

Collaboration

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Weaving Miracles (on Maggi Lidchi-Grassi) by Larry Seidlitz •
Update on the Sri Aurobindo Yoga Mandir in Nepal by Ramchandra Das •
Science and yoga by Don Salmon and Jan Maslow •
The truth of harmony by Ashesh Joshi •
Recreating the world around at every instant by Pravir Malik •
Current affairs • AV almanac • Source material • Book Reviews • Poetry • Apropos



About the cover

Title: Ascent to Truth (I). This is a greyscale reproduction of a color painting (pencils with watercolor) by Mirajyoti (mjyoti@auroville.org.in) who has lived in Auroville since 2001 and formerly lived in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. It is part of a collection in soft pastels which has been set to music on a DVD which is available from the artist (mjyoti@auroville.org.in). Mirajyoti is also an editor and she coedited the popular book *The Hierarchy of Minds* with Prem Sobel, among other works.

The authors and poets

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Maggi Lidchi-Grassi was formerly a secretary to the Mother, is an author, and has been involved in several important projects for the Ashram and Auroville.

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Noel Parent (earthyoga@hotmail.com) is an American Aurovilian who recently published a book of poetry, *Transcendent Sky* (see Poetry Room for details).

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Wolfgang Schmidt-Reinecke, **Soleil Lithman**, and **John Robert Cornell** were the main organizers for AUM 2013 with an interest in the souls of nations.

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The late **Thémis**, a sadhika of the Ashram, was author of the book *Poems*, published in 1952/1994.

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Table of contents

Collaboration, vol. 38, no. 2, Fall 2013

From the office of Collaboration

| | | |
|--------------------------|----------------|---|
| Notes on this issue..... | Larry Seidlitz | 3 |
|--------------------------|----------------|---|

Current affairs

| | | |
|---------------------------|--|---|
| AUM Conference 2013 | Wolfgang Schmidt-Reinecke, Soleil Lithman and John Robert Cornell | 4 |
| Briefs | | 5 |

AV almanac

| | | |
|---|-----------------|---|
| Aurohost: A homestay network | Mandakini Gupta | 6 |
| Growing Sadhana Forests in India and abroad | Larry Seidlitz | 7 |

Chronicles

| | | |
|---|----------------|----|
| Weaving miracles | Larry Seidlitz | 9 |
| Update on the Sri Aurobindo Yoga Mandir in Nepal...Ramchandra Das | | 13 |

Essays

| | | |
|---|---------------------------|----|
| Science and yoga | Don Salmon and Jan Maslow | 15 |
| The truth of harmony | Ashesh Joshi | 21 |
| Recreating the world around at every instant..... | Pravir Malik | 24 |

Source material

| | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------|----|
| The release from the ego..... | Sri Aurobindo | 25 |
| Giving oneself to the Divine | The Mother | 26 |

Book reviews

| | | |
|---|---|----|
| Oneness..... | Reviewed by Larry Seidlitz | 28 |
| The New Spirituality..... | Reviewed by Carel Thieme & Guy Ryckaert | 28 |
| The Mother's Yoga | Reviewed by Larry Seidlitz | 29 |
| ...But it is done | Reviewed by Larry Seidlitz | 30 |
| Letters on Yoga: The Complete Works Edition | by Bob Zwicker | 30 |

The poetry room

| | | |
|--|---------------------|----|
| Rebirth | Sri Aurobindo | 31 |
| Meditation with the Mother..... | Kailas Jhaveri | 32 |
| Spirit of change | Noel Parent | 32 |
| Supreme identity..... | Noel Parent | 33 |
| Naked | Noel Parent | 33 |
| A single theme | Thémis | 33 |
| On first reading Sri Aurobindo's Synthesis of Yoga Maggi Lidchi-Grassi | | 34 |
| That tender pulsing | Maggi Lidchi-Grassi | 34 |



The poetry room continued

| | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|----|
| The trance | Shyam Kumari | 34 |
| The secret of the skies | Lalita | 35 |
| Sacrificial fire..... | Lopa Mukherjee | 35 |
| Thy hands of glory..... | A. Venkataranga | 35 |
| Apropos | | 36 |

From the office of Collaboration

We open this issue with Current Affairs, which includes a report on AUM 2013, an announcement for AUM 2014, and news from two US centers. AV Almanac follows with an article on Aurohost, a new homestay program for Aurobindonian travelers, and an article on Sadhana Forest, a vibrant Auroville community that also has projects in Haiti and Kenya and elsewhere in India.

Our first featured Chronicle is on the work of Maggi Lidchi-Grassi, a former secretary to the Mother who has roots in both the Ashram and Auroville. In a past issue of *Collaboration* (Winter/Spring 2005/2006, available at www.motherandsriaurobindo.org under the tabs for e-library/periodicals), we included an article focusing on Maggi's personal relation with the Mother. The present article, after touching on a few highlights of that relation, focuses on Maggi's endeavors and accomplishments, including her work with the Udavi school, Auroshikha, the Quiet Healing Center, her books and writings, her work with the homeopathic potentizations of the relics of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, and her aspirations for the establishment of the Stillness residential retreat center.

The second Chronicle gives an update on the Sri Aurobindo Yoga Mandir in Nepal. Three years ago, *Collaboration* (Summer 2010, find at www.motherandsriaurobindo.org) featured an article on the life and work of its founder, Ramchandra Das. Here he discusses the progress made since then and his plans for starting a third ashram.

Our Essays section begins with an article by Don Salmon and Jan Maslow on science and yoga, which was included as an appendix in their book *Yoga Psychology and the Transformation of Consciousness*. This article examines the different approaches to achieving knowledge in science and yoga, and how they can be integrated. The second essay is by Ashesh Joshi, a former Ashramite and present Aurovilian, and focuses on harmony and its importance in sadhana, especially in regards to our interpersonal relations. The third essay is a thoughtful piece by Pravir Malik from his blog discussing how we continuously create our own realities, and the higher possibilities for such creation.

Our Source Material presents selections from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother which focus on finding liberation from the ego, that mental formation which provides a center for our growing consciousness, while at the same limiting us to a superficial part of our external being, and veiling from us our true Self which is infinite and immortal.

We next present a series of book reviews covering books by Martha Orton and Georges Van Vrekem, and two compilations from *Mother's Agenda* by Loretta of Auroville, and Jyoti Madhok and Kireet Joshi. Also included is an article by Bob Zwicker of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Archives about the new Complete Works edition of *Letters on Yoga*.

In the Poetry Room, we have a beautiful collection, including three selections from the Noel Parent's new book, *Transcendent Sky*, others by stalwart Ashram poets Kailas Jhaveri, Thémis, Maggi Lidchi-Grassi, and Shyam Kumari, and stirring poems from Lalita, Lopa Mukherjee, and A. Venkataranga. We close the issue with Apropos quotations.

Quote on karmayoga

This, in short, is the demand made on us, that we should turn our whole life into a conscious sacrifice. Every moment and every movement of our being is to be resolved into a continuous and a devoted self-giving to the Eternal. All our actions, not less the smallest and most ordinary and trifling than the greatest and most uncommon and noble, must be performed as consecrated acts. —Sri Aurobindo (*The Synthesis of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 23, p. 111)

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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; Margaret Phanes and Angelo Salerno, directors.

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Current Affairs

AUM Conference 2013: Discovering the soul of America, A step in human unity

by Wolfgang Schmidt-Reinecke, Soleil Lithman,
and John Robert Cornell

Reprinted from Auroville Today, August 2013

The unity of all the nations is the compelling future of the world. But for the unity of all nations to be possible, each nation must first realize its own unity. —The Mother

The fierce urgency of our global need and, as Sri Aurobindo put it, “the demand of the Time-Spirit on the human race that it find subjectively, not only in the individual, but in the nation and in the unity of the human race, its real self and live according to that” inspired this year’s AUM (All USA Meeting) conference as an offering to the evolutionary work of the Divine Mother.

The core organizing team Soleil, Wolfgang, and John Robert set out on an ambitious adventure 12 months before the event to create a program that would support deep and profound experiences of the soul of the USA for participants.

From the beginning, the team held that even a small group of people can act as a homeopathic dose of transformation if they can touch a nation’s soul, in its truth and living consciousness, together. Therefore, the conference program was designed around elements from the Soul of Nations workshops already created and tested successfully in Auroville in 2011, and in a number of other countries.

In this way AUM 2013 became a kind of workshop-conference with group exercises. By “soul” is meant as our most inner being, which is found in a subjective experience. The soul of our nation can not be fully known as an objective entity, but can be found through the subjectivity of our own soul. That is why, on the last day, the participants were invited to connect and to work with the soul quality and shadow aspect of their nation, to which their body reacted most intensely.

Some participants experienced a very specific quality as central to the soul of the USA. Integral Yoga author Michael Miovic presented this as the *muladhara chakra* which showed that one of the central soul qualities of America is the psychic presence found in the land, flora and fauna.

Woman Stands Shining, a Dine (Navaho) poet and ceremonial leader, also spoke in her talk about the essential identity of the Native American spirit with the land and nature. This theme came through again in Barbara Shor’s sacred animal communication workshop. Actually, a strong component of this AUM

endeavor was to seek a partnership with the deep consciousness of Native American people, which carries essential soul roots of the present USA. Woman Stands Shining was indeed a shining star in this regard. Her Summer Solstice Ceremony and drum journey took people to an experience of oneness with the land and with our greater unity consciousness.

In other presentations, she also helped participants to recognize the holocaust of Native peoples (9 out of 10 were obliterated) in America and some shadow aspects that are still in need of healing. The process of soul discovery of the nation implies facing the national shadow and finding the love and the strength to overcome them. Wolfgang in his introducing slide show on the evolutionary aspects of nations, as well as Woman Stands Shining in her talk, suggested Truth and Reconciliation Committees as a possible tool and example to heal unintegrated wounds in a national society. Integration of the still neglected Native American heritage could also be fostered by a true national Commemoration Day in the USA. In fact, many of AUM’s participants spoke of significant steps of healing and progress during these days.

Additional presentations, ceremonies, meditations, discussions, and other activities by people from around the world broadened and enriched the experience. Vera from Auroville led a collective sound journey into the American soul with the Singing bells; John Robert informed us about the amazing democratic achievements of the Iroquois Confederacy; Nadaka, Gopika, and Keshava fed our souls with Indian chants; while Raina Imig and Woman Stands Shining talked about East and West perspectives on the Divine Mother. Tuning into this, participants created mandalas.

On a practical level, the logistics flowed well. A wonderful caterer provided delicious organic locally-grown veggies and ethnically diverse meals. Volunteer helpers did untold hours of work through the year and on-site, designing a website and printed materials, driving shuttles, cleaning and arranging tables and chairs, arranging flowers, etc. Many felt the Grace supporting this conference.

The Aurovilians and Auroville International people who were present will hopefully take back a new inspiration with them to Auroville. The International Zone groups, for example, can replicate practical elements of this conference to discover the soul of nations and to integrate and heal the past. The AUM organizers hope that Auroville’s International Zone one day will become a starting point for similar integrating initiatives in many countries.

There will be other follow-ups sprouting from this AUM, including a discussion and sharing forum on the themes and discoveries of this conference. John Robert, whose vision is of an Institute or Center for the American Soul to widen, deepen, and carry forward into action these themes and discoveries, also drafted a public statement for this year’s AUM (see below).

A longtime member of AVI USA and the American Sri Aurobindo Association summarized this conference as a “A groundbreaking AUM, that went, where no AUM had gone before!”



Excerpt of the drafted statement of AUM 2013

We invite citizens and friends to acknowledge the crucial role Native Americans have played in constituting these United States, and welcome the equally crucial role they will play in bringing the soul qualities of this land to the forefront of consciousness and of practice. We joyfully anticipate sharing America's soul work with them and with other members of the American peoples.

We have discovered by experience that each nation, just as each individual, has a similar healing and transformative work to do: to confront the shadows of its past and present through soul discovery and to recognize and evolve the genuine qualities of that unique soul.

This is an essential portion of the world's evolutionary work. We believe that only through this transformation can nations rise up to play their part in the world symphony of the future in a progressive peace and human unity.

Joerg Roettger, a German film maker, will create a professional documentary of this conference. After its completion the film can be ordered through the organizers and other sources. To see some visual impressions of AUM 2013 and news of follow-up activities, go to: <http://www.collaboration.org/aum/2013/post-aum/index.html>

Briefs

Auromesa is excited to host AUM 2014 in Taos, NM on August 7-10, 2014. We invite you to join us as we reflect on and explore the many avenues in which the Divine Shakti can express Herself in our lives through integral creativity, therefore bringing more and more of Herself into manifestation. Auromesa is an oasis of Integral Yoga in the high desert of Northern New Mexico. On the mesa, where skies, more than earth, make up the landscape, there is a dimension of openness and palpable silence. We strive to live in harmonious reciprocity with the sun and the land. We nurture friendship in the spirit of Integral Yoga. Auromesa is sustained by offering Ayurvedic healing retreats and panchakarma in this same spirit and participants often finish their retreats with a new inlook on life. Daily meditation and weekly explorations of the works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother are sustaining a field of conscious growth and the whispers of *Savitri* are spreading among the sage. The AUM conference will be held at the Kachina Lodge in Taos and at Auromesa, just north of Taos. For more information, visit www.collaboration.org/AUM/2014/

The East West Cultural Center—The Sri Aurobindo Center of Los Angeles has been graced with a number of visitors and speakers this year and a host of new members. One of our new members is long-time resident of Auroville, Mikael Spector. We also have a steady stream of devotees who are visiting or transiting through. In August we hosted two ardent seekers—one from Brazil and another from Kansas. Zackaria Moursi, from the Sri

Aurobindo Sadhana Peetham ashram, visited us in February and spoke about his discovery of Sri Aurobindo and his journey from Islam in Egypt to Integral Yoga. In March and April we had brief visits from Lucille Seidlitz, Michael Miovic and Sally Walton. In July, Rod Hemsell presented his second Savitri Intensive workshop here consisting of three days of sessions reciting and discussing Sri Aurobindo's magnificent epic poem. Gaia Lamb from SASP visited in September and she shared with us some of her health and healing methods.

