also, sometimes progress that has taken place in the inner consciousness may take some time before it begins to manifest in the outer life which is more under the influence of physical inertia.

There is something else. It may be that the Divine uses our weaknesses and defects to its own advantage. One must be a little careful not to turn this into an excuse for continuing mistakes, but often it seems that it is our difficulties and the pain they engender that keeps us motivated towards progress. They become a focal point of our efforts, almost a symbol of the ignorance, unconsciousness, or selfishness that we must overcome. They force us to persevere, to strive harder, more intelligently and skillfully. They require us to turn to the Divine more completely because sometimes it seems we cannot overcome these difficulties by ourselves.

So we must be patient and persevere. We must not give up because after much effort we still face the same difficulties. Mother said that victory goes to the most persevering. We may struggle with something for a long time, and then the thing may suddenly be swept aside and disappear. But other things may then take its place. One by one we may need to clear out many such obstacles from our nature. This yoga is a long labor; it is not easy. There are delights and surprises that come in its course, descents of ananda or peace or light that keep us afloat, encouraged, but there is also much difficult labor.



Sri Aurobindo's perspective on Reality

by Martha Orton

Introduction

Sri Aurobindo's philosophy consists of the formal expression of spiritual realization and truth which he has shared with us. As such, it forms the basis for the perspective which he expresses throughout his works. Sri Aurobindo's view of the nature of reality is especially relevant as the foundation for understanding his yoga and his writings on the psychology of yoga, as well as for understanding his works on social and political themes. Moreover, it constitutes the basis from which Sri Aurobindo develops his conceptualization of the evolution of consciousness. His major philosophical work, *The Life Divine*, is the primary source for gaining an understanding of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy, including his perspective on reality. In addition, this can be discovered throughout numerous other writings, including his letters to his disciples, published as *Letters on Yoga*. This article examines this perspective, the core of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy, which has its origins in traditional Vedanta, yet also differs in some particularly meaningful respects.

Brahman and Sachchidananda

The concept of Brahman is essential to understanding traditional spiritual beliefs which are centered in Hinduism or derive from it. Brahman is the term used to refer to the Absolute, the Supreme Being. Brahman is also considered to be everything, the All, and it is believed that there is nothing which is not Brahman. In the scriptures, it is referred to frequently as "The One without a second," meaning that Brahman is all there is and that there is nothing else. Sri Aurobindo endorses this understanding of Brahman and it forms the foundation of all that follows in his philosophy as well as in the thought and



Martha facilitates online courses on Sri Aurobindo's philosophy. (Photo courtesy Martha Orton)

teachings of others whose spiritual basis is in the Vedas and Upanishads.

Brahman is inseparably linked with Sachchidananda, which is the Divine Being comprised of a trinity of Existence-Consciousness-Bliss. These three conjoined aspects of the Divine are considered to be what the Divine consists of. The Divine is Existence itself. Existence necessarily implies and consists of Consciousness. Then the scriptures explain that Existence itself is Bliss, that Consciousness itself is Bliss—essentially that Bliss is the very heart and essence of Existence, of All. The three are not only intertwined, but merge and are One. There is differentiation, but not difference.

Therefore we have a view of reality in which: (1) There is nothing but the Divine. The Divine is in All, All is in the Divine, and All is the Divine. (2) The Divine is Sachchidananda. The All is Existence-Consciousness-Bliss. From this we can only conclude that, at least from this perspective of the ancient texts, there is nothing but existence, consciousness, and bliss and nothing else exists or is real.

Sri Aurobindo's perspective on Reality

Sri Aurobindo affirms the perspective described above. He fully endorses the

concept of Brahman, affirming throughout his philosophical writings the belief that All is the Divine. He also affirms the reality of Sachchidananda. From these two concepts, which need to be seen as conjoined and inseparable, with each necessarily implying the other, widely ranging implications follow. For Sri Aurobindo, the reality of Brahman is unequivocal, as is the reality of Sachchidananda. These are the great truths which exist without qualification or exception. As a result, from his perspective we can take the statement of them completely literally: The Divine is in everything. Everything is in the Divine. The Divine is everything. Where Sri Aurobindo's perspective differs from more traditional scholars and seers is that he considers even matter to be Divine. The reality of Brahman is complete, absolute, pervasive. This view is especially exceptional when considered in relation to the traditional Hindu concept of Maya in which the world and life in it are considered to be an illusion and the only true reality to be the Divine, with the Divine seen as the Absolute, the Transcendent, existing above and apart from the manifestation.

In *The Life Divine* Sri Aurobindo weighs the perspectives of the materialist and the ascetic, carefully considering the merits and problems of each. He considers the materialist perspective, in which only the material world is considered to be real, as having benefited humanity by helping to dispel superstition and encouraging rational thought and inquiry. This has led to significant scientific advances, for example, which have been of great help to humanity and to life in the world, increasing our knowledge of material phenomena and our ability to cope with this level of reality. To the extent that the ascetic perspective, the mystic view which considers only the spirit to be real, regards the world as unreal, as an illusion, Sri Aurobindo describes this as resulting in neglect of the physical world and life within it, consequently leading to degradation of life on the material plane. He also explains how the mystic or spiritual seeker who has experience of the Absolute



can become so absorbed in this realization that he or she comes to consider only this to be real. High spiritual experience can result in all lesser consciousness and the things associated with it appearing to be unreal and completely inconsequential. Yet, most importantly, the ascetic perspective acknowledges the truth of the Divine. Consequently each of these two apparently opposite perspectives has both merits and disadvantages, and each contains elements of truth. Sri Aurobindo creates a new synthesis of the two perspectives, an integral perspective which incorporates the strengths of both.

In Sri Aurobindo's view of reality both matter and spirit are real. Also both are divine. This conclusion derives directly from a complete, wide and comprehensive perspective on Brahman. Therefore, instead of understanding Brahman as "the One without a second" to mean that there is only the Spirit, all else is unreal, Sri Aurobindo understands this statement to mean that all is real, all is Divine—Matter, Spirit—everything.

Involution of the Divine in matter

We need next to consider how the divinity of matter relates to its creation and to the creation of the universe and our world. While the reader is referred to *The Life Divine* for a more complete and subtle explanation, a simplistic one is given here. Sri Aurobindo describes Reality in a series of levels or expressions. It is not a hierarchy as such, since the Divine is indivisible, yet when we come to the manifested physical world, we necessarily regard this as a lower order, since it is not the pure Divine. Essentially there is the Absolute, the Transcendent—the vast Silent One which is and always has been. The Absolute is vast, eternal, limitless in every sense imaginable. Its power is Sachchidananda. By this dynamic power the Absolute extends Itself to create and sustain the universe. In this original extension into the creation matter was formed. Before the creation of matter there was only the one unmanifest Divine. In Its extension creating the manifest universe, the Divine used its unlimited

power to limit itself and create from part of Itself the world of forms. Consequently matter is necessarily, inherently, Divine since it derives from the One. The Divine is all that is. Matter is Its creation. The universe and our world are expressions of It. Therefore the Divine is within matter, as well as having created it, and supports its continuance through Its omnipotence. This involvement, literally, of the Divine in matter, is what Sri Aurobindo calls the involution of the Divine in the creation. Hence we see that Sri Aurobindo's interpretation of the meaning of Brahman is the most complete and comprehensive which can be proposed. In his view, the Divine is literally All, The Divine is literally in All, and All is literally, unquestionably, in the Divine. For Sri Aurobindo, the complete and total reality of Brahman underlies the entire conceptualization of his philosophy and his yoga.