We are expecting a presentation in late October by Jerry Schwartz, "Money and Spirituality." He will show us how money is to be used as a spiritual Force and to be held not as a possession, but in Trust for the Divine's work. Jerry is a Certified Financial Planner and the Treasurer and Financial Adviser for the Foundation for World Education. His talk is on October 31st.

In November Jeanne and Gordon Korstange will visit us and Gordon will give a flute concert on November 15th.

In addition to the above we continue our observances of all four darshans, February 21st, April 24th, August 15th and November 24th with offerings of readings, memories of the Mother, music, group meditation and prasad. Our weekly programs consist of *Savitri* readings and discussion on Thursday nights at 7 pm and Satsang with reading and discussion and meditation on Saturdays from 4-6 pm. A once a month Sunday session for women for reading *The Mother's Agenda* and *Notebook on Evolution* was also initiated in January as well as Satsang in Spanish on Tuesday nights for our Latino members.

This year we completed several albums with Jyotipriya's memorabilia and are in the process of creating a Wikipedia listing for Jyotipriya. Lotus Light Book Distributors, who are handling the distribution of Jyoti's Sanskrit books for us, have recently scanned her book *The Language of the Gods*, and this will soon go on the Internet as an e-book.

We will complete the year with observances of November 24th Darshan, the Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's Mahasamadhi days and a special Christmas Eve open house with readings, music and the showing of an inspirational film.

Institute for Wholistic Education, in collaboration with Lotus Press (www.lotuspress.com), is continuing its development and publishing of study guides for Sri Aurobindo's major writings. Readings in Rebirth and Karma by Sri Aurobindo is now printed and in stock. This is the 5th book in the series. Any center in the USA which has not yet requested and received their free copies for any of these five volumes should contact us at santoshk@msn.com. The books are available for sale as well.

Work is now underway on *Essays on the Gita* with daily posts at <http://sriurobindostudies.wordpress.com>

The Institute also sponsors classes on reiki, levels 1, 2 and 3, conducted by Karuna Krinsky. The schedule is regularly updated and can be found at www.reikiteacher.org

Contact: Institute for Wholistic Education, 3425 Patzke Lane, Racine, WI 53405. 262 619 1798; www.wholisticinstitute.org



AV almanac

AuroHost, a homestay network

by Mandakini Gupta

Reprinted from Auroville Today, October 2013

If there could be a common database of Auroville-related people worldwide willing to host one another, wouldn't that make traveling a more integral experience? The good news is that now there is AuroHost.

AuroHost is a project of Auroville International (AVI) USA which aims to encourage friendship and collaboration within the global Auroville family. It is funded by the Foundation for World Education (FWE), and the work was delegated to the IT team in Auroville led by Manoj who gave it its present form of a homestay website.

AuroHost is meant for the Aurovilians and Newcomers, AVI members and close associates. Anyone can register as a friend or potential traveler. The information to be shared is one's email id, physical address, phone number, a good recent photo and a reference person's address. Once the reference person confirms the applicant as a trusted member or friend, and the administrator approves, the registration is complete and access to the database is given. If one signs up as a host, one is expected to provide a bed/couch and breakfast facility for a minimum of two nights.

The website has been designed to easily navigate and provide quick steps for hosting requests. Simple traveler and hosting guidelines underline the larger goal of nurturing friendship and trust. It is a safe and easy way for potential travelers to connect with and possibly stay with others around the world. No money is involved, just the sincere desire to connect.

Background

The need to have a hosting database of like-minded people arose simultaneously in the minds of two people—Auroville born Nilacro Markus and FWE board member Gordon Korstange. Nilacro recounts, "I lived in Auroville until I was 17. I went to the USA to experience the outside world. Although I did well in the USA, I thirsted to see the rest of the world too. So, when I was done with my first two years of college, I decided to take a break from my education and travel around the globe. I didn't have the financial resources, so I worked for the summer, and saved up enough money for my ticket, and about \$300/month of travel budget. That wasn't going to get me any hotels, not even youth hostels. To make this work, I was going to have to network. This was in 1990, when the internet was not yet part of everyday life. I contacted all my family and friends in Auroville by post, asking

them for contacts they had around the world. People sent me addresses of their relatives and friends overseas, and I compiled this into an 11 page list of addresses and phone numbers, and took off. Over the next 9 months I met family I had never known, I stayed with friends I hadn't seen for years, and met new people connected to Auroville in some way or another. I was plugged into the Auroville network."

For Gordon, the case was somewhat similar. He recalls, "The idea for AuroHost began after a trip we made to Europe where we spent a month staying in several different countries with connections to the Integral Yoga (IY), some of whom we knew and some not. What if, I wondered, I was going to Iceland where I knew no one and wanted to find out if there was someone who was an IY person? What if I had to go to Kansas for mundane reasons and wanted to find out if there was an IY person in Topeka? So I began to think in terms of a database of people in the IY who might give a traveller shelter, or at least arrange to meet me when I came to their area. Having no ability to do the computer work that would bring this into being, I contacted various people, among them Nilacro, who I thought could do the work."

"In 2001, I started working for AVI USA full time as its Executive Director," continues Nilacro. "I had a fabulous opportunity to put all my time and energy into networking between Auroville and the USA. I saw this as a great opportunity to rekindle my idea of a global Auroville-related network of travellers and hosts." In hindsight Nilacro recounts, "At the time there were discussions about specific logistics. How would we make it equitable, so that certain hosts weren't taken advantage of? How would we avoid Aurovilians from becoming burned out by requests to stay with them from overseas, or Aurovilians using the system without also being hosts themselves? Would the network be open to all people in the yoga, or just to Auroville-related people?" Although these were important issues to consider, the solution was to continue nurturing the project with trust and goodwill. "There was lots of goodwill," continues Nilacro, "but the time and technology were not quite lined up yet. Implementing it back then would have been a much bigger effort than it seems today."

Gordon explains, "The problem was always how the site would be administered and by whom, plus who would have admission to the database."

"In the last year or two," says Nilacro, "the project was rekindled. The time was right. The technology was easier to implement. And most of all, Jeanne and Gordon, who have supported this idea from the very start, were able to get funding for it from the FWE who also saw the vision."

"We put in a grant to the FWE which was accepted and gave the job to Manoj Pavitrin in Auroville," says Gordon. "This grant has been the impetus for the website to manifest."

Manoj, who created the website, says, "We looked at other similar models and studied the best possible workflows, created a wire-frame and mock-up models and programmed it based on Drupal, a popular open-source content management system. The website is now being tested to see if everything works as



envisaged. Once we are satisfied with the smooth functioning of the site, we will open it up to the community. We will continue to solve the issues as and when they come up.”

For the moment, until the site is successful, the programme will only be accessible to those related to Auroville. Afterwards we will expand it to include the larger IY family. Aurohost is here to foster trust and simplify the process of connecting with everyone in this family. “After all the preparation,” says Gordon, “Aurohost can only succeed if members of the worldwide Auroville-related community register as hosts and guests. We invite them to visit the site at <http://www.aurohost.org> and join the 25 already there to create a world-wide network.”

Growing Sadhana Forests in India and abroad

by Larry Seidlitz

Reprinted from Auroville Today, October 2013

On December 19th, 2013 Sadhana Forest will turn 10 and will celebrate its anniversary on January 4th, 2014. Auroville Today spoke with its founder Aviram about its activities and progress.

Sadhana Forest started after Aviram, together with his wife Yorit and their daughter Osher, came to Auroville in 2002. They went to the Forest Group in 2003 and were granted about 70 acres of largely barren, unused land to develop. Since then they have been living and working to develop the forest.

They have now covered about 55 of the 70 acres, reclaiming about five acres each year. Aviram explains that a lot of effort goes not only into planting trees, but also into water conservation. In fact, most of the manual work goes into the latter. Without first preparing the land to prevent runoff of rainwater, the trees won't do well unless a lot of effort is put into irrigating them, which is not cost-effective and not sustainable. With good water conservation, tree planting becomes less important, because there will be a lot of natural regeneration. Sadhana Forest has made hundreds of small bunds around trees, dozens of kilometers of contour bunding, and some large water catchment ponds with the help of Kireet from Gaia's Garden.

The Sadhana Forest community doing this work has now grown to about 20 long-term volunteers and from anywhere between about 10 to 140 short-term volunteers, depending on the season. Whereas various institutions are regularly sending groups of volunteers, most come through word of mouth or learn about Sadhana Forest on the internet. Aviram explains that the community works on a gift economy. “People stay for free and contribute for their food if they can, and this goes together with their work for the forest. We give this experience to people, and then they can go back and perhaps live their life with some new insights. It is a way to move out of the human-centric idea that nature is there to serve us, and to move into a more planet-centric approach that looks at the needs of other



Aviram inspecting a recently planted tree.

(Photo by Larry Seidlitz)

electricity with solar panels and a human-powered bicycle generator. We also try to be more conscious in our relationships with others in the community.”

More than 40 wooden structures have been built in the community with a team of local people. For short-term volunteers, there are two wooden dormitories, each of which can house up to 60 people, each person in their own cubicle separated from the others by curtains. Once people stay in the community for a few months and demonstrate their commitment to the forest work and have leadership skills, they may become a long-term volunteer and take on more responsibility. The long-term staff members, those who stay for more than a year or two, get their own private hut or a couple's hut.

Aviram explains that although there are many volunteers for normal tree care which takes place during the tourist season, there often aren't enough volunteers during the planting season, which begins in August in order to catch the summer monsoon and continues through September before the winter monsoon. Having few volunteers during this time, the work is challenging because of a lack of funds to hire workers. They are presently trying to find ways to create a bigger flow of volunteers during the planting season.

The growth of Sadhana Forest into a close-knit community has happened very naturally, explains Aviram. “When Yorit, my wife, and I first came it was just us. Then people started coming and asking can we volunteer and eventually we ended up with many volunteers, but it wasn't planned like this. At first it was just my family and slowly it grew with the same habits of a family, such as eating three times a day together, working together, and often spending time in the evenings together. For me it is great fun, because I feel that the diversity of people enables huge growth for each other. We enrich each other with ideas and different systems of beliefs and feelings.

species as well. Our effort goes into expanding consciousness beyond our own immediate or even long-term needs.

“Our emphasis is on putting consciousness into matter, on increasing the consciousness in our everyday actions. For example, we try to be very conscious and conserve natural resources. We cook only organic vegan food using very efficient wood-burning ‘rocket stoves,’ and provide all our own



“Like any diverse system that we see in nature, diverse human systems create resilience. A monoculture of people that all think the same is not interesting and is not strong. Sadhana Forest is an extreme example of human diversity. We get volunteers from over 50 countries here every year, people of different ages and physical capabilities, eating together, working together, and living in dormitories together, in very close quarters. That has helped to create the resilience of the community, and enabled us to start the projects in Haiti, Kenya, and other places in India. All the support and energy and well-wishing that comes brings a huge force. People all over the world are thinking how to develop this and make it happen. I feel very lucky to live in a community like this; it is something very rare. It is not to say that there are no challenges, but overall the picture is one of a lot of happiness and joy.”

How is Sadhana Forest connected with the rest of Auroville? Aviram explains that Sadhana Forest serves Auroville in several ways. In addition to its obvious work of regenerating a large piece of Auroville land, Sadhana Forest is attracting hundreds of volunteers each year, and they get to know about other projects in Auroville as well. They consume various services of Auroville, and then move on and tell others about their experience in Auroville. Also, many people have joined Auroville through Sadhana Forest, because joining Auroville is not cheap, and Sadhana Forest supports the people during the transition period. Another way it serves the Auroville community is that every week since June 2008 (except the week of Cyclone Thane) they have held the EcoFilm Club for the benefit of Aurovilians and guests, which includes an explanation and tour of the community, an ecological film, and a free vegan organic dinner.

Sadhana Forests abroad and elsewhere in India

Sadhana Forest has also expanded to other countries. There is a Sadhana Forest in Haiti, which is developing an area of about 6,500 acres. The campus and the nursery is on about seven acres, where there are dormitories and private huts for volunteers, just like in Auroville. The 83 minutes documentary on the work of Sadhana Forest in Haiti, *One Day, Everything Will Be Free*, just won the Wisdom Award 2013 in the Auroville Film Festival. In the words of the Jury, “It’s a wonderful film about a great attitude, that of service, or, ‘Seva’, as Aviram puts it. Caring for the Earth in places where it’s most wounded and bringing it back to life, making it a personal cause and its own reward, making it possible for others to experience this ‘giving’ of themselves, to inspire the present and to work towards a future, full of wellbeing for the generations to come, this is what we see in this film about ‘Sadhana Forest’, Haiti.”

Presently a third Sadhana Forest is being started in north Kenya, which will be built on the same model. Twenty-seven acres of land have already been purchased for the campus, and there are thousands of potential acres for development. Having established a very good relation with the Kenyan government, Aviram hopes to do the same thing there on an even larger scale.