The purpose of the creation

A central question of human thought is "Why are we here?" This is sometimes expressed as "If there is a God, why did he make us, why did he put us here?" The Vedas tell us that the Divine created the world and all its creatures for His delight. This is also spoken of as the Divine play or Lila, in Sanskrit. Sri Aurobindo describes this view:

If we look at World-Existence...in its relation to the self-delight of eternally existent being, we may regard, describe and realize it as Lila, the play, the child's joy, the poet's joy, the actor's joy, the mechanic's joy of the Soul of things eternally young, perpetually inexhaustible, creating and re-creating Himself in Himself for the sheer bliss of that self-creation, of that self-representation, —Himself the play, Himself the player, Himself the playground.¹

Since the Divine is infinite and has limitless capacities for expression, one of the forms this took was to create our universe, our world, and all the forms of life and matter within it. However, the creation

was not made only for His amusement, though that in itself could be sufficient, but has a profoundly meaningful purpose. Most interpretations of the Vedas see this purpose in terms of human beings coming to the understanding that they can seek enlightenment and ultimately become absorbed into the Absolute, becoming freed from life on earth, including the chain of life, death and rebirth, according to the belief in reincarnation. Therefore the traditional view of mankind's purpose is to discover and unite with the Divine, ultimately being reabsorbed into the Absolute, essentially returning to the divine Origin.

Sri Aurobindo accepts the view that the human purpose is spiritual development and realization with the goal being to discover and unite with the Divine. However, he takes this significantly further than previous spiritual thought has envisioned. Based on his comprehensive view of Brahman, Sri Aurobindo sees the involution of the Divine in matter as impelling a comprehensive evolution of mind, life and matter. Calling this the evolution of consciousness, Sri Aurobindo envisions a complete transformation of mind, life and matter from their original expression in the creation to the realization of their full divine potential. This is a gradual evolutionary process in which consciousness and matter itself reveal their inner divinity. The involution of the Divine in the manifestation not only enables, but actually makes inevitable, its ultimate evolution. The fulfillment of this process is the union of the individual being with the Divine. While this initially resonates as similar to the traditional interpretation of the Vedic view, Sri Aurobindo does not see the goal as the absorption of the individual consciousness back into the Absolute from which it once came. Instead he envisions the divinized individual being transformed into its divine expression and continuing to live in the world and, by its influence, facilitating the continued evolution. This is not only an individual process, but also a generalized one in which, ultimately, life on earth can become completely transformed.



Perfection and imperfection

In looking over daily life as well as reflecting on human history, it is obvious that life on earth is imperfect and fraught with problems. We might then ask how this can be if human beings and, in fact, matter itself, contain an element of the Divine. Sri Aurobindo describes a process of separation as occurring with the creation of the manifested world. According to this description, the perception of separate forms, as separate objects and beings, cloaks our ability to perceive the actual oneness which, nevertheless, pertains. The perception of separateness is necessary to enable interplay and interaction, without which there could be no growth and development, no evolution. Therefore individuation, both of objects and of human consciousness into the form of individuals, is essential for the divine play of life on earth, to enable the interaction which provides the field and opportunity for growth of consciousness and evolution in general. In the perception of separateness, then, we move away from a complete sense of union with the Divine, even having this completely concealed or masked from our view. Sri Aurobindo describes this process as moving into the ignorance, with ignorance being described as separation from the truth of oneness and union with the Divine. With human beings, this separation, and hence ignorance, becomes complete with the development of the ego.

There is, quite appropriately, much denigration in Eastern spiritual thought of the role played by the ego. It is seen as the primary obstacle between the individual and his or her soul, that which obstructs the spiritual vision and realization in the individual. Sri Aurobindo also regards the ego as an obstacle to spiritual development for much the same reasons. However, he also recognizes that it has an essential role to play in the process of individuation and the consequent growth of the individual. It is necessary for the full development of the individual, as one builds one's personality and individual competencies in life and also one's initial identity or sense of self in the formation of the outer being.

However, once an individual has developed at the mental level, the time comes when the ego needs to be transcended for further growth and development to take place, for the potential for spiritual growth to be realized.

Human beings have an innate drive for growth and progress. Sri Aurobindo writes in *The Life Divine* of the dissatisfaction inherent in humanity, describing it as a restlessness and disquiet in the face of imperfection and disharmony. He explains that Nature seeks harmony in all things and so human beings, driven as creatures of Nature, also seek harmony in their lives. Moreover, because human beings have a spark of the Divine within them, they are driven to seek perfection, to seek to liberate their inner divinity, to release their divine potential into life and action. It is in this way that we then come to understand how there is so much imperfection in beings, while the world is imbued with the Divine. The imperfection is the ignorance, the sense of separation from oneness, from divinity, and cloaks the inner Divine and its potential for realization and fulfillment. The impulsion for perfection is there. It is the light and power of the innate divinity within the manifestation. It is this that drives the evolution of consciousness, revealing the inner divinity eternally present.

The psychic being

Sri Aurobindo explains that the specific presence of the Divine in the individual human being is the psychic being. Having been a distinguished classical scholar while studying at Kings College, Cambridge, Sri Aurobindo uses the term "psychic" based on its original Greek meaning, where "psyche" means "soul." He identifies the psychic being as "the soul developing in the evolution."² It is a tiny element, "the spark of the Divine"³ within the being. It is the presence of the psychic being which enables and, in fact, drives the evolution of the individual. This presence of the Divine impels the individual to seek self-perfection, to be dissatisfied with the lower aspects of his or her nature, and

drives the individual toward the ultimate goal of union with the Divine. Where the human individual is concerned, the psychic being is the direct and clear evidence of the involution of the Divine in the creation. It is this involvement which both enables and impels the evolution of consciousness.

The Divine and the manifestation

In order to understand Sri Aurobindo's conception of Reality further, we need to consider how he sees the Divine as relating to the manifestation. We have briefly considered the Divine as creator and also noted that Sri Aurobindo regards the Divine as literally involved in Its creation, present there even at the level of matter itself. Next we need to explore what this means in terms of the role and presence of the Divine. Sri Aurobindo explains the Divine in terms of the silent, or passive, and active Brahman. The Divine, as the Absolute, the Transcendent, IS. This is a great state of being, infinite and vast beyond human conception. As such, It is also called the Unknowable, meaning that It is beyond the range of human knowledge. However, it should also be noted that Sri Aurobindo asserts that the Unknowable can be known. By this he means that human beings have the inner potential to attain spiritual knowledge, the true knowledge which consists of spiritual realization and is unrelated to intellectual accomplishment or capacity.

The Absolute expresses Itself through its active power of Sachchidananda, the great trinity of Existence-Consciousness-Bliss which is the foundation of the universe. Through his extensive research in the Vedas and his own exceptional spiritual realization, Sri Aurobindo discovered a great power and consciousness which he called the Supermind. This is the extension which Sachchidananda puts forth to enable the creation. In Supermind, there is still oneness, though Supermind enables differentiation, hence creating the multiplicity of forms for life in the world. Sri Aurobindo makes it clear that though there is differentiation at the level of Su-



permind, there is no division. All remains as Oneness. Division enters at the level of what he terms the Overmind, below which are several levels of consciousness (Intuition, Illumined Mind, Higher Mind) descending to what we usually consider to be mind. Sri Aurobindo explains that these levels of consciousness are actually levels of being. Sri Aurobindo also explains that the Divine extended Itself through the power of Sachchidananda, through the dynamic creative action of Supermind, and involved Itself in successive levels of expression down to the level of mind as we usually think of it (the active intellect), and life and matter. Also, Brahman is Brahman regardless of where and how it is expressed, conceals or reveals Itself, and whether active or passive. So all these levels are Brahman, though Brahman is concealed further and further through the descent into matter.

Brahman is One, eternal, undivided. However, It exists in two aspects: passive and active. The vast silent immutable Brahman, the passive aspect, is the support of the creation. It maintains and sustains the universe. Through Its active role, Brahman contains and extends Itself into the manifestation, dynamically asserting its influence. In Its expression and involvement in the life of the world, Brahman also sends forth emanations of Itself. These are the avatars who have come through the ages to offer the direct intervention of the Divine in the life of the world, doing so by their concrete physical presence. When we consider these aspects of the divine Reality, we see that it ranges from the Absolute, the Transcendent, completely and pervasively down through all levels of being to Its actual presence in matter, with the Divine being involved actively and comprehensively throughout, including taking a direct interest and involvement in life on earth.

Sri Aurobindo writes extensively of the nature of Brahman and Its relation to the universe and to the individual. The following passage comprises a brief summary:

In relation to the universe the Supreme is Brahman, the one reality which is

not only the spiritual, material and conscious substance of all the ideas and forces and forms of the universe, but their origin, support and possessor, the cosmic and supracosmic Spirit. All the last terms to which we can reduce the universe, Force and Matter, Name and Form, Purusha and Prakriti [Soul and Nature], are still not entirely that which the universe really is either in itself or its nature. As all that we are is the play and form, the mental, psychic, vital and physical expression of a supreme Self unconditioned by mind, life and body, the universe too is the play and form and cosmic soul-expression and nature-expression of a supreme existence which is unconditioned by force and matter, unconditioned by idea and name and form, unconditioned by the fundamental distinction of Purusha and Prakriti. Our supreme Self and the supreme Existence which has become the universe are one spirit, one self, one existence. The individual is in nature one expression of the universal Being, in spirit an emanation of the Transcendence. For if he finds his self, he finds too that his own true self is not this natural personality, this created individuality, but is a universal being in its relations with others and with Nature and in its upward term a portion of the living front of a supreme transcendent Spirit.⁴

Conclusion

We can summarize Sri Aurobindo's perspective on reality as being based on a complete and comprehensive view of the reality of Brahman. All is in the Divine. The Divine is in All. The Divine is All. From this we see that Sri Aurobindo regards Sachchidananda, the sublime trinity of Existence-Consciousness-Bliss as the pervasive omnipresent power emanating from the Transcendent, the Absolute. The Divine has used its freedom to limit itself to create the universe and the world of separate forms, all of which are expressions of Himself. He has done this for the delight of the play, the delight of existence.

This can also be explained in terms of the joy of self-finding. For when the apparently separate beings rediscover their divine Origin and unite with It, they experience the bliss of that union. This has been regarded as the purpose of human life from the literature of the Vedas. Sri Aurobindo envisions even more than this, conceiving of a complete transformation, a divinization, of the individual and also of the collective life on earth in the evolution of consciousness.

References

All quotations are from: Sri Aurobindo, *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library (SABCL)*, Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1970.

1. SABCL, vol. 18 (*The Life Divine*), pp. 102-103.
2. SABCL, vol. 22 (*Letters on Yoga*), p. 301
3. Ibid., p. 296.
4. SABCL, vol. 20, (*The Synthesis of Yoga*), p. 282.

On the reading of Savitri

by Richard Pearson

To read inspired poetry lifts us above ourselves to realms of beauty, delight and power,—closer to divinity. In reading *Savitri*,

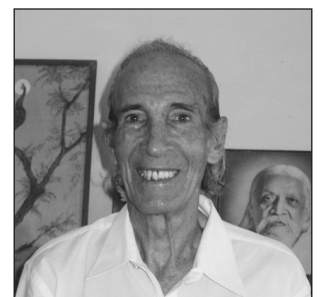


Photo courtesy Richard Pearson

however, we can experience what the Mother said once to Norman Dowssett: "For the opening of the psychic, for the growth of the consciousness and even of the improvement of English, it is good to



read one or two pages of *Savitri* every day.” (Amal Kiran, *Our Light and Delight*; 2nd ed., p. 193) We also become aware of the depths of our own being.

True, we constantly soar upwards, ascending to levels of consciousness far beyond our normal ken. We can reach to terrestrial, universal and even cosmic states of consciousness. I believe we also touch the transcendental level too.

Let us study how the Mother herself looked at this self-transforming and world-revealing epic. This is what she observed while talking to Satprem on 18 Sept. 1962:

I am going to take the whole section of *Savitri* (to start with, I'll see later) from “The Debate of Love and Death” to the point where the Supreme Lord makes his prophecy about the earth's future; it's long—several pages long. This is for my own satisfaction...

I am not doing it to show it to people or to have anyone read it, but to remain in *Savitri's* atmosphere, for I love that atmosphere...

I know that light. I am immediately plunged into it each time I read *Savitri*. It is a very, very beautiful light.

So I am going to see.

First of all, I'll concentrate on it just as Sri Aurobindo said it in English, using French words. Then I'll see if something comes without changing anything—that is, if the same inspiration he had comes in French. It will be an interesting thing to do. If I can do one, two, three lines a day, that's all I need: I will spend one hour every day like that.