In Kenya they are working with the Samburu people, a local

tribe that lives in the north. The idea is to give every home the opportunity to develop a small food forest around them. They will train the people in irrigation techniques that are simple, affordable, and accessible, as well as in tree planting and tree care techniques. The volunteers will come to their homes with the trees and help them plant them and later follow up to help them take care of them. This is the same approach as they have been using in Haiti for the past three years, where it has been very successful.

Aviram explains that when planning food forests with a local population, it is necessary to first analyze what are the nutritional needs—what they have and don’t have in their diet and what should be supplemented. In Haiti, the problem is basically protein. “Our approach was to bring trees that have seeds or nuts that are very rich in protein, such as the Maya nut, an indigenous tree of Haiti that went extinct, which we have brought back to Haiti from Mexico. In Samburu County, Kenya, protein is not a problem. What they need is vitamins and minerals. So together with the Kenya Forest Service, we researched and identified 18 indigenous species which are high in vitamins and minerals which we will plant.”

Are these projects in Haiti and Kenya independent of Auroville? Aviram explains that while the Sadhana Forests in Haiti and Kenya are registered as international NGOs through which donations for those projects are passed, they are tied into Auroville as much as possible. “We feel that this is our expression of human unity. In Haiti, we are the official liaison with Auroville International. In Kenya, we have not started yet, but when we start we will find a way to tie it with Auroville as closely as we can. Auroville International has been very supportive of our work both in Haiti and in Kenya. We feel that Auroville is not just a physical place, but a perceptual place which can be expanded beyond its physical boundaries.”

Sadhana Forest also extends to other parts of India. “In Madhya Pradesh in a place called Omkareshwar, an island in the Narmada River, we’ve created a beautiful piece of forest. Also in Madhya Pradesh, we are doing a water conservation project in a place called Luniyakhedi, near Ujjain. We made one big earth dam in February, and we will go back there at the end of October to do another one, and later it will be planted around. We’ve also trained a lot of people from India who come here and stay with us for some time and then go back to their place to do work.”

Research

Research in Sadhana Forest is more an applied research as they have learned and experimented while working on the land. Aviram explains that they no longer plant in holes in the ground, but in heaps above the ground, which they have found is much more cost effective and gives a better survival rate. They have also experimented with wick irrigation, which consists of using reused plastic bottles with a wick that drips the water very slowly underneath the tree without any evaporation. This technique was introduced two years ago and it is working very well. The



Chronicles

area currently being planted is very difficult terrain, full of pebbles, a very hard and dry soil. But using this technique it is now full of thousands of trees.

Sadhana Forest is also conducting research together with the University of Lausanne in Switzerland on oxalogenesis, which is a phenomenon in which trees take carbon from the air, and fix it into the ground as calcium carbonate, limestone. Even if you cut the tree and burn it, the carbon would stay in the ground. Aviram explains that is a very important discovery vis-a-vis global warming. Sadhana Forest in Auroville is now mainly planting four species of oxalogenic trees that are part of the Tropical Dry Forest indigenous to this area, as well as a few oxalogenic species that are indigenous to other parts of India, and will follow their growth and the soil composition for the next few years. There is also a master's student volunteer doing research on oxalogenesis in Haiti, and soon there will be a Ph.D. student doing research on this as well.

Aviram explains that indigenous reforestation is not a profit-making venture, so all the funds for Sadhana Forest come from donations, mainly private. In terms of government money, Sadhana Forest got one grant a few years ago from the German government, through Auroville International Germany, to build the staff quarters and the training center. For the new project in Kenya, they have just received approval of a grant request for \$50,000 from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to start the project. The project in Haiti is funded by two donors, one a French foundation and the other a French company that does processing of organic food. For Auroville, Sadhana Forest has depended mainly on private donations, which are routed through the Unity Fund. Aviram explains, "It has been a struggle all along with the money and it is still a big struggle. But we feel supported, and as we know we are doing our best, we hope that the Divine will support us. Until now it has been okay."

For more information, contact: <http://sadhanaforest.org>

Weaving miracles

by Larry Seidlitz

As explained in an article by Shyam Kumari that appeared previously in *Collaboration* (Winter/Spring 2005/2006), Maggi Lidchi-Grassi had a very special relationship with the Mother. The Mother had explained that when she was studying art in France, she had a close friend named Valentine about the same age as her. As Ms. Kumari put it:

Their friendship was deep, so deep that when after her marriage Valentine had to leave for Egypt, she was so miserable to part from Mirra that she lost all taste for life. No wonder she left her body—soon afterwards (when only 19 years old)—at childbirth, a day before André was born to Mirra.

When Maggi first came to the Ashram in 1960 and met the Mother, Maggi's first words were, "I know you already." The Mother later explained that Valentine had returned in her next birth as Maggi. It is interesting that while in France the Mother had painted a portrait of her friend Valentine and later presented it to Maggi (a copy is shown in the earlier story), accompanied with the words, "I loved you very much then and I love you even more now. You came back very quickly."

There is another very interesting aspect to Maggi's relation with the Mother which the Mother explained in a letter:

I have to tell you that my perceptions concerning you are becoming more and more precise—and that I am convinced that your vital is united to a charming little fairy, charming, smiling attractive, who likes to do pretty little miracles that give a special flavor to human life, quite dull in



Photo courtesy Maggi Lidchi-Grassi

general. "Your presence is a joy and your collaboration is precious . . . And I too love you."

The Mother would perceive this fairy whenever Maggi would come into the room, and she used to call Maggi her "sweet fairy" or "good fairy" on cards and letters addressed to her. For many years, Maggi was a secretary for the Mother, and enjoyed a close and special personal relation with her.

Udavi

Maggi was married to the dynamic and capable Nata (Alberto Grassi), whose name was given to him by the Mother and means "He who has given himself to the Divine." Nata was an engineer and had been in put in charge of all construction in Auroville. Together they founded the Udavi project in the village of Edayan-chavadi, which borders Auroville. Mother had named the project Udavi, which means "help," because she wanted to help the people of this village who were among the poorest in the whole area. In the first days of Auroville, the Mother had arranged for a borewell to be dug for the village. Afterwards a store and medical dispensary were established. Later, the Udavi school was started for the children,



starting with a kindergarten, and then the addition of a new class each year. The children at the school were provided with three meals a day, a bath, freshly washed and ironed uniforms, and school supplies. The free progress teaching method advocated by the Mother was employed as far as possible. At first these projects were run on funds received from donors, but after some time it was decided to start a business to support these projects.

With Mother's blessings, Nata started an incense making unit. Rolling the incense would provide the villagers with work, machines and electricity which were scarce or unavailable would not be needed, and with the help of friends in various countries, the incense could be exported. The profits from this successful business scheme were used to support the Udavi project and Auroville. Later Auroshikha Agarbatthis became one of the biggest exporters of incense in India. Today the Udavi project and Auroshikha Agarbatthis are under the auspices of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

Quiet Healing Center

The Mother used to take walks along a strip of land along the beach near Auroville, and feeling the special energy there, had named it "Quiet." She told the owner of the plot, Gautam, a devotee, that she wanted that land to be reserved for a healing center. Separately, the Mother had told Maggi that she had seen in her vision a wonderful project in Auroville for which Maggi would be responsible for realizing, but did not reveal the details. It was only later that Maggi became involved in alternative healing.

Nata had been suffering from a long illness. In 1985, he had gone for a check-up to a hospital in Europe and was given a diuretic IV which landed him in the Intensive Care Unit, where he was treated coldly. Afterwards, returning to the Ashram, he was treated lovingly by Dr. Datta. Then, a few weeks before his passing that same year, he said to Maggi who was feeding him, "There ought to be a hospital of love like this." Maggi was inspired and kept repeating, "Yes, there will be such a place,

there will be such a place, we will build it." Knowing he had only a short time remaining, he patted her hand reminding her of his condition. The next day when he got up he made a few rough drawings of what would become the Quiet Healing Center, but that was as much as he could do.

By this time, Maggi had already become interested in homeopathy which had proven to be helpful for Nata. She was invited to a conference on spirituality in the US where she gave a paper on "the spiritual implications of homeopathy." While there, she did further research on alternative therapies and visited various centers of healing. She followed this with further studies with Professor Masi in Italy and George Vithoulkas in Greece and other European countries. In January 1987, she arranged for the first alternative healing multi-disciplinary congress in Pondicherry and Auroville. It was on this occasion that the building of a new complementary healing center was announced.

Shortly after this, Gautam approached Maggi and said he had heard she was looking for a site on the seashore for "the hospital of love." He offered to sell his plot, which he explained that the Mother had asked him to designate for this purpose, for the small sum that Maggi had raised for the healing center. In the beginning of 1997, exactly 10 years after it had been announced, the Quiet Healing was inaugurated.

Situated on seven acres of beautiful beachfront property, the Quiet Healing Center offers a wide range of natural treatments, courses, workshops, and accommodations. It is based on the understanding that we are spiritual beings seeking to express ourselves through our mental, emotional, and physical instruments. Its therapies "address the client on a deeper energetic level within a safe space of care, love and touch." Here one can find treatments and courses in various types of massage, aquatic bodywork, shiatsu, acupuncture, physiotherapy, chiropractic therapy, homeopathy, bio-resonance therapy, sound healing, and other natural therapies. The accommodations provide for a restful, rejuvenating retreat from the stresses of life, with or without par-

ticipations in the therapies, and the Quiet kitchen provides three natural, delicious vegetarian buffet style meals each day which are suited to both Western and Indian tastes. Further details are available at: <http://quiethealingcenter.info>.

The author

Maggi is also a prolific author who has written journal articles, short stories, poems, fables, children's stories, two plays, and several novels. A collection of her short stories was published under the title *Jitendra the Protector* (1986). Her novels include *Earthman* (1967) and *The First Wife* (1981), which received favorable reviews. Her later novels *The Battle of Kurukshetra* (1987) and the *The Legs of the Tortoise* (1990), are volumes 1 and 2 of Maggi's novel on the Mahabharata which was later published by Random House in one volume as *Great Golden Sacrifice of the Mahabharata* (2011). These books tell the story of the great battle of the Mahabharata, largely through the perspective of Arjuna, and help make accessible the story of the great epic to modern Western readers. Her novel *Great Sir and the Heaven Lady* (1993) tells the story of John Kelly, an American infantryman who had visions of and was guided through the second world war by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Her book *The Light that Shone into the Dark Abyss* (1994) tells more broadly about the role of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in World War II. Maggi's fascination for both the wars of Kurukshetra and World War II are revealed vividly in an essay published recently in *Mother India* (June 2013), the Ashram's primary literary journal. In the article, "Striking Parallels," she lays out a number of interesting parallels between the two great battles, of their protagonists and antagonists, and how they both represented decisive turning points in the spiritual evolution of the human race.

We must also mention Maggi's contributions to the Italian journal *Domani*, first as founder and always with her articles. *Domani* is the only magazine of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram dedicated to a specific nation and exists only in the Italian language.



Domani was started by Nata and Maggi in 1966 on cycle styled free sheets at request of the Mother, as no books in Italian existed at that time. In 1968 the Mother gave a message for the Italians: *Sopravvivere e Rinnovarsi* which was written in Italian by the Mother. The message is reproduced on the first page of each issue of *Domani* and it means "Survive and Renew." It is clear that the Mother attached much importance to the magazine and to the Italian people for the Integral Yoga. In 1972, Sri Aurobindo's birth centenary year, *Domani* was printed as a magazine for the first time. In 1977, it received a prize in India for its beautiful, high quality graphics. Most Italians who are connected to the Integral Yoga came to know about it through *Domani*. Many translations of Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's writings have been published in the magazine and each year the last issue is accompanied by a booklet of about 45 pages targeted on a particular theme based on translations of Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's writings.

Harmony and Samata

In recent years, a project close to Maggi's heart has been the widespread distribution of the homeopathic potentizations of Harmony and Samata, which are based on the relics of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, respectively, for the purpose of effecting positive change in the collective consciousness. The idea for this project was inspired in part by homeopathic colleagues Peter Cappell and Harry Van Der Zee. In the journal *Homeopathic Links* (2008), Cappell had suggested the idea of finding a homeopathic remedy for humanity's negativities—such as greed, insensitivity, repressed anger, and hard-hearted over-intellectuality—and that if given to a critical number of people, it might effect a change in the racial consciousness. At the same time as reading Cappell's article, Maggi also stumbled upon an earlier article by Van der Zee (*Ho-*

meopathic Links, 2004), who wrote that the success of one of Cappell's remedies in treating AIDS suggested that "it is possible to include understanding and intention in a homeopathic remedy." Putting these ideas together, it occurred to her that where better to find that understanding and intention to relieve humanity's negativities than in Sri Aurobindo and the Mother? She wondered "whether the subtle/spiritual/supramental energy that had been fixed in the cells of their bodies might not be releasable by the homeopathic process of potentization; and to wonder further what the effect might be on someone taking a potentization derived from such startling material." (*Homeopathic Links*, summer 2010)

Maggi was in possession of some of Mother's hairs, which the Mother had given her with the words, "All of me is potentially in this" Maggi "hoped that

done in a scientific way, for example, by using a control group, but said that the results were so consistently positive (and sometimes profound) that it appeared inescapable that something of Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's energies were working through the remedies. Most of these people were in good health, and reported changes mainly in their state of consciousness, but some people had various health problems such as hypertension, cancer pain, migraine headaches, and chronic depression.

She explained that in some ways the results of the two remedies were similar, for example, in helping people "not to get upset by circumstances that would normally be very disturbing, but each had its individual character." She indicates that the keywords that kept coming up in the reported effects of "Harmony" were "calm, compassion, connectedness, and

consciousness in dreams," and that there were reports of experiencing strong states of love and kindness. For Samata, the term "stillness"

The results were so consistently positive (and sometimes profound) that it appeared inescapable that something of Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's energies were working through the remedies.

something of the Mother's unutterable sweetness, compassion and love, as well as her indomitable courage and yogic force would transpire in a potentization." So from these hairs, the remedy Harmony was prepared. Subsequently, some parings of Sri Aurobindo's nails which had been lovingly preserved by his attendant were given for potentization to make the remedy which came to be called Samata (Sanskrit for equanimity), which was thought might actuate his Himalayan stillness and calm.

Over a period of several years, Maggi tested the remedies with several hundred people, primarily in Pondicherry and its surroundings, who took either one or the other or both the remedies. Maggi has collected the testimonies from many of them of their effects and published her findings in the *Homeopathic Links* journal (summer 2010). She admits that this was not

was most frequently reported, along with such descriptions as "calm," "serenity," and "compassion." While there are few detailed reports that have been published on the effects of Samata, a number of impressive findings on the beneficial health effects of Harmony have been described.

One of the "provers" for the Harmony remedy had had chronic pain and many health problems over a period of several years that led her to go to many doctors and alternative treatment providers, none of whom provided lasting relief. Her experience with "Harmony" was different, however. She said that her pain went away and did not come back. Further, she says it has changed her completely, and her partner verified that "she is now a transformed person full of joy." She characterized this inner change by saying that "somewhere within myself there is no space for fear or dramas.



All that is over. All that I have to do and live from now onwards will be from another perspective.”

Many others also found profound pain relief. One man who had been experiencing severe cancer pains found instant relief: “For the first time in years, my symptoms seemed to disappear almost completely and it was almost unbelievable... I feel a lot better physically than I have in recent years. At the psychological level Harmony has done wonders for me. I feel a sense of general well-being and a definite difference in the level of my spiritual consciousness.” Maggi added that this man continued to take Harmony daily for many months until his pain disappeared completely, and in fact, he became free of his cancer. Maggi stressed, however, that she was not claiming that Harmony was a cure for cancer. Another man who was in the terminal stages of cancer found an alleviation of his pain, symptoms and agitation, and he succumbed to his cancer after several weeks without the need for morphine. Another woman with cancer pains said that “Miraculously, the pain went away as if Mother took it into her own hand.” Another woman suffering from Parkinson’s Disease found relief such that her sleep improved dramatically: “It is difficult for me to sleep and since taking Harmony I can sleep beautifully, four hours in one go, and this is like a miracle for me.” Another person, who had been having migraine headaches for the past five years, reported that she immediately got a migraine when she first took the remedy, but it subsided after about an hour and she “has not had a migraine since.”

Information on Harmony and Samata how to procure them can be obtained by emailing: harmonysamata@gmail.com

The Stillness Retreat Center

The “Stillness Project” is a planned



Images of the proposed Stillness Center. (Courtesy Stillness News 8 newsletter, December 2012, from the Growing Towards Foundation)

“residential retreat center based on the power of stillness, on the power of symbol, and on the inspirational power of art.” Maggi and her companion Surekshita were drawn out of their home near the Ashram by the noise pollution, and obtained a six acre plot of land near Auroville in a very quiet area where they built a house and established a splendid garden. A friend had visited and suggested that what was needed is a retreat center with Mother’s atmosphere. Maggi agreed. She sometimes went to other meditation retreats centers, but she always had felt that the Mother’s atmosphere was missing. And while there is already the incomparable Matrimandir in Auroville, she explains that you can’t go there for 10 days or two weeks to stay and sleep and eat in that silent atmosphere. She feels such a place is needed “because we all

talk too much and plan too much without stepping back into our ‘stillness,’ that area where all the creativity takes birth.”

The stillness project will consist of a main building and several ancillary buildings. The main building will have a central space for collective meditation, and 12 rooms for individual meditations. Each of the 12 rooms will be an art installation for evoking one of the Universal Mother’s 12 powers of the advent of the new cycle of evolution. Also, these individual meditation rooms will have glass walls and ceilings which will create an expansive atmosphere in which each one will be in connection with others and the building as a whole, but will still allow silence and solitude. The ancillary buildings will include a reception, dining room, kitchen, laundry-ironing-wardrobe, staff room, watchman’s room, and a water tank.

A foundation has been established for collecting funds for the project—the Growing Towards Foundation—and there is a beautiful website with numerous artistic drawings and plans, as well as textual information

about the proposed project (<http://www.stillness-for-growingtowards.net>). The foundation applied to the government of India for permission to receive funds for the project, and is awaiting a positive response.

Maggi is now in her 80s, but she is still weaving miracles with her writing and her various other projects designed to bring down the higher spiritual consciousness into the material world and her fellow human beings. While her consciousness is uplifted towards the Divine, her feet remain planted firmly on the ground, and her fingers tirelessly working to implant that higher consciousness here. We are sincerely appreciative of her remarkable accomplishments and life-long efforts.



Update on the Sri Aurobindo Yoga Mandir in Nepal

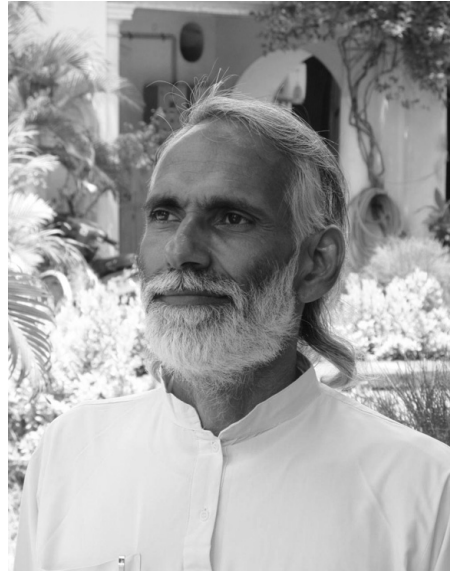
by Sri Ramchandra Das

Three years ago Collaboration interviewed Sri Ramchandra Das about his life and the development of the Sri Aurobindo Yoga Mandir in Nepal. During his recent visit to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram we asked him for an update on what has been done in the last few years.

Now we have more people, especially more children. We have about 200 children, three years ago I think we had about 165. We have been adding about 15 new children each year, and there are very few who leave the Ashram.

There also have been many changes in our infrastructure and facilities. About three years ago, or slightly more, we started a big building. It will be six stories. On one storey we will have 15 rooms, so it is a big project. We have finished the outer concrete structure for all six storeys, and on the inner work we have finished two and one-half storeys. That will need quite a huge amount of money to complete, but we are doing it. It will be a multipurpose building. The land is very expensive in Katmandu, so building up is more economical. Now we are growing and selling organic vegetables and grains on our land, so if we would build more smaller structures, all our land would be taken up.

On the ground floor we have a bakery, a few rooms, and storage. On the first floor we built a big new kitchen and dining hall which replaced our older facilities which were too small. On the second floor we have a large theatre hall where the children can perform, or we can have big meditations. On this floor we also have



Sri Ramchandra Das. (Photo by Larry Seidlitz)

a showroom where we display Sri Aurobindo's books and our organic products, and we also have a stitching room. On the third floor we have some guest rooms and

Now a new thing, which is wonderful, is that for the last one year I am trying to start a new Ashram, a third one. It is up in the Himalayas, almost 2000 meters in altitude.

some rooms for the residents, but that is still under construction. Above that, will be two floors for the girl residents. Now the girls are scattered in different places, and their number is increasing, so these two floors will be for them. I think when this building is complete we will be set for a long time without needing another building.

In the Terai Ashram, a lot of work has been done, but most recently we have constructed a new cowshed, whereas before we had only a small cowshed. This new cowshed can accommodate 100 cows, and outside also I have a fenced area so that they can go out. They come in for feeding or milking, otherwise they are free to roam outside, especially in summer, and there is a water tank out there for them to drink. So in Terai we have 100 cows, and in Katmandu we have 55 cows.

I had to increase the number of cows to increase the milk quantity, some of which we sell. Before I was selling water from our bore well with a tanker in the city of Katmandu where there is water scarcity, but suddenly the villagers started opposing it. Being in the suburbs near a forest, our water quality was far superior to most of the other sellers, so people preferred our water and were willing to pay extra money for it. We had two tankers running daily, one in the morning and one at night, and were making almost two lakhs rupees per month. So I had to compensate the loss of this income.

For this I had two possibilities. One was to increase the number of cows, which I did immediately, and the second was to increase the production of organic vegetables, which we are also doing. Previously I was not very professional in this, doing it more haphazardly. But now we have increased the production and are doing it

more systematically, and even during the winter we grow the vegetables by putting a plastic covering over them to protect them from the cold.

We wanted to get into the big farmer's organic market in the

city, but at first they would not let us sell the vegetables, because there are many other sellers there. So we started selling some of our other products, such as milk, butter, ghee, and curd, and different varieties of grains, lentils, beans and peas. We also make and sell oils, such as sesame seed oil. Again, many people preferred our products, even though many of the others were cheaper, because of our better quality. My way is no compromise in quality, even if it costs more. Slowly we added some vegetables, despite the opposition. Now it has become more liberal and anyone can join and many others have come. Despite more sellers, our products are still preferred, because they taste better and cook faster.

We are not selling in the stores, though people are coming to us at the



Ashram to buy. We also have our own delivery system. If someone buys more than Rs. 1000 of goods, then we will deliver it. This way the children who help with the deliveries can also learn how the people are living and talk with them and make new discoveries. Now we are making almost three lakhs per month selling the vegetables and grains.

Now a new thing, which is wonderful, is that for the last one year I am trying to start a new Ashram, a third one. It is up in the Himalayas, almost 2000 meters in altitude. The location is wonderful and the water up there is marvelous. We have purchased 20 acres of land with some money that I have borrowed. I bought it now because every day the price is going up. It is not even farmer's land, they are just using it to grow grass. During the rainy season it grows and then they cut it and use it for the winter. People are just grabbing the land for their houses.

That land is mostly on the top of the mountain, in some places it is on the sides. It is beautiful, but the land is not good for growing things. One reason the land is going up in price is that the Nepal government has decided to build a road from near the Indian border to the north up into the Himalayas to a nice place where there is a hunting resort. Many tourists come to hunt the animals there. They have just initiated the project, so it may take ten years before it is complete, but this road will touch the land we have purchased, and the prices are going up quickly. Earlier it would have been about 6 lakhs, but it has cost us 35 lakhs. I had liked the place, so I had to buy it.

There were several reasons why I was interested in this land. First, it was my birth place. I was born there and I played until I was 12 years old in that region. Second, the people in my birth place sacrifice animals, innocent animals they sacrifice to their ancestors and to their deities. I was telling them, "please do not slaughter the animals." Throughout the year they sacrifice them, especially female and baby



The meditation hall at the Terai Ashram in Nepal can seat up to 500 people. (Photo courtesy www.aurnepal.net)

black goats, male white or red color goats. During the Durga puja, each family will sacrifice two male goats and one male buffalo. So there are hundreds of animals slaughtered. I don't like this, and I thought I must stop it. But how to stop it? First I made a Shiva temple, because to Lord Shiva you can't give sacrifices, he doesn't like them.

When the temple was built, I made a big announcement. I told them we are now in the 21st century, the whole world has become like a village. If people come and see that you are slaughtering the animals, they will think you are barbaric. It is not good, you should stop it. You can worship in a different way. You can break a coconut, like they do in South India. Or in some Durga pujas, they cut a cucumber, and it is also considered a sacrifice. Now you can come to the Shiva temple, where a Brahmin priest will offer mantras to Lord Shiva in a Rudra puja which is considered the best puja to remove all obstacles. The people in this area do these sacrifices because they are afraid that if somebody is sick at home, or their cow is ill, it is because some ancestor or deity is angry. I told them that if you do this puja, Lord Shiva will remove all the obstacles.

But still some people have their old thinking and they say I am wrong. So I thought, "Okay, I can't change these people's minds, so I will start with the children and educate them." When the Ashram is there we will offer free English classes, and

when they come we will tell them these things. So with the next generation I am sure this animal sacrifice will stop.

A third reason for choosing this place is that in the village near to the Shiva temple, I also had made a school for the villagers. Before there was no school in the village. When I was young I had to walk for two hours to go to school, and walk two hours back. So when my father died, with my share of the money from the property, along with some other money, I made a school there that goes up to the eighth standard class. There are 300 to 400 children who are

now benefitting from that school. Now I am trying to extend it to the tenth standard. When we create the new Ashram, some of the money that we generate will be used to develop this school and also another school that is now there.

I want to help develop this area. I will show them how to grow good organic products. Now they are growing things, but they are not of good quality and few people buy them. Also, I want to give them good cows, Jersey cows, which give good milk. In the village, they have small cows which hardly give a liter of milk a day. But our cows in Katmandu are giving 35 liters of milk a day. So I will take a bull from Katmandu and some of our calves, so that we can give them good cows that will give them a better standard of life. They will also benefit from the Ashram in other ways. Now there is nothing at the Ashram, so everything we will have to buy from them and their economy will improve.

A fourth reason for buying the land is that it is so beautiful, because it overlooks many valleys. And fifth, if you walk ten minutes into the forest, my father's land is there, which is three acres. So at my father's land there is a lot of firewood, and possibly we can use some of the wood for construction.