I don't have anything in mind. All I know is that being in that light above gives me great joy. For it is a supramental light—a supramental light of aesthetic beauty, and very, very harmonious. (*Mother's Agenda*, pp. 347-348)

Once, for the second of December program, the Mother chose a passage from *Savitri*, book eleven. Svetlana was directing the performance and I believe she must have asked the Mother to guide us by reading out the whole portion her-

self. The Mother agreed and called the few of us with Svetlana at noon to the Darshan room. I distinctly remember her seated in her chair with a table lamp at her side since the shutters were closed to avoid outside noise. Vishvanath-da was there to record the Mother's reading so that later we could practise by listening to it.

There was a short silence as we sat on the floor in front of her. She smiled and said softly: “Let us read to Sri Aurobindo.” I found this so sweet and touching. She then began to read the oft-heard passage beginning with this line: “Choose, Spirit, thy supreme choice not given again.” Whenever she pronounced the word ‘Lord’ there was such tenderness in her voice that I felt she was addressing Sri Aurobindo himself. After she had finished I remember her giving a Divine Grace flower to each of us. Little did I realize at the time how great was the Grace we had just received!

Here are some extracts from letters to Narad from Amal Kiran:

What Huta told you about reading or reciting *Savitri* must have been a directive from the Mother— or something mixed with it from what I may have said: ‘Slowly, clearly, precisely,’ it is very fine advice... Read slowly with an awareness that there is a metre, i.e. long syllables, short syllables and a combination of them. Metre means that there is a design, a pattern and the fact that poetry is divided into lines means that each line has to be felt in a certain shape. So there must be a short pause after each line even if the sense of the line continues into the next...

We must not forget that *Savitri* is poetry, generally of five metrical beats: that is, it is by and large iambic pentameter. One must be aware of this fact and also of the variations played upon this base. Of course one must be familiar with the usual stress in English words. The voice must not fall into any sing-song. English poetry is to be read and not sung, but since it is metrical in a marked way, some sense of the metre must come through. Then there is the matter of end-stopped lines and

of enjambment, that is the sense of one line running over to the next... So, whether end-stopped or made to flow over, there must be in different ways a ‘delay’ between line and line. The length of the delay is to be decided by the reciter's sense of his subject.

The very *raison d'être* of the division into lines is the need to show each line in its own weight in the metre chosen. *Savitri* is special in its meaning and message. It has a certain rhythm which is at the same time like all other poetry and yet with a subtle difference. And its special character makes it what Sri Aurobindo calls Overhead Poetry—that is, poetry that comes from planes of consciousness above the mind.” (*Mother India*, Nov. 2011, pp. 964-965)

Savitri is a crystallization of the Universal Mother in an earthly personality for the Earth's luminous future represented by Satyavan. Everything may be seen as symbolic. From the time of the rishis, deep experiences were expressed in double terms: an inner one for the initiate and an outer for the outer ear. Sri Aurobindo does call *Savitri* ‘a legend and a symbol.’

It is worth recalling what the Mother wrote when asked what was the true method to study the works of Sri Aurobindo:

The true method is to read a little at a time, with concentration, keeping the mind as silent as possible, without actively trying to understand, but turned upwards, in silence, and aspiring for the light. Understanding will come little by little.

And later, in one or two years, you will read the same thing again and then you will know that the first contact had been vague and incomplete, and that true understanding comes later, after having tried to put it into practice. (*Collected WM*, Vol. 12, p. 206).

Following these suggestions in our reading of *Savitri*, we surely will progress more rapidly on the path, while also enjoying more fully its wonderful divine atmosphere.



Source Material

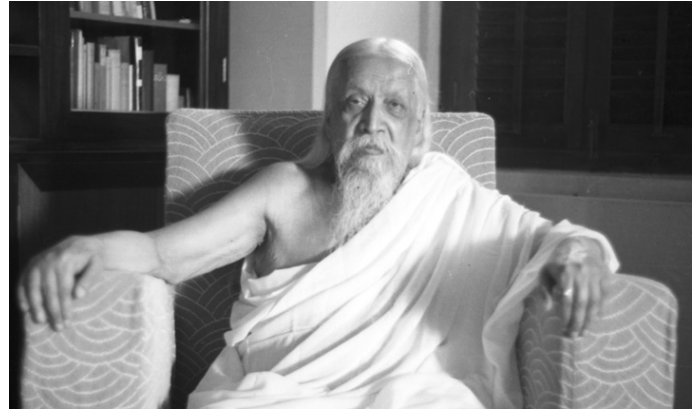
Yogic Force and the divine Force

by Sri Aurobindo

The invisible Force producing tangible results both inward and outward is the whole meaning of the Yogic consciousness. Your question about Yoga bringing merely a feeling of Power without any result was really very strange. Who would be satisfied with such a meaningless hallucination and call it Power? If we had not had thousands of experiences showing that the Power within could alter the mind, develop its powers, add new ones, bring in new ranges of knowledge, master the vital movements, change the character, influence men and things, control the conditions and functionings of the body, work as a concrete dynamic Force on other forces, modify events, etc., etc., we would not speak of it as we do. Moreover, it is not only in its results but in its movements that the Force is tangible and concrete. When I speak of feeling Force of Power, I do not mean simply having a vague sense of it, but feeling it concretely and consequently being able to direct it, manipulate it, watch its movement, be conscious of its mass and intensity and in the same way of that of other, perhaps opposing forces; all these things are possible and usual by the development of Yoga.

It is not, unless it is supramental Force, a Power that acts without conditions and limits. The conditions and limits under which Yoga or Sadhana has to be worked out are not arbitrary or capricious; they arise from the nature of things. These including the will, receptivity, assent, self-opening and surrender of the Sadhak have to be respected by the Yoga-force, unless it receives a sanction from the Supreme to override everything and get something done, but that sanction is sparingly given. It is only if the supramental Power came fully down, not merely sent its influences through the Overmind, that things could be very radically directed towards that object—for then the sanction would not be rare. For the Law of the Truth would be at work, not constantly balanced by the law of the Ignorance.

Still the Yoga-force is always tangible and concrete in the way I have described and has tangible results. But it is invisible—not like a blow given or the rush of a motor car knocking somebody down which the physical senses can at once perceive. How is the mere physical mind to know that it is there and working? By its results? But how can it know that the results were that of the Yogic force and not of something else? One of two things it must be. Either it must allow the consciousness to go inside, to become aware of inner things, to believe in the experience of the invisible and the supraphysical, and then by experience, by the opening of new capacities, it becomes conscious of these forces and can see, follow and use their workings, just as the Scientist uses the



Sri Aurobindo in 1950. (Photo courtesy Sri Aurobindo Ashram)

unseen forces of Nature. Or one must have faith and watch and open oneself and then it will begin to see how things happen, it will notice that when the Force was called in, there began after a time to be a result, then repetitions, more repetitions, more clear and tangible results, increasing frequency, increasing consistency of results, a feeling and awareness of the Force at work—until the experience becomes daily, regular, normal, complete. These are the two main methods, one internal, working from in outward, the other external, working from outside and calling the inner force out till it penetrates and is visible in the exterior consciousness. But neither can be done if one insists always on the extrovert attitude, the external concrete only and refuses to join to it the internal concrete—or if the physical mind at every step raises a dance of doubts which refuses to allow the nascent experience to develop. Even the Scientist carrying on a new experiment would never succeed if he allowed his mind to behave in that way.