I am thinking that I want to create a retreat center there, for people who would like to come to a beautiful, natural place for meditation and yoga. Around the property



Essays

Science and yoga

by Don Salmon and Jan Maslow

Science taken in its essence should stand only for a method and not for any special beliefs, yet as habitually taken by its votaries, science has come to be identified with a certain fixed general belief, the belief that the deeper order of nature is mechanical exclusively, and that non-mechanical categories are irrational ways of conceiving and explaining even such a thing as human life. —William James

there is a national forest reserve. There nobody can kill animals, so many varieties of animals are coming to our land. We want to offer yoga, meditations, sun bath, massage, Ayurvedic and naturopathy treatments, trekking in the mountains. We will have a seven day course and a 15 days course, something like that. Of course, it will be costly, as we will have to carry everything to the site because the road is not yet ready. Up to some distance a tractor can bring supplies, but for the rest of the distance people will have to carry the things. During the winter one must walk about one hour to get to the site, but in the rainy season one must walk about two hours as some areas become impassable.

Developing this property will be heavy work. Concrete construction is very costly, plus to carry the things to the site is not possible, so now I am thinking of building bamboo huts at this center. I can buy bamboo from the villagers, and wood also I can buy from them. Whereas we have some wood on my family's land which we can use, most of it is not very good quality wood.

I am also thinking I will have a heliopad on our land, which would make it accessible for rich people or government officials from Katmandu or big cities in India. I am thinking that it would be good for the government people to come and have some meetings at the Ashram, for five or six days, with no alcohol, pure vegetarian food, and meditation, so that they would make good decisions. I will be inviting them to come for this. You know, Nepal is very backward. We still have no constitution. For the last seven years, the leaders have been fighting for nothing. They have no vision. They are ruining the country, and the country has so much potential. It is a beautiful country, it has so much wealth, but these people don't know how to use it to develop the country. I hope that our center could help them.

Sri Aurobindo Yoga Mandir is seeking volunteers to help develop the Ashrams in Nepal. For more information, contact Ramchandra Das at: sriarobindo@gmail.com.

How might we go about reconciling the yogic view of consciousness with that of science? In the Renaissance and post-Renaissance period, scientists chose to focus their studies on the physical world in order to avoid conflict with religious authorities. Enlarging their sphere of study over the centuries, scientists in the past 100 years have entered territory previously considered to be the province of religion. Having chosen to explore the nature of the subject—referred to variously as mind, consciousness, soul, or spirit—it is no longer possible to avoid conflict between science and religion by claiming, as did paleontologist Stephen J. Gould, that they investigate separate, non-overlapping fields of study.

From the yogic perspective, most modern versions of science, philosophy and theology have something essential in common: they all make use of the reasoning capacity of the surface thinking mind as their primary tool of investigation. Scientific investigation adds one essential factor—careful use of the physical senses, augmented by various physical instruments.

Sri Aurobindo describes the way of knowing common to the surface thinking mind as “separative knowledge.” Our knowledge of people and the things of the world is limited because we take them to be essentially separate from ourselves. Because of the limitations of this way of

knowing, scientists have had to develop compensatory means of gaining information and understanding, such as complex measuring instruments, statistical analyses and painstaking peer review.

There is another kind of knowing, native to the inner or subliminal consciousness, which Sri Aurobindo refers to as “knowledge by direct contact.” By means of this way of knowing it is possible to gain intimate knowledge of people and things that are physically external to ourselves. Once we awaken to the inner consciousness, we discover we have the capacity to know things apparently separate from us in time and space. Paranormal abilities, which are manifest in an extremely limited and unpredictable fashion as long as we are confined to the surface consciousness, become normal, fully utilizable capacities.

There is a still deeper way of knowing, which yogis say is the source of all other knowledge. According to Sri Aurobindo, this ultimate form of knowledge is altogether beyond the mind—“supramental”—though we can develop a reflection of it in the mind by cultivating our intuitive abilities. Sri Aurobindo describes this way of knowing as “knowledge by identity”; that is, we know something by becoming one in consciousness with that which we seek to know.

If we examine some of the latest scientific developments in the field of consciousness studies with regard to how they make use of these different ways of knowing, we may get a sense of what would be involved in developing a truly yogic science.

Separative knowledge: using the outer senses and the surface thinking mind

Speculations based on pre-existing research

Several scientists have offered interesting speculations regarding the relationship between consciousness and matter. For example, physicist Freeman Dyson, describing what he considers to be evidence of the operations of mind in matter,



writes, "Atoms in the laboratory are weird stuff, behaving like active agents rather than inert substances. They make unpredictable choices between alternative possibilities according to the laws of quantum mechanics. It appears that mind, as manifested by the capacity to make choices, is to some extent inherent in every atom." Dyson goes on to say that atoms and humans "may have minds that differ in degree but not in kind."

Other scientists, reflecting on existing research, have offered more specific suggestions for possible ways that consciousness may relate to matter. Physicist Amit Goswami suggests that consciousness may make use of quantum processes to bring about the kind of creative mutations that lead to the appearance of new species. When it comes to helping a species become more stable within its environment, Goswami maintains that Darwinian natural selection plays an important role. However, he suggests that at the same time this process of stabilization is going on, potential mutations are accumulating in the form of quantum possibilities. These are passed down, in their potential form, to subsequent generations. When a change in the environment calls for it, a number of the potential mutations are then "chosen" to manifest simultaneously, resulting in a new species that will be suited to the new environment.

Aware that this makes no sense in the context of a purely materialistic perspective, Goswami proposes that the quantum possibilities for potential mutations are held in a non-physical field. Both Ervin Laszlo and Daniel Benor propose kindred theories suggesting that non-material fields of subtle energy are in part responsible for adaptive mutations. All three agree that consciousness appears to play a fundamental role in the evolutionary process.

Psychologist Alan Combs and neuroscientist Francisco Varela have developed intricate and compelling theories combining chaos and complexity theory, as well as ideas about self-organization, which they suggest may contribute to understanding

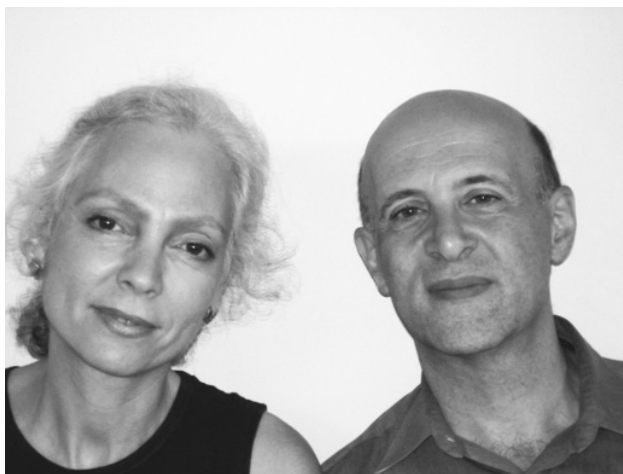


Photo courtesy Jan Maslow and Don Salmon.

the role of consciousness in the material universe. In each of these instances, scientists have analyzed existing data using their surface thinking minds in an attempt to discern meaningful patterns. They have then, without benefit of direct, intuitive knowledge, simply asserted a causal role for consciousness in bringing about or shaping these patterns. Let's see if there is anything more to be gained by conducting original research on the relationship of consciousness and matter while still using the surface mind as one's primary tool for understanding.

Conducting research using conventional scientific methods

Biologist Rupert Sheldrake has conducted research suggesting that the experience of animals is somehow recorded in non-physical "morphogenetic" (i.e., form-building) fields, making it easier for future generations to acquire certain behaviors. His research builds on the observations of others, including psychologist William McDougal, "who discovered quite by chance that untrained rats were quick to learn a task (escaping from a water maze) previously acquired by many earlier generations of rats of the same strain." Researchers in Scotland and Australia similarly found several years later that rats that had no training picked up the task almost immediately. Physiologist Ivan Pavlov also "observed a similar effect when he trained

several generations of white mice to run to a feeding station at the sound of a bell. While the first generation required an average of about three hundred trials to learn the task, the second generation required only about one hundred trials. The third and fourth generations learned in thirty and ten trials respectively."

After conducting numerous experiments on morphogenetic fields in relation to animals, Sheldrake has since conducted research on the relationship of these fields to human beings. Sheldrake theorizes that, when we focus our attention on something, our

mind extends outward to connect us with the object of our attention. Thus, when a person is staring at someone, his field of vision "extends out to touch the person he is staring at." In addition, the person being looked at has a field around him as well, and the two fields interact—though this interaction may not be experienced consciously. Sheldrake suggests that these interacting fields may be the same as what yogis have referred to for centuries as pranic or vital energy fields.

Sheldrake has developed a simple experiment to test this theory. He has two people sit together, one designated as the starrer, the other the person to be stared at. In each round of the experiment, the starrer tosses a coin to decide whether he will look at the other person or not. He then signals the initiation of a ten-second period, during which the other person has to guess whether or not he is being stared at. Among the many trials Sheldrake has conducted, by far the largest number were carried out in Amsterdam, Holland, involving more than 18,700 pairs of subjects. He reports that "the statistical significance of the positive results is astronomical: the odds against chance are 10376 to 1."

The work of psychiatrist Ian Stevenson, while also relying primarily on the use of the ordinary thinking mind, presents a strong challenge to conventional notions of the relationship between consciousness and matter. Over the course of



several decades, Stevenson has conducted several thousand case studies of individuals (usually children) claiming to have recollections of a previous life. His work presents a strong challenge. The prestigious *Journal of the American Medical Association* has written of his “meticulous and extended investigations,” in which he has “painstakingly and unemotionally collected a detailed series of cases in which the evidence for reincarnation is difficult to understand on any other grounds... He has placed on record a large amount of data that cannot be ignored.”

As a young psychiatrist, prior to beginning this research, one of Stevenson’s major interests had been psychosomatic medicine, the study of the relationship between mind and body. Later, in the course of conducting reincarnation research, he became intrigued by the many cases in which birthmarks in a current life could be correlated with wounds reportedly received in a previous life, suggesting the “mind’s influence on the body across the gap of death.” In many cases, medical records, including autopsy reports, were found describing the precise location of a wound incurred by the person the child claims to have been in a previous life, and which matched the precise location of a birthmark in the current life. Sometimes a child in his current life was found to have a specific disease identical to that of the former personality, and which was entirely absent in the child’s current genetic heritage.

In a particularly dramatic example, “a child in Turkey recalled being a bandit in his former life. He had committed suicide when about to be captured by the French police, [by wedging] the muzzle of his long rifle under the right side of his chin, resting the handle on the ground, and then [pulling] the trigger. In his new life, the boy was born with a huge gash mark under his chin. While Stevenson was investigating the case, an old man turned up who had remembered the bandit’s death and seen the condition of his dead body.”

Thinking as a physician, Stevenson conjectured, “if the bullet had gone through the brain in the manner described, there must be another scar where

the bullet exited.” During his investigation, he asked the child if there was another scar, and one was found just to the left of the crown of his head, hidden under a thick crop of hair. In a presentation at the United Engineering Center in New York, Stevenson showed a slide tracing “the line of trajectory the bullet should have taken in its passage [from the gash under the jaw] through the brain...[which] was in perfect alignment with the scar mark on top of the head.”

Interesting though these observations and experiments may be, none of them involve the direct perception of the workings of consciousness. As physicist Arthur Zajonc notes,

Physics, chemistry, and neuroscience provide accounts for the mechanism of consciousness but say nothing about the experience of consciousness itself ... Every science, if it would move beyond purely formal mathematical relationships, must incorporate qualities [i.e., subjective experience] into itself. All meaning inheres in qualities. The qualitative connects the formal treatment with experience... If our interest ultimately is consciousness, then we will require a means of investigation that is able to include the full range of conscious experience, and not merely a reduced set of variables easily amenable to quantification.

As long as researchers continue to rely on the outer thinking mind and outer senses as the primary means of gathering and analyzing data, they will not gain an understanding of the nature of consciousness that is substantially different from that of mainstream science. Limited to the surface consciousness, which takes things to be essentially separate from each other, we have no direct awareness of the relationship between consciousness and the object of study. Even more fundamental, we cannot, using only the surface mind, develop a truly comprehensive understanding, because [m]ind in its essence is a consciousness which measures, limits,

cuts out forms of things from the indivisible whole and contains them as if each were a separate integer. Even with what exists only as obvious parts and fractions, [m]ind establishes this fiction of its ordinary commerce that they are things with which it can deal separately and not merely as aspects of a whole.

Knowledge by direct contact: Using the inner mind and inner senses

Recognizing the limits of conventional approaches, some scientists suggest that introspection would provide a more direct approach to the study of consciousness. In an interesting instance of the interaction between theory and practice, psychiatrist Jeffrey Schwartz gained new insight into the mind-brain relationship as a result of teaching his patients to incorporate introspection as part of their treatment. He has developed a comprehensive program using mindfulness meditation—a form of introspection—for the treatment of obsessive-compulsive disorder. His treatment involves teaching patients to maintain a calm, non-judgmental stance while passively observing arising thoughts and impulses. In his research, Schwartz found that the simple act of focusing attention brings about specific and substantial changes in brain functioning that correlate with a substantial reduction of symptoms in his patients.

This use of introspection involves a more direct approach to the study of consciousness than other methods used by cognitive scientists. However, it differs from a yogic approach in three fundamental ways: 1) the focus of the subject’s (or patient’s) attention does not penetrate beyond the ordinary waking consciousness; 2) the researcher, in his analysis of results, relies on the limited, separative knowledge of the outer thinking mind; and 3) in a yogic approach to the study of consciousness, researcher and subject would be co-participants, both making use of the inner consciousness, through which they could gain direct, unmediated knowledge of



whatever “object” they seek to understand.

How might a researcher use his inner consciousness to conduct one of the experiments described earlier? With the inner consciousness it is possible to become directly aware of the interaction of the physical, vital and mental consciousness in things. Consider, for example, research being conducted on mutations in bacteria. Currently, even with the compelling evidence amassed by such individuals as John Cairns, Barry Hall and Asher Ben-Jacob, the assumption that intelligence is involved in the process of mutation is not based on direct inner awareness, but rather, indirect speculation. An individual who had sufficiently developed his inner consciousness could carry out similar experiments and perceive directly the role of the physical, vital and mental consciousness in the process of mutation. Furthermore, given the greater intuitive capacity of the inner mind, he could understand the meaning and purpose of each step of the process in the context of the larger ecosystem and the entire cosmos, perceiving all as one interconnected physical-vital-mental whole. Such perceptions could be verified by having a number of yogic researchers observe the same phenomena, and checking for commonalities in their perceptions.

Developing the capacity for knowledge by direct contact, native to the inner consciousness, is only an intermediate step between the separative knowledge of the surface consciousness and the true knowledge by identity which characterizes the supramental consciousness. However, it is still such an immense change from our ordinary way of knowing, and still so subject to egoic distortion, that many safeguards would be needed to assure the validity of knowledge so acquired. Safeguards currently employed would continue to be useful: complex physical instruments to check for physical correlates of non-physical perceptions, rigorous and refined experimental designs, statistical analyses, submission of results to the community of fellow scientists, etc. However, another critical factor arises when the primary instrument of research is one's own consciousness.

Imagine if each time you looked through a microscope or telescope, the lens changed in wildly unpredictable ways. This is analogous to the way our minds function most of the time. There is, however, an important difference. Repairing a faulty physical instrument may require a great deal of work, but it does not call for a fundamental change in the person using it. On the other hand, when the instrument for looking is the mind of the researcher, the “repair” of the instrument calls for the involvement of the whole person. In other words, ethical considerations become paramount. With current methodologies, an individual scientist may very well be a highly ethical person, but that is not a requirement of the particular method he uses. By contrast, a scientist who employs inner or intuitive ways of knowing, must live his life in a such a way that anger, craving, anxiety and hatred do not prevent the mind from attaining an exquisitely refined and balanced level of attention. This has significant implications for the education of such scientists as it will require they become highly trained, well-practiced contemplatives.

The research methodology suggested here may sound similar to psychologist Charles Tart's proposal for the development of “state-specific sciences.” Tart has observed that the “data” obtained in altered states of consciousness (e.g., the dream state) is often not only different from that obtained in the ordinary waking state, but difficult or even impossible to comprehend when not in the same altered state oneself. He therefore proposed that a complete science would require investigators to enter “altered states” in order to obtain the fullest understanding of data that was obtained in an altered state.

What is being described here is distinct from Tart's proposal in that it does not directly relate to a particular “state” of consciousness (i.e., waking or dream state). It may seem to do so because yogis have used the same terms (“waking state” and “dream state”) to describe particular ways of knowing. In yogic terminology, the dream “state” (*swapna* in Sanskrit) refers to the way of knowing native to the

inner consciousness, one in which we are in direct contact with that which we seek to understand. By contrast, the waking “state” (*jagrat*) refers primarily to the way of knowing characteristic of the surface or outer awareness, one in which we take ourselves to be separate from what we know. It is possible to employ knowledge by direct contact not only in what is commonly called the dream state, but in the waking state as well. Similarly, it is possible to employ separative knowledge both in the dream and waking states.

Knowledge by identity: Using intuition

Though knowledge by direct contact is a more intimate way of knowing than the separative knowledge characteristic of the surface consciousness, knowledge by identity (what we've been referring to as “intuitive knowledge”) is a still more powerful and comprehensive way of knowing. Physicist and philosopher of science Henri Bortoft, in his book, *The Wholeness of Nature*, writes of an intuitive approach to research based on the work of German writer Johannes Wolfgang von Goethe and Austrian philosopher Rudolf Steiner. Bortoft describes this research as involving a different kind of seeing, one that sees the whole reflected in the parts. This intuitive way of knowing can take in both the quantitative and qualitative in one, integral glance.

For example, studying a rose, the researcher would employ an intensely focused, highly disciplined awareness, making possible the discovery of a whole world of qualities not discernable by conventional quantitative methodology. To the extent he is able to identify his consciousness with the consciousness of the rose, he may actually experience it “coming-into-being.” According to Bortoft, this method can lead to an understanding of the evolution of plant and animal forms that has so far eluded conventional methods of research.

However, Bortoft's descriptions still fall short of what one would expect at the highest levels of intuitive knowledge, as



they lack an awareness of the inseparable relationship between the infinite and the finite.

In addition to using intuition as a primary tool of research, the advanced yogic researcher, by virtue of having awakened the inner consciousness, would have a greatly expanded range of sensory data to work with. This would include the universal fields of physical, vital and mental conscious-energy.

It would be interesting to see the extent to which a yogic methodology – utilizing both intuition and this expanded sensory capacity—could be applied to both the natural and social sciences. The use of intuition—which can “see” the whole in the part—may, in coming centuries, lead to a comprehension of large-scale socio-cultural phenomena with a specificity beyond what even the most rigorous statistical analysis can provide. Similarly, with regard to physical phenomena, yogic research may yield a new understanding—perhaps in conjunction with further developments in external technology—of the movements of the galaxies and the course of biological evolution.

What might a researcher with a highly developed capacity for knowledge by identity find, were she to examine the question of mutations in bacteria? Rather than focusing on the outer form of the bacteria, or even their inner qualities, she would enter into communion with the “Self” of the bacteria which is the same as her own True Self. Knowing the bacteria as an appearance of the Divine, she would see the mutation as a purposeful unfolding of the Divine Consciousness, and would know in the most intimate fashion the aspiration of that Consciousness to manifest more fully. In a single, unified act of knowing she would comprehend the relationship between the Will of the Supreme Knower, the group-soul of the bacteria, the appearance of their evolving form, and the tim-

ing of the whole process.

The Indo-Tibetan tradition contains many sublime descriptions of knowledge by identity—particularly in the writings of Tibetan Buddhists and the great 11th century Kashmiri philosopher Abhinavagupta. Building upon this tradition, Sri Aurobindo gives some hints as to how intuitive knowledge may contribute to a radically new understanding of matter.

Sri Aurobindo’s comments are offered here as scientific hypotheses to be tested. However, testing of these hypotheses, unlike those associated with conventional research, would require the use of a highly developed intuitive capacity. The level of requisite intuitive refinement is not one that could be easily achieved in a matter of weeks or even months. Rather, it would likely require an intensive, years-

In addition to using intuition as a primary tool of research, the advanced yogic researcher, by virtue of having awakened the inner consciousness, would have a greatly expanded range of sensory data to work with.

long training program along the lines of Alan Wallace’s Samatha project. A number of researchers so trained might then be able to work collaboratively to reach an intimate knowledge of the relationship between matter and consciousness.

* * * * *

When science, instead of following the course of Nature upstream by analysis... shall begin to follow it downstream... and especially studying and utilizing critical stages of transition, then the secret of material creation will be solved, and Science will be able to create material life and not as now merely destroy it. —Sri Aurobindo, Commentary on the Isha Upanishad

A diamond is a diamond and a pearl a pearl, each thing of its own class, existing by its distinction from all others, each distinguished by its own form and properties. But each has also properties and elements which are common to both and others which

are common to material things in general. And in reality each does not exist only by its distinctions, but much more essentially by that which is common to both; and we get back to the very basis and enduring truth of all material things only when we find that all are the same thing, one energy, one substance or, if you like, one universal motion which throws up, brings out, combines, realises these different forms, these various properties, these fixed and harmonised potentialities of its own being. If we stop short at the knowledge of distinctions, we can deal only with diamond and pearl as they are, fix their values, uses, varieties, make the best ordinary use and profit of them; but if we can get to the knowledge and control of their elements and the common properties of the class to which they belong, we may arrive at the power of making either a diamond or pearl at our pleasure: go farther still and master that which all material things are in their essence and we may arrive even at

the power of transmutation which would give the greatest possible control of material Nature. Thus the knowledge of distinctions arrives at its greatest truth and effective use when we arrive at the deeper knowledge of that which reconciles distinctions in the unity behind all variations. That deeper knowledge does not deprive the other and more superficial of effectivity nor convict it of vanity. We cannot conclude from our ultimate material discovery that there is no original substance or Matter, only energy manifesting substance or manifesting as substance,—that diamond and pearl are non-existent, unreal, only true to the illusion of our senses of perception and action, that the one substance, energy or motion is the sole eternal truth and that therefore the best or only rational use of our science would be to dissolve diamond and pearl and everything else that we can dissolve into this one eternal and original reality and get done with their forms and properties for ever. There is an essentiality of



things, [the transcendent, infinite Spirit] a commonality of things [the universal Spirit], an individuality of things [the individual Spirit]; the commonality and individuality are true and eternal powers of the essentiality: that transcends them both, but the three together and not one by itself are the eternal terms of existence.

This truth which we can see, though with difficulty and under considerable restrictions, even in the material world where the subtler and higher powers of being have to be excluded from our intellectual operations, becomes clearer and more powerful when we ascend in the scale. We see the truth of our classifications and distinctions, but also their limits. All things, even while different, are yet one. For practical purposes plant, animal, man are different existences; yet when we look deeper we see that the plant is only an animal with an insufficient evolution of self-consciousness and dynamic force; the animal is man in the making; man himself is that animal and yet the something more of self-consciousness and dynamic power of consciousness that make him man; and yet again he is the something more which is contained and repressed in his being as the potentiality of the divine,—he is a god in the making. In each of these, plant, animal, man, god, the Eternal is there containing and repressing himself as it were in order to make a certain statement of his being. Each is the whole Eternal concealed. —Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*

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11. This is not to say that it is not helpful to conduct research providing understanding of the mechanisms of consciousness. Psychiatrist Jeffrey Schwartz and physicist Henry Stapp have come up with an intriguing theory that attention serves to collapse two co-existing quantum possibilities in the brain—“release neurotransmitter” or “don’t release neurotransmitter.” Their fascinating description of the way in which this may work is in Schwartz’ *The Mind and the Brain*. In this book and in an article for the *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, Schwartz takes the step—quite bold within the current world of neuroscience—of asserting that the mind has causal efficacy in regard to the brain.

12. Zajonc, A., Toward An Adequate Epistemology and Methodology for Consciousness Studies, at <http://www.infinity-foundation.com>.

13. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, p. 162.

14. The introspective approach has recently been referred to as a “view from within.” See Varela, F. and Shear, J., *The View From Within*.

15. For more on state-specific science, see Tart, C., *Open Mind, Discriminating Mind*.

aThe brief descriptions offered in this section regarding yogic research methods are intended to be provide no more than a hint of what is possible. Any description intended for practical use would require a great deal more written exposition. In order to make use of such a description, researchers would need extended contemplative training.

bWe are using the term “intuition” broadly to refer both to the pure knowledge by identity characteristic of the supramental consciousness and the in-

creasingly limited forms of intuition that are characteristic of the various mental planes, from the Overmind down to the physical mind. See the section on intuition in Chapter 18, *The Supramental Consciousness*, for more details.

16. For a masterful account of a new approach to scientific methodology inspired by this way of knowing, see Bortoft, H., *The Wholeness of Nature*.

17. Sri Aurobindo, *The Upanishads*, p. 128.

18. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, p. 381.

The truth of harmony

by Ashesh Joshi

When all is in agreement with the one Truth or an expression of it, that is harmony.
—Sri Aurobindo

We understand from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother that each individual carries a spark, a unique aspect of the Divine Truth within, and it is our work here to realise our mode of divinity and its expression here in harmony with others. Similarly, a well-formed group, a community, a culture, a nation or race carries a unique aspect of the Divine and needs to find and express it for the sake of a complete manifestation in harmony with the other groups.

Sri Aurobindo called this indwelling divine element the psychic being, the evolving seed of divinity in each individual. This being is actually the hidden leader of our journey here and has the capacity to purify, integrate and turn all our parts and personalities towards the Divine. It is also inherently aware of our real purpose and role in the world and our relations with it, and to realise it is given to us as our first priority. To work in the world is largely a means to work within ourselves and make this discovery first before our works begin to truly reflect the Divine Will in the world. To work collectively, to create a place or an environment or a community can help towards this only when each one

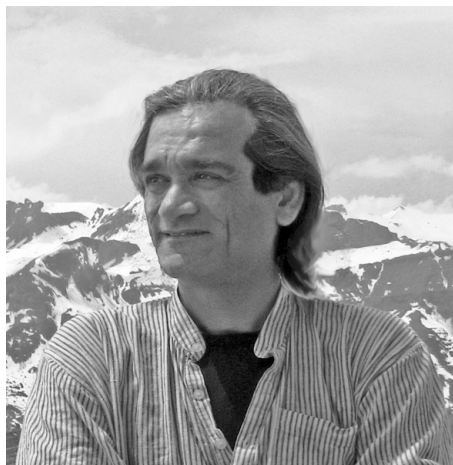


Photo courtesy Ashesh Joshi.

understands that each has its own truth to live and express and while asserting one's mode of being, respects the modes of others. To exercise respect, humility and sincerity towards others further helps in the realisation of the inner divine. And to learn to accommodate others' views and ways while growing in one's own helps one's own growth and contributes towards developing a greater harmony for the collectivity.