Well, I made the mistake of "thinking aloud with my pen" when I wrote that unfortunate sentence¹ about the force I had put for the success of the gramophone. As my whole action consists of the use of force, —except, of course, my writing answers to correspondence which is concrete, but even that I am made to do by and with a force, otherwise I can assure you I would not and could not do it, —I am sometimes imprudent enough to make this mistake. It is foolish to do so because a spiritual force or any other is obviously something invisible and its action is invisible, so how can anyone believe in it? Only the results are seen and how is one to know that the results are the result of the force? It is not concrete.

But I am myself rather puzzled by your instances of the concrete. How are the schemes of a schemer concrete? Something happens and you tell me it was the result of a schemer's scheme. But the schemer's scheme was a product of his consciousness and not at all concrete; it was in his mind and another fellow's mind is not concrete to me unless I am a Yogi or a thought-reader.



I can only infer from some things he said or did that he had a scheme, things which I have not myself seen or heard and which are therefore not to me concrete. So how can I accept or believe in the scheme of the schemer? And even if I saw or heard, I am not bound to believe that it was a scheme or that which happened was the result of a scheme. He may have acted on a chain of impulses and what happened may have been the result of something quite different or itself purely accidental. Again, how did you control the music choir? By word and signs etc. which are of course concrete. But what made you use those words and signs and why did they produce a control? And why did the other fellows do what you told them? What made them do that? It was something in your and their consciousness, I suppose; but that is not concrete. Again, scientists talk about electricity which is, it seems, an energy, a force in action and it seems that everything has been done by this energy, my own physical being is constituted by it and it is at the base of all my mental and life energies. But that is not concrete to me. I never felt my being constituted by electricity, I cannot feel it working out my thoughts and life processes—so how can I believe in it or accept it? The force I use is not a sweet blessing—a blessing (silent) certainly is not concrete, like a stone or a kick or other things seizable by the senses; it is not even a mere will saying within me "let it be so"—that also is not concrete. It is a force of consciousness directed towards or on persons and things and happenings—but obviously a force of consciousness is not seizable by the physical senses, so not concrete. I may feel it and the person acted on may feel it or may not feel it, but as the feeling is internal and not external and perceivable by others, it cannot be called concrete and nobody is bound to accept or believe in it. For instance, if I cure someone (without medicines) of a fever and send him fresh and full of strength to his work, all in the course of a single night, still why should any third person believe or accept that it was my force that did it? It may have been Nature or his imagination that made him cure (three cheers for those concrete things, imagination and Nature!)—or the whole thing happened of itself. So, you see the case is hopeless, it can't be proved at all—at all. 6-12-1935

The mistake is to think that it [Sri Aurobindo's Force] must be either a miraculous force or else none. There is no miraculous force and I do not deal in miracles. The word Divine here is out of place if it is taken as an always omnipotently acting Power. Yogic Force is then better; it simply means a higher consciousness using its power, a spiritual and supraphysical force acting on the physical world directly. One has to train the instrument to be a channel of this force; it works also according to a certain law and under certain conditions. The Divine does not work arbitrarily or as a thaumaturge; He acts upon the world along the lines that have been fixed by the nature and purpose of the world we live in—by

an increasing action of the thing that has to manifest, not by a sudden chance or disregard of all the conditions of the work to be done. If it were not so, there would be no need of Yoga or time or human action or instruments or of a Master and disciples or of a Descent or anything else. It could simply be a matter for the *tathāstu* and nothing more. But that would be irrational if you like and worse than irrational—"childish." This does not mean that interventions, things apparently miraculous, do not happen—they do. But all cannot be like that. 6-2-1935

What is Sri Aurobindo's force? It is not a personal property of this body or mind. It is a higher Force used by me or acting through me. Of course it is a Divine Force, for there is only one force acting in the world, but it acts according to the nature of the instrument. Yogic Force is different from others because it is a special power of the spiritual consciousness.

There was an obvious intervention in the case he speaks of—

Yogic Force is different from others because it is a special power of the spiritual consciousness.

but the agent or process could only be determined if one knew all the circumstances.

Such interventions are

frequent; e.g. my uncle's daughter was at her last gasp, the doctors had gone away telling him that there was no more to be done. He simply sat down to pray—as soon as he had finished, the death symptoms were suspended and the girl recovered without further treatment (it was a case of typhoid fever). Several cases of that kind have come within my personal observation.

I have marginalised on the Force—to write more completely would need more time than I have tonight. Of course, if it depended on a few cases of illness, it would be a thing of no certitude or importance. If the 'Force' were a mere freak or miracle, it would be equally trivial and unimportant, even if well-attested. It is only of importance if it is part of the consciousness and the life used at all times, not only for illness but for whatever one has to do. It manifests in various ways—as a strength of the consciousness evenly supporting the life and action, as a power put forth for this or that object of the outward life, as a special Force from above drawn down to raise and increase the scope of the consciousness and its height and transform not only by a miraculous but by a serious, steady organised action following certain definite lines. Its effectiveness as well as its action is determined first by its own height and intensity or that of the plane from which it comes (it may be from any plane ranging from the Higher Mind upward to the Overmind), partly by the condition of the objects or the field in which it acts, partly by the movement which it has, to effect, general or particular. It is neither a magician's wand nor a child's bauble, but something one has to observe, understand, develop, master before one can use it aright or else—for few can use it except in a limited manner—be its instrument. This is only a preface. 6-2-1935 (SABCL, Vol. 26, pp. 197-202)



On opening to the divine Force

by the Mother

Sweet Mother, here it is written: "The personal effort has to be transformed progressively into a movement of the Divine Force. If you feel conscious of the Divine Force, then call it in more and more to govern your effort, to take it up, to transform it into something not yours, but the Mother's." But if one is not conscious of the Divine Force?

You must become conscious. Aspire, ask, aspire sincerely.

You see, generally speaking, you are here, we have a class, we have just read something, you have questions to ask; while you are here you ask questions and think of the subject. But as soon as you go out or go home, you think of a thousand other things, don't you? So, how do you expect that you will become conscious of the divine Force? We have hardly about half an hour here, that's not a very long time to become conscious of the Force.

But if it is your sole preoccupation, if truly, with all your being, you want to become conscious of the divine Force, you will be able to. You can't, simply because you think about it from time to time; when the subject comes up, you ask yourself, "Why, it is true, how can I do it?" And then, the next minute you don't think about it any more. So, how do you expect this to happen? You must be very attentive, you must be very silent, must observe yourself very clearly. And you must be very humble; that is, be willing not to play a great part in all this story. The misfortune is that usually either the vital being or the mental being or even the physical being is very anxious to play a part, very anxious. So it swells up, takes up a lot of place, covers the rest; and it covers it so well that one can't even become aware of the presence of the divine Force because the personal movement of the physical, the body, the vital, the mind, covers everything with its own importance.