Unsolved discords

This being our aspiration we also need to consider our limitations and frequent failures and find ways to deal with them. For as our inmost being, the Psychic being is determined to work towards the fulfilment of our highest aspiration, our outer and instrumental being—mind, life and body—has usually a long way to go before becoming responsive to the inner guidance; and unless there is a strong and lasting realisation of the Psychic being, which also necessitates a general purification of our egoistic nature, it is next to impossible that our outer being will be able to express the inner truth, or be able to appreciate the truths of others and work out things in the required harmony!

Therefore, when we are actually struck by disharmony amongst ourselves, we need to step back in consciousness, at times to step back from life and action, to concentrate, contemplate and find a guiding principle, a light that can harmonize

all viewpoints and lead us further. As this stepping back to seek a higher harmony is an indispensable part of each one's inner work so also, to respond to the developing situations, each collectivity needs to step back, contemplate and contribute towards a harmonizing solution.

To a growing consciousness differences are not perceived as problems as they challenge us to find a greater harmony, provide an opportunity to discover greater depths and heights of our being and uncover subconscious elements influencing our life which otherwise would remain hidden from our conscious mentality.

For all problems of existence are essentially problems of harmony. They arise from the perception of an unsolved discord and the instinct of an undiscovered agreement or unity. To rest content with an unsolved discord is possible for the practical and more animal part of man, but impossible for his fully awakened mind, and usually even his practical parts only escape from the general necessity either by shutting out the problem or by accepting a rough, utilitarian and unilluminated compromise. For essentially, all Nature seeks a harmony, life and matter in their own sphere as much as mind in the arrangement of its perceptions. The greater the apparent disorder of the materials offered or the apparent disparateness, even to irreconcilable opposition, of the elements that have to be utilised, the stronger is the spur, and it drives towards a more subtle and puissant order than can normally be the result of a less difficult endeavour. —Sri Aurobindo (*The Life Divine*, pp. 4-5)

Conflict resolution

There are stages to the conflicts and the resulting disharmony—difference, argument, quarrel, war etc. These roughly correspond to the descending levels of our psychology—perception, ideology, sentiments, physicality—and at each descend-

ing level our involvement in the gross and unconscious nature increases. Thus, as the disharmony grows and the consciousness slips to the lower levels it becomes more difficult to step back from the raging energy, to look at the situation from the depth of our being or from the height of our consciousness where reigns a greater unity, to find and introduce into the conflict a truer solution that can harmonise all the viewpoints. However, as the Yoga proceeds, the need to step back and concentrate in order to contact the higher consciousness grows less for, through successive stages of development one is able to experience the higher and higher grades of spiritual consciousness, allowing each to descend, to get established and express itself in and through one. For each ascending grade of the higher consciousness is also a greater and more powerful witnessing and a uniting consciousness.

The perception of difference is an indication that the interest of a party is not in harmony with that of another or life in general. Tuning interests by the contact and influence of the soul-uniqueness of each one can solve the difference; and this already asks of us for an effort to turn inwards. The levels of argument, quarrels and war are respectively levels of mind, vital and physical and on each level the impurities of that particular plane come into action.

Difficult as this may be, at any given stage of a conflict, it is wise to avoid nurturing the sprouts of the next degrading stage; the solution is to remain turned to a higher way and to a growing harmony. By getting agitated or excited, by losing one's temper and one's faith, by getting hurt or by being aggressive and thus throwing ourselves to the mercy of our surface nature, we only close ourselves from the influence of the higher workings and open ourselves to the ordinary or lower forces.

The true basis of progress

Harmony and not strife is the law of yogic living. —Sri Aurobindo (*Letters on Yoga*, p. 803)



I take this opportunity to assure you that spiritual progress and the service of Truth are based on harmony and not on division and criticism.
—The Mother (*CWM*, Vol. 12, p. 184)

Only in an environment of harmony and not in an aggressive, distrustful and mutually painful atmosphere can the greater harmony evolve. The aim of a divine life upon earth can be reached progressively only when the individual and the collectivity are both able to grow together and support each other. It is to learn to give space, encouragement and means to others to develop in their own modes that we are here together, and also to find the same for ourselves.

And when one or the other person or some action is perceived as compromising one's freedom of movement, it is not by creating a greater disharmony that we fix the out-of-tune movement, but by contemplating, living and suggesting harmonious solutions that can set things right for one and all.

In fact, I insist that the more difficult things are, the more you must remain quiet, and the more should you have an unshakeable faith. Of all things this is the most important. Usually, as soon as things become difficult, human beings get agitated, become irritated, get terribly excited and they make the difficulties ten times more difficult. So I am warning you right away that this is not to be done, that you must do the opposite. —The Mother (*CWM*, Vol. 6, pp. 453-454)

Choosing the side of the Divine

In the same talk, the Mother reads her next year's message:

No human will can finally prevail against the Divine's Will. Let us put ourselves deliberately and exclusively on the side of the Divine, and the Victory is ultimately certain. (*Ibid.*)

We are asked to choose the Divine and be on His side! Essentially it means that we are here to concentrate on the Divine, to consecrate our life to his presence and service, to live only for the Divine, win his victory in ourselves and work for his unity and harmony in the world. And yet, since life is all about making the right choices, we often find ourselves on one or the other side of a conflict. In such a case one needs to understand what it means to choose the side of the Divine!

The choice is there at every minute; every minute you are faced with a choice: the choice to climb up or go down, the choice to progress or go backwards. But this choice does not imply that you prefer things to be like this or like that; it is a fact of every moment, an attitude you take.
—The Mother (*CWM*, Vol. 8, p. 407)

If we choose to make the inner discovery, it should be an unflinching choice because it refers to changing the way we aspire to experience life and contribute to the world. But the choice made regarding any external motive cannot be held on to as the ultimate choice, for it would then become a bias and a preference and in the scenario of an ever-changing situation we are required to choose freely, again and again, the side of the Truth!

The Mother further explains,

... if you have preferences, you will choose through preference in one way or another, your preference will distort your choice: it will be calculation, bargaining, you will act with the idea that a particular thing must happen because this is what you prefer and not because that is the truth, the right thing to do. Preference is attached to the result, acts with a view to the result, wishes things to be in a particular way and acts to bring about its wish; and so this opens the door to all kinds of things. Choice is independent of the result. And certainly, at every minute you can choose, you are faced with the neces-

sity of choosing at every second. And you do not choose really well, in all sincerity, unless it is the truth of the choice which interests you, and not the result of your choice. If you choose with the result in view, that falsifies your choice. (*CWM*, Vol. 8, p. 407)

Having a consciousness free from preferences is a state of inner freedom from the narrowness of mind and having it, the inner consciousness can freely perceive the situation and call down the higher consciousness and its alchemy and find the appropriate applications of the higher truth.

The Mother adds,

You may — or you ought to if you can't — aspire to have the same deep attitude of understanding, unity, love, perfect compassion for all that is in the universe; but this very attitude will be applied to each case in a different way, according to the truth of that case and its necessity. What could be called the motive or rather the origin of the action is the same, but the action may even be totally and diametrically opposite in accordance with the case and the deeper truth of each case. (*CWM*, Vol. 8, p. 408)

The rules of the game

While it is true that at times one has to speak up and stand up by the deeply-felt truth, the way one takes to bridge the gap will determine one's relation with the Divine Mother and will facilitate or hamper the manifestation of her will in the world.

From the point of view of a spiritual life, it is not what you do that matters most, but the way in which it is done and the consciousness you put into it.
—The Mother (*CWM*, Vol. 14, p. 36)

To be able to choose, to be sincere, inwardly to put oneself on the side of the Di-



vine! This also means that one will be able to come out of one's preferences and seek the truth, be able to perceive the concerns of each and what aspect of the Divine each represents, be able to place all the viewpoints in the true perspective and be able to find a harmonising solution.

It [harmony, delight and love] is in you and when it is like that it spreads out in the atmosphere—but naturally only those can share who are open and sensitive to the influence. Still everyone who has peace or love in him becomes an added influence for its increase in the atmosphere. —Sri Aurobindo (*Letters on Yoga*, p. 835)

The Integral Yoga is challenging, the practice is on the individual as well as the collective level. Spirituality turning towards life is a novel adventure, the treading of the Yoga is in unknown territories and we are still to develop the tools to work with the problems that were never faced before. But, if for any reason, if we find ourselves in the middle of a conflict and must find the way to a greater harmony, we will need to take care to see that the energy we use, the means we employ, the attitudes we take to create such tools are also true and pure! We have to build on the deeper qualities of our consciousness—invocation, sincerity, truthfulness, humility, respect, openness, generosity, forgiveness, love, compassion, wisdom, surrender etc. And these cannot be compromised.

The words of the Mother, explaining an aphorism of Sri Aurobindo, give us a guiding light to work in this direction:

'Only those thoughts are true the opposite of which is also true in its own time and application; indisputable dogmas are the most dangerous kind of falsehoods.'

If one element of this totality is taken separately and affirmed as the only

true one, however central or comprehensive it may be, it necessarily becomes a falsehood, since it denies all the rest of the Total Truth.

This is precisely how indisputable dogmas are created and this is why they are the most dangerous kind of falsehood—because each one asserts that it is the sole truth to the exclusion of all other truths which, in their innumerable and complementary totality, express progressively, in the becoming, the infinite, eternal, absolute Truth. (CWM, Vol. 10, p. 66)

To open ourselves only to the Divine

Many things deemed true and high from an ordinary viewpoint cannot stand the test of the vision of the Life Divine. For instance, the known phrase, "all is fair

in love and war", may have a validity in normal life but when the choice is not just about the result but also and mainly about the growth into the higher consciousness, it will not do to indulge in the ways of the ordinary or lower consciousness! The experience, vision and discipline of keeping always in front the truth of harmony for the sake of the Divine's work allows us to keep adjusting, even losing and sacrificing, if that is required, in order to gain the ultimate victory for the Divine. In fact, most of the time it is those who know how to sacrifice their interests and lose their personal battles who really help secure victory for the Divine Mother!

To grow in an all-inclusive unity and harmony is our goal and our life a means of service to the Supreme Mother. We are also asked to grow in the one self, in unity with all by the growth of consciousness and to replace our lower Nature by the Higher Nature. An exclusive concentration on the Su-

preme Consciousness is given to us as our means to grow in the higher consciousness.

It is a fact always known to all yogis and occultists since the beginning of time, in Europe and Africa as in India, that wherever yoga or Yajna is done, there the hostile Forces gather together to stop it by any means. It is known that there is a lower nature and a higher spiritual nature—it is known that they pull different ways and the lower is strongest at first and the higher afterwards. It is known that the hostile Forces take advantage of the movements of the lower nature and try to spoil through them, smash or retard the siddhi. —Sri Aurobindo (*Letters on Yoga*, p. 1730)

Apart from ignorance and ego, it is the influence and action of the subtle adverse forces that are at the root of the quarrels. And it is important to note that wherever there is an attack of the hostile forces, all the people involved in the quarrel and those who are able to influence it, directly or indirectly are under attack and will manifest forces of disintegration whenever anyone from any side is careless and insincere in following the purest truth.

However, there is always something to be done from our end, and for the most part, that alone must be our concern.

I have noticed one thing, that in at least ninety-nine cases out of a hundred this [attack by adverse forces] is an excuse which people give to themselves. I have seen that practically almost all who write to me: "I am violently attacked by adverse forces", give this as an excuse. It is because there are many things in their nature which do not want to surrender, so they put all the blame on the adverse forces. —The Mother (CWM, Vol.15, p. 345)

Apart from ignorance and ego, it is the influence and action of the subtle adverse forces that are at the root of the quarrels.



Reliance on the Grace

Fortunately, the Grace of the Divine Mother is with us and it is always possible to go to the root of the problem or simply offer the entire problem to her while focusing our energies in her service, preferably through selfless work. Though it becomes difficult in the later stages of quarrels, if we can open to the Mother, we can always find a way to a lasting peace and unity.

This too the supreme Diplomat can use,
He makes our fall a means for greater rise. (*Savitri*, p. 34)

By surrendering our will to the Mother, we are actually invoking Her Will and power to deal with our situation. And that also prepares an environment in us to receive her consciousness in us. It is seen that whenever there is a conflict and the play of restless subconscious energies, in the absence of a decisive and permanent psychic or spiritual realisation, it is safer to turn exclusively towards the Mother and open to her influence, to rely on her care, offer selflessly our works to her, love her, contemplate her presence and service in the world, read the works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in order to come in contact with their consciousness and transforming power etc; this done and allowed its time, the answers gradually emerge from them. It is also seen that the answers can be in the form of words, but most of the time they come as a presence and a grace and an influence that remoulds our consciousness and gives us the experience of a deep and vast harmony that begins from within ourselves.

When one feels the Divine and feels others in the Divine, then the real harmony comes. Meanwhile what there can be is the goodwill and unity founded on the feeling of a common divine goal and the sense of being all children of the Mother... Real harmony can come only from a psychic or a spiritual basis. —Sri Aurobindo (*Letters on Yoga*, p. 814)

Recreating the world around us at every instant

By Pravir Malik

From the blog, <http://blog.aurosoorya.com>

When one takes a good, hard look at oneself, one will find there many active voices housed within the self. There may be a voice that wants fast promotion in the workplace, a voice that wants to balance work and family life, a voice that is continually frustrated by one's own boss, a voice that is driven by idealism, a voice that is somewhat scared and shy, a boisterous and self-righteous voice, a voice that is enamored of technology, amongst many other voices.