Listen: if every evening before going to sleep you take off only a tiny minute, like that, and in this little minute, with all the concentration you are capable of you ask to become conscious of the divine Force, simply like that, nothing more; in the morning when waking up, before beginning your day, if you do the same thing, take a minute off, concentrate as much as you can and ask to become conscious of the divine Force, you will see, after some time, it will happen. Nothing but these small things which are nothing at all and take no time.

One day it will happen. Only, you must do it with concentration, intensity and sincerity; that is, it must not happen while you are asking for this, another part of your being is telling itself, "After all, this has no importance." Or maybe you think of something else, what you are going to put on or the person you will meet, anything at all, a thousand desires. You must be there, fully, for one minute. Of course if you multiply the minute, it goes so much the quicker. But as I also said, if one is able not to contradict the next minute the aspiration one had the minute before, it is easier; if not, it pushes sincerity away. (CWM, Vol. 6, pp. 398-400)



The Mother. (Photo courtesy Sri Aurobindo Ashram)

Mother, last time we read: "It does not matter what defects you may have in your nature. The one thing that matters is your keeping yourself open to the Force." Mother, if one has defects, how can one open to the Force?

I think everyone has defects. So if it were necessary not to have any defects in order to be open, nobody could be open. One always has defects, to begin with. One is not made of a single piece. This is the main reason. There are many different parts in the being which sometimes are quite independent of one another and take hold of the consciousness almost in turn and sometimes even in an altogether regular order. So, when part of the being has goodwill and already a kind of perception of what the divine force is, you see, this opens the being and puts it into contact with this force. But it is not always there. There are other parts which come to the front, which have defects, bad habits, and which can veil the consciousness completely. But if one keeps the memory of the part which was open, one can keep the opening all the same, though outwardly the part that is active is not particularly interested and not even able to understand. But the other part can continue to be open and receive the force. (CWM, Vol 6, p. 394)

* * *

How can we make the mind and vital a "clear field"?

Make what?... Yes, it is difficult. (Laughter) It is a great task. Well, it is always the same thing; first of all you must understand what is meant by being clear. And then you must aspire, and with persistence; and each time something comes to obstruct you, you must brush it aside, push it back, not accept it.

The mind and vital have a very bad habit: when one has succeeded through aspiration in having an experience, being in contact with the divine force, immediately they rush forward to make it their own property, you see, like that (gesture), as a cat jumps on a mouse. And then they catch it and say, "It is for me." And then the mind turns it into all kinds of speculations and



affirmations and constructions and takes great pride in it, and the vital uses the power to fulfil its own desires.

So, in order to avoid this it is said that they must be clear, quiet, peaceful, and must not rush at the force which is trying to manifest and make of it a tool for their personal use. For the mind to be clear it must be silent – at least to a certain extent, and for the vital to be clear it must give up its desires, have no desires and impulses and passions. This indeed is the essential condition. Later, if one goes into details, neither of them should have any preferences, attachments, any particular way of being or particular set of ideas. (CWM, Vol. 6, p. 396)

* * *

“Will and aspiration are needed to bring down the aid of the Divine Force and to keep the being on its side in its dealings with the lower powers.” What is the meaning of “keep the being on its side”?

“To keep on its side” – it is, for instance... you see, there is on one side – how shall I put it? – let us take the army, the army of the divine forces, on the other side the army of the forces of ordinary nature; so whether to keep on the side of this army or of that, that's what it means.

You do not understand? That is to say, to go to this side, join this or that side. If I keep on the side of the divine forces I join those who are fighting for the divine forces like an army. If I put myself on the side of the ordinary vital forces of life, I go over to that side and forsake the others, I go over to that side. (CWM, Vol. 6, 389-90)

* * *

During the 1929 talk someone asked what should be done to effect the cure of an illness, whether one should exercise one's willpower or only live in the confidence that it will be done or rely entirely on the divine Power. Mother replied:

“All these are so many ways of doing the same thing...”

But whatever you ask for or whatever your effort, you must feel, even while trying your best, using knowledge or putting forth power that the result depends upon the Divine Grace.” (23 June 1929)

But first you must will it, I believe that is quite important ! There is no one method to follow... I read this and at the same time ask myself how many people would be satisfied to hear this. All the materialism and positivism in the world have been constructed just because people do not want the Divine Grace to come in at all. If they are cured they want to say, “It is I who cured myself”; if they make a progress, they want to think, “It is I who have progressed”; if they organise something, they want to proclaim, “It is I who am organising.” And many, many of those who try to do otherwise, if they look within themselves, would see how seldom spontaneously, sincerely (not as when one

says something because one knows it should be said, or as one thinks something because it is the fashion to think like that but spontaneously, sincerely, with all their heart) they know that it is not they who have done the thing, but the divine force. When they have made a progress, when they have changed something in themselves, when they have learnt something, then when is it that spontaneously, without an effort of will, without thinking, without needing to tell oneself, “One ought to think like this”, spontaneously one knows that without the divine force nothing would have been done ? Look into yourself, it is a very interesting thing, very interesting, how many times a day you think (without even telling yourself), “I have done this”, “I have been able to do that”, “I succeeded in this”, “I failed in that”, and when you have made a good effort, when you have obtained a result, you need a little moment for thought, or more, to tell yourself, “If the divine force had not helped me, probably I would not have been able to do it.” The spontaneous thing is, “Oh ! I have succeeded”, isn't that true ? There is indeed a part of the mind which has been educated, which has learnt, has reflected, understood, which is well-disposed and truly feels that in reality it is like that, but this is only one part of the mind, and it is not always active, sometimes it must be called up, asked its advice, “What is then the best attitude to have ?”, “What should I think ?” I believe all who have taken up yoga, if they are sincere, if they reflect for a moment, tell themselves, “I was not aware of it, but if I have succeeded, it was probably because the divine forces were there to help me, otherwise I would not have been able to succeed.” This is well understood. But there comes a moment when one knows that one would not have been able to lift a finger if these forces had not been there. That comes later... But to begin with, how many times, if one thinks, if one quite simply observes oneself, does one catch oneself saying, “It is I !” And, then, one congratulates oneself sometimes, one says, “After all I can do something, I am capable !” I am going further: how many people would be capable of doing anything at all if simply deprived of the pleasure of being able to tell themselves, “I have done this, I have realised that, I have made a progress, how well I played this game” ? How many people would be able to sincerely do something if this pleasure were taken away ? I have known individuals whose mind was much more developed than the rest of the being, they had understood very well (almost too well); they sat down to meditate and all their energy was gone, all vitality evaporated into a kind of peace, not unpleasant, but very still. There is no more need to do anything, no longer any need to move, one dreams... Under a tree, arms crossed, one leaves the Divine to do everything for oneself, including feeding you if you need it. This is perhaps very well, but this shows that the instrument is not ready; it is not really at the service of the Divine, it is at the service of the ego, and when the ego is taken away, it does nothing any longer. Therefore, so long as one lives in the ego this illusion is necessary to make you act; it is necessary to keep up action until one is completely transformed or, in any case, till the true consciousness is established. (CWM, Vol. 4, 279-280).



The poetry room

To the sea

O grey wild sea,
Thou hast a message, thunderer, for me.
 Their huge wide backs
Thy monstrous billows raise, abysmal cracks
 Dug deep between.
One pale boat flutters over them, hardly seen.
 I hear thy roar
Call me, "Why dost thou linger on the shore
 With fearful eyes
Watching my tops visit their foam-washed skies?
 This trivial boat
Dares my vast battering billows and can float.
 Death if it find,
Are there not many thousands left behind?
 Dare my wide roar,
Nor cling like cowards to the easy shore.
 Come down and know
What rapture lives in danger and o'erthrow."
 Yes, thou great sea,
I am more mighty and outbillow thee.
 On thy tops I rise;
'Tis an excuse to dally with the skies.
 I sink below
The bottom of the clamorous world to know.
 On the safe land
To linger is to lose what God has planned
 For man's wide soul,
Who set eternal godhead for its goal.
 Therefore He arrayed
Danger and difficulty like seas and made
 Pain and defeat,
And put His giant snares around our feet.
 The cloud He informs
With thunder and assails us with His storms,
 That man may grow
King over pain and victor of o'erthrow
 Matching his great
Unconquerable soul with adverse Fate.
 Take me, be
My way to climb the heavens, thou rude great sea.
 I will seize thy mane,
O lion, I will tame thee and disdain;
 Or else below
Into thy salt abysmal caverns go,
 Receive thy weight
Upon me and be stubborn as my Fate.
 I come, O Sea,
To measure my enormous self with thee.

—Sri Aurobindo

From Year of the world*

Give reverence, O man, to mystery,
Keep your soul patient, and with closed eye hear.
Know that the Good is in all things, the whole
Being by him pervaded and upheld.
He is the will, the thwarting circumstance,
The two opposing forces equal both—
Birth, Death, are one. Think not the Lotus flower
Or tulip is more honoured than grass,
The bindweed, or the thistle. He who kneels
To Cama, kneeleth unto me; the maid
Who sings to Ganga sings to me; I am
Wisdom unto the wise, and cunning lore
Unto the subtle. He who knows his soul,
And from thence looketh unto mine; who sees
All underneath the moon regardlessly,
Living on silent, as a shaded lamp
Burns with steady flame: —he sure shall find me—
He findeth wisdom, greatness, happiness.
Know, further, the Great One delighteth not
In him who works, and strives, and is against
The nature of the present. Not the less
Am I the gladness of the conqueror—
And the despair of impotence that fails.
I am the ultimate, the tendency
Of all things to their nature, which is mine.
Put round thee garments of rich softness, hang
Fine gold about thine ankles, hands, and ears,
Set the rich ruby and rare diamond
Upon thy brow. —I made them, I also
Made them be sought by thee; thou lack'st them not?
Then throw them whence they came, and leave with them
The wish to be aught else than nature forms.
Know that the great Good in the age called First,
Beheld a world of mortals, 'mong whom none
Enquired for Truth, because no falsehood was:
Nature was Truth: man held whate'er he wished:
No will was thwarted, and no deed was termed,
Good, Evil. In much wisdom is much grief.
He who increases knowledge sorrow also
Takes with it, till he rises unto me,
Knowing that I am in all, still the same:
Knowing that I am Peace in the contented.
I, Great, revealed unto the Seer, how man
Had wandered, and he gave a name and form
To my communings and he called it Veda.
To him who understands it is great gain—
Who understandeth not, to him the Sign
And ritual is authority and guide,
A living and expiring confidence.

—William Bell Scott



A meditation*

The Self is Peace; that Self am I.
The Self is Strength; that Self am I.
What needs this trembling strife
With phantom threats of Form and Time and Space?
Could once my Life
Be shorn of their illusion and efface
From its clear heaven that stormful imagery,
My Self were seen
An Essence free, unchanging, strong, serene.

The Self is Peace. How placid dawns
The Summer's parent hour
Over the dewy maze that drapes the fields,
Each drooped wild flower,
Or where the lordship of the garden shields
Select Court beauties and exclusive lawns!
'Tis but the show
And fitful dream of Peace the Self can know.

The Self is Strength, Let Nature rave,
And tear her maddened breast,
Now doom the drifting ship, with blackest frown,
Or now, possessed
With rarer frenzy, wreck the quaking town,
And bury quick beneath her earthy wave—
She cannot break
One fibre of that Strength, one atom shake.

The Self is one with the Supreme
Father in fashioning,
Though clothed in perishable weeds that feel
Pain's mortal sting,
The unlifting care, the wound that will not heal;
Yet these are not the Self—they only seem.
From faintest jar
Of whirring worlds the true Self broods afar.

Afar he whispers to the mind
To rest on the Good Law,
To know that naught can fall without its range,
Nor any flaw
Of chance disturb its reign, or shadow of Change;
That what can bind the life the Law must bind—
Whatever hand
Dispose the lot, it is by that Command;

To know no suffering can beset
Our lives, that is not due,
That is not forged by our own act and will;
Calmly to view

Whate'er betide of seeming good or ill.
The worst we can conceive but pays some debt
Or breaks some seal,
To free us from the bondage of the Wheel.

—Paul Hookham

Sonnet on a sleeping world*

Awake and yet asleep! The whole world lies
Unconscious of its own unconscious state;
Destructive of itself and blind to fate,
Ignoring all the warnings of the wise.
For here and there a man may waken, rise,
Shake off the shackles ere it be too late,
His mind to master, anger, greed and hate
Drive out and penetrate the veiled guise
Of man mechanical—his nature true—
Which he perceives, his helplessness he knows;
All others cling to dreams that they can do
Whate'er they will—themselves mere puppet shows,
Their strings worked by events, nor do they heed
The call to rouse as slaves from fetters freed.

—Michael Dillon

Atonement*

Not for the faint of heart the search for Truth,
Not for the weak of will or dull intent;
Beset with troubles from the very start,
Pulled back by shackles, torn apart by doubts,
Until from perseverance, from the dark
A tiny ray of light shines down the Way,
To show a single step ahead—no more.
And if the eyes by then are not too blind,
By lengthy struggle with the written word;
And if the ears at last are not too deaf,
From listening to the sounds of argument;
And if the teeming brain is not too dulled
To grasp the Truth, so long and hardly sought;
Then all materialism falls in place.
A true perspective of the world is grasped,
Where earthly lusts and wants no longer count
For more than they are worth, in proper place;
All merged together in the true Desire
Which rises over all and with it brings
The sense of Happiness, because the feet
Are set upon the rightful Way to God.
To reach At-onement with the Trinity
Of Beauty, Truth and Love eternally.

—Michael Dillon



Arise, my soul! and urge thy flight*

I

Arise, my soul! And urge thy flight,
And fix thy view on God alone.
As eagles spring to meet the light,
And gaze upon the radiant sun.

As planets on and onward roll,
As streams pour forth their swelling tide,
Press on thy steady course, my soul,
Nor pause, nor stop, nor turn aside.

Planets and suns shall dim their fire;
Earth, air, and sea, shall melt away;
But though each star of heaven expire,
Thou may'st survive that awful day.

In life, in death, thy course hold on:
Though nature's self in ruins lie,
Pause not till heaven-gate be won;
Then rest; for there thou canst not die.

II

Beneath this starry arch
Nought resteth or is still:
But all things hold their march,
As if by one great will:
Moves one, move all;
Hark to the footfall!
On, on, for ever!

Yon sheaves were once but seed:
Will ripens into deed.
As cave-drops swell the streams,
Day-thoughts feed nightly dreams;
And sorrow tracketh wrong,
As echo follows song,
On, on, for ever!

By night, like stars on high,
The hours reveal their train;
They whisper, and go by;
I never watch in vain:
Moves one, move all:
Hark to the footfall!
On, on, for ever!

They pass the cradle-head,
And there a promise shed;

They pass the moist new grave,
And bid rank verdure wave;
They bear through every clime
The harvests of all time,
On, on, for ever!

III

All men are equal in their birth,
Heirs of the earth and skies;
All men are equal when that earth
Fades from their dying eyes.

All wait alike on Him whose power
Upholds the life He gave;
The sage within his star-lit tower,
The savage in his cave.

God meets the throngs that pay their vows
In courts their hands have made;
And hears the worshipper who bows
Beneath the plantain shade.

'Tis man alone who difference sees,
And speaks of high and low,
And worships those and tramples these,
While the same path they go.

Oh, let man hasten to restore
To all their rights of love;
In power and wealth exult no more;
In wisdom lowly move.

Ye great! Renounce your earth-born pride;
Ye low, your shame and fear:
Live as ye worship side by side;
Your brotherhood revere.

—Harriet Martineau

Love's Lord*

When weight of all the garner'd years
Bows me, and praise must find relief
In harvest-song, and smiles and tears
Twist in the band that binds my sheaf;

Thou known Unknown, dark, radiant sea
In whom we live, in whom we move,
My spirit must lose itself in Thee,
Crying a name Life, Light, or Love.

—Edward Dowden

*From Alan Jacobs (Ed.), *Poetry for the Spirit*. London: Watkins, 2002.



Apropos

A Transcendent who is beyond all world and all Nature and yet possesses the world and its nature, who has descended with something of himself into it and is shaping it into that which as yet it is not, is the Source of our being, the Source of our works and their Master. —Sri Aurobindo

Surrender means to consecrate everything in oneself to the Divine, to offer all one is and has, not to insist on one's ideas, desires, habits, etc., but to allow the divine Truth to replace them by its knowledge, will and action everywhere. —Sri Aurobindo

The storm is only at the surface of the being; in the depths all is quiet. —The Mother

We must be free of all selfishness to serve properly the Divine's cause. —The Mother

Everyone has been made for some particular work, and the desire for that work has been put into him. —Rumi

Our best work is done, our greatest influence is exerted, when we are without thought of self. All great geniuses know this. Let us open ourselves to the one Divine Actor and let Him act; let us do nothing ourselves. —Swami Vivekananda

There is guidance for each of us, and by lowly listening we shall hear the right word...For you there is a reality, a fit place and congenial duties. Place yourself in the middle of the stream of power and wisdom which animates all whom it floats, and you are without effort impelled to truth, to right and perfect contentment. —Ralph Waldo Emerson

A life is either all spiritual or not spiritual at all. No man can serve two masters. Your life is shaped by the end you live for. You are made in the image of what you desire. —Thomas Merton

When people say they are looking for happiness, I ask, What are you giving to the world? —Oprah Winfrey

Truth is immediate, radiant, here now. It is not that truth has to be discovered—only you have to become aware. Truth is already here. —Osho

Take no notice of the ego and its activities, but see only the light behind. —Ramana Maharshi

The soul can grow only in freedom. Love gives freedom. And when you give freedom, you are free, that's what detachment is. If you enforce bondage on the other, you will be in imprisonment on your own accord. If you bind the other, the other will bind you; if you define the other, the other will define; if you are trying to possess the other, the other will possess you. —Osho

Spiritual freedom is freedom from all wanting... When the soul breaks asunder the shackles of wanting, it is emancipated from bondage to body, mind, and ego. This freedom brings realization of the unity of all life and puts an end to all doubts and worries. —Meher Baba

You have to grow from the inside out. None can teach you, none can make you spiritual. There is no other teacher but your own soul. —Vivekananda

Dive deep. Learn to love God. Plunge into divine love. —Ramakrishna Paramhansa

Divine love makes us true to ourselves and to others... Divine love is the solution to our difficulties and problems. It frees us from every kind of binding. It makes us speak truly, think truly, and act truly. It makes us feel one with the whole universe. Divine love purifies our hearts and glorifies our being. —Meher Baba

Impart as much as you can of your spiritual being to those who are on the road with you, and accept as something precious what comes back to you from them. —Albert Schweitzer

There is neither past nor future. There is only the present. Yesterday was the present to you when you experienced it, and tomorrow will be also the present when you experience it. Therefore, experience takes place only in the present, and beyond experience nothing exists. —Ramana Maharshi

When your consciousness becomes a still mirror, a still lake, a silent reservoir of energy, God is reflected in it. —Osho

Renunciation of desires does not mean asceticism or a negative attitude to life. Without avoiding contact with the different aspects of life, maintain complete detachment in the midst of intense activity. —Meher Baba

The only Real Renunciation is that which abandons, in the midst of worldly duties, all selfish thoughts and desires. —Meher Baba

It is not the end of the physical body that should worry us. Rather, our concern must be to live while we're alive—to release our inner selves from the spiritual death that comes with living behind a facade designed to conform to external definitions of who and what we are. —Elisabeth Kubler-Ross

We stumble and fall constantly even when we are most enlightened. But when we are in true spiritual darkness, we do not even know that we have fallen. —Thomas Merton

By having a reverence for life, we enter into a spiritual relation with the world. By practicing reverence for life we become good, deep, and alive. —Albert Schweitzer

One's real life is so often the life that one does not lead. —Oscar Wilde

No man is rich enough to buy back his past. —Oscar Wilde

Action speaks louder than words but not nearly as often. —Mark Twain