These voices are not unlike different "players" within one's small self, and in this manner of looking it is as though one were a team comprised of many different players or members.

Sometimes these team members are at odds with one other, sometimes one member imposes their will to the dismay of all other members, sometimes the team seems to be getting absolutely nowhere—lost in a task that can hardly be defined, and sometimes there is forward movement—at the cost of delayed retribution because one of the voices feels that its agenda has been severely compromised, for now.

The dynamics of self when considered from this point of view is not unlike the dynamics of a team, as illustrated by the forming-storming-norming-performing model. In fact, these dynamics repeat themselves on a different scale, and are therefore fractal in nature.

Note though, that it is NOT that there is this happy, coincidental similarity between the way a team functions, and the possible dynamics in one's small self. Quite the contrary—the dynamics in the small self is the dynamics of the many voices, and this is causative, fractal in nature, and ripples out so that teams are in fact an ac-

centuating mirror held up to throw into relief the conflicting dynamics in oneself.

After all, if one finds frustration in interacting with another team member, it is not that that team member is fundamentally frustrating (they, after all, are themselves a conglomeration of many possibilities), but it is that a voice in oneself gets triggered into frustration because that voice has stagnated around a dysfunction that is particular to one's self.

If immediately, when this voice of frustration arises, there is a stronger movement in oneself that coalesces around a voice of compassion or a voice of love, then the whole external dynamic will shift, and the apparent frustration that was beginning to crystallize will get dissolved.

In other words, if the myriad team members in one's self coalesced around the emergent leader of compassion and love, then the forming-storming-norming-performing dynamic would accelerate through its stages and the team (or self) would display attributes of 'performing' [Fractal Systems Architects will immediately recognize that this movement through forming-storming-norming-performing is none other than the movement through the all-present physical-vital-mental fractal for progress, where physical = forming, vital = storming, mental = norming + performing].

When looked at from this point of view, each one of us is a repository of incredible resourcefulness, possibility, and power. A whole environment can be understood if one learns that the environment is a reflection, an image, a projected world, with its origin in the dynamics in one's self. A whole environment can be shifted if one learns to shift what one is feeling and thinking when in that environment. A whole environment can also be recreated if one recreates the dynamics one experiences in one's self.

It seems that the human was after all made in the image of God. We are powerful beyond measure. And knowingly or not, we create and recreate the world around us, at every instant.



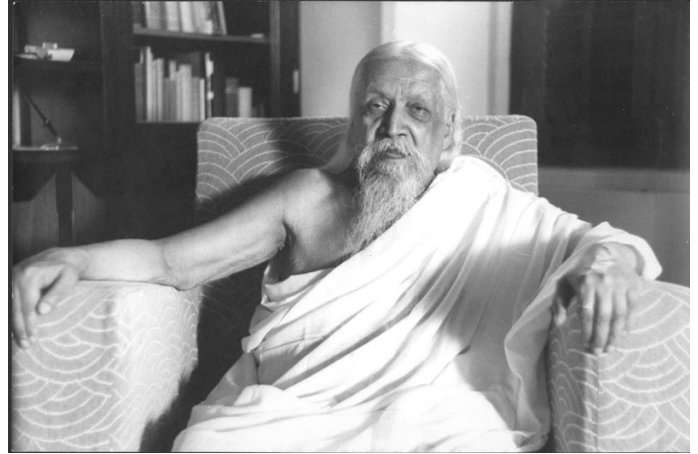
Source Material

The release from the ego

by Sri Aurobindo

The formation of a mental and vital ego tied to the body-sense was the first great labour of the cosmic Life in its progressive evolution; for this was the means it found for creating out of matter a conscious individual. The dissolution of this limiting ego is the one condition, the necessary means for this very same Life to arrive at its divine fruition: for only so can the conscious individual find either his transcendent self or his true Person. This double movement is usually represented as a fall and a redemption or a creation and a destruction,—the kindling of a light and its extinction or the formation first of a smaller temporary and unreal self and a release from it into our true self's eternal largeness. For human thought falls apart towards two opposite extremes: one, mundane and pragmatic, regards the fulfilment and satisfaction of the mental, vital and physical ego-sense individual or collective as the object of life and looks no farther, while the other, spiritual, philosophic or religious, regards the conquest of the ego in the interests of the soul, spirit or whatever be the ultimate entity, as the one thing supremely worth doing. Even in the camp of the ego there are two divergent attitudes which divide the mundane or materialist theory of the universe. One tendency of this thought regards the mental ego as a creation of our mentality which will be dissolved with the dissolution of mind by the death of the body; the one abiding truth is eternal Nature working in the race—this or another—and her purpose should be followed, not ours,—the fulfilment of the race, the collective ego, and not that of the individual should be the rule of life. Another trend of thought, more vitalistic in its tendencies, fixes on the conscious ego as the supreme achievement of Nature, no matter how transitory, ennoble it into a human representative of the Will-to-be and holds up its greatness and satisfaction as the highest aim of our existence. In the more numerous systems that take their stand on some kind of religious thought or spiritual discipline there is a corresponding divergence. The Buddhist denies the existence of a real self or ego, admits no universal or transcendent Being. The Advaitin declares the apparently individual soul to be none other than the supreme Self and Brahman, its individuality an illusion; the putting off of individual existence is the only true release. Other systems assert, in flat contradiction of this view, the eternal persistence of the human soul; a basis of multiple consciousness in the One or else a dependent but still separate entity, it is constant, real, imperishable.

Amidst these various and conflicting opinions the seeker of the Truth has to decide for himself which shall be for him the Knowledge. But if our aim is a spiritual release or a spiritual fulfilment, then the exceeding of this little mould of ego is imperative.



In human egoism and its satisfaction there can be no divine culmination and deliverance. A certain purification from egoism is the condition even of ethical progress and elevation, for social good and perfection; much more is it indispensable for inner peace, purity and joy. But a much more radical deliverance, not only from egoism but from ego-idea and ego-sense, is needed if our aim is to raise human into divine nature. Experience shows that, in proportion as we deliver ourselves from the limiting mental and vital ego, we command a wider life, a larger existence, a higher consciousness, a happier soul-state, even a greater knowledge, power and scope. Even the aim which the most mundane philosophy pursues, the fulfilment, perfection, satisfaction of the individual, is best assured not by satisfying the narrow ego but by finding freedom in a higher and larger self. There is no happiness in smallness of the being, says the Scripture, it is with the large being that happiness comes. The ego is by its nature a smallness of being; it brings contraction of the consciousness and with the contraction limitation of knowledge, disabling ignorance,—confinement and a diminution of power and by that diminution incapacity and weakness,—scission of oneness and by that scission disharmony and failure of sympathy and love and understanding,—inhibition or fragmentation of delight of being and by that fragmentation pain and sorrow. To recover what is lost we must break out of the walls of ego. The ego must either disappear in impersonality or fuse into a larger I: it must fuse into the wider cosmic "I" which comprehends all these smaller selves or the transcendent of which even the cosmic self is a diminished image.

But this cosmic self is spiritual in essence and in experience; it must not be confused with the collective existence, with any group soul or the life and body of a human society or even of all mankind. The subordination of the ego to the progress and happiness of the human race is now a governing idea in the world's thought and ethics; but this is a mental and moral and not a spiritual ideal. For that progress is a series of constant mental, vital and physical vicissitudes, it has no firm spiritual content, and offers no sure standing-ground to the soul of man. The consciousness of collective humanity is only a larger comprehensive



edition or a sum of individual egos. Made of the same substance, in the same mould of nature, it has not in it any greater light, any more eternal sense of itself, any purer source of peace, joy and deliverance. It is rather even more tortured, troubled and obscured, certainly more vague, confused and unprogressive. The individual is in this respect greater than the mass and cannot be called on to subordinate his more luminous possibilities to this darker entity. If light, peace, deliverance, a better state of existence are to come, they must descend into the soul from something wider than the individual, but also from something higher than the collective ego. Altruism, philanthropy, the service of mankind are in themselves mental or moral ideals, not laws of the spiritual life. If into the spiritual aim there enters the impulse to deny the personal self or to serve humanity or the world at large, it comes not from the ego nor from the collective sense of the race, but from something more occult and profound transcendent of both these things; for it is founded on a sense of the Divine in all and it works not for the sake of the ego or the race but for the sake of the Divine and its purpose in the person or group or collective. It is this transcendent Source which we must seek and serve, this vaster being and consciousness to which the race and the individual are minor terms of its existence.

There is indeed a truth behind the pragmatic impulse which an exclusive one-sided spirituality is apt to ignore or deny or belittle. It is this that since the individual and the universal are terms of that higher and vaster Being, their fulfilment must have some real place in the supreme Existence. There must be behind them some high purpose in the supreme Wisdom and Knowledge, some eternal strain in the supreme Delight: they cannot have been, they were not created in vain. But the perfection and satisfaction of humanity like the perfection and satisfaction of the individual, can only be securely compassed and founded upon a more eternal yet unseized truth and right of things. Minor terms of some greater Existence, they can fulfil themselves only when that of which they are the terms is known and possessed. The greatest service to humanity, the surest foundation for its true progress, happiness and perfection is to prepare or find the way by which the individual and the collective man can transcend the ego and live in its true self, no longer bound to ignorance, incapacity, disharmony and sorrow. It is by the pursuit of the eternal and not by living bound in the slow collective evolution of Nature that we can best assure even that evolutionary, collective, altruistic aim our modern thought and idealism have set before us. But it is in itself a secondary aim; to find, know and possess the Divine existence, consciousness and nature and to live in it for the Divine is our true aim and the one perfection to which we must aspire.

...Obeying the necessity to withdraw successively from the practical egoism of our triple nature and its fundamental ego-sense, we come to the realisation of the spirit, the self, lord of this individual human manifestation, but our knowledge is not integral if we do not make this self in the individual one with the cosmic spirit and find their greater reality above in an inexpressible but not unknowable Transcendence. (CWSA, Vol. 23, pp. 356-362)

Giving oneself to the Divine

by the Mother

Mother reads from Sri Aurobindo's Lights on Yoga, "The Goal."

Now then! We shall have impromptu, improvised questions, not prepared ones. (To a child) You have any?

Sweet Mother, here it is written: "This liberation, perfection, fullness too must not be pursued for our own sake, but for the sake of the Divine." But isn't the sadhana we do done for ourselves?

But he stresses precisely that. It is simply in order to stress the point. It means that all this perfection which we are going to acquire is not for a personal and selfish end, it is in order to be able to manifest the Divine, it is put at the service of the Divine. We do not pursue this development with a selfish intention of personal perfection; we pursue it because the divine Work has to be accomplished.

But why do we do this divine Work? It is to make ourselves...

No, not at all! It is because that's the divine Will. It is not at all for a personal reason, it must not be that. It is because it's the divine Will and it's the divine Work.

So long as a personal aspiration or desire, a selfish will, get mingled in it, it always creates a mixture and is not exactly an expression of the divine Will. The only thing which must count is the Divine, His Will, His manifestation, His expression. One is here for that, one is that, and nothing else. And so long as there is a feeling of self, of the ego, the person, which enters, well, this proves that one is not yet what one ought to be, that's all. I don't say that this can be done overnight but still this indeed is the truth.

It is just because even in this field, the spiritual field, there are far too many people (I could say even the majority of those who take to the spiritual life and do yoga), far too many of these who do it for personal reasons, all kinds of personal reasons: some because they are disgusted with life, others because they are unhappy, others still because they want to know more, others because they want to become spiritually great, others because they want to learn things which they may be able to teach others; indeed there are a thousand personal reasons for taking up yoga. But the simple fact of giving oneself to the Divine so that the Divine takes you and makes of you what He wills, and this in all its purity and constancy, well, there are not many who do that and yet this indeed is the truth; and with this one goes straight to the goal and never risks making mistakes. But all the other motives are always mixed, tainted with ego; and naturally they can lead you here and there, very far from the goal also.

But that kind of feeling that you have only one single reason for existence, one single goal, one single motive, the entire, per-



fect, complete consecration to the Divine to the point of not being able to distinguish yourself from Him any longer, to be Himself entirely, completely, totally without any personal reaction intervening, this is the ideal attitude; and besides, it is the only one which makes it possible for you to go forward in life and in the work, absolutely protected from everything and protected from yourself which is of all dangers the greatest for you—there is no greater danger than the self (I take “self” in the sense of an egoistic self). This is what Sri Aurobindo meant there, nothing else...

...Is it possible to change this at once, change this consciousness?

(Pavitrī) *In a few minutes. One feels that it will be a revolution to change that.*

Yes, but a revolution can occur in half a second; it can also take years, even centuries, and even many lives. It can be done in a second.

One can do it. Precisely, when one has this inner reversal of consciousness, in one second everything, everything changes... precisely this bewilderment of being able to think that what one is, what one considers as oneself is not true, and that what is the truth of one's being is something one doesn't know. You see, this should have been the normal reaction, the one she had, of saying, “But then what is myself? If what I feel as myself is an illusory formation and not the truth of my being, then what is myself?” For that she doesn't know. And so when one asks the question like that...

There is a moment—because it is a question which becomes more and more intense and more and more acute—when you have even the feeling, precisely, that things are strange, that is, they are not real; a moment comes when this sensation that you have of yourself, of being yourself, becomes strange, a kind of sense of unreality. And the question continues coming up: “But then, what is myself?” Well, there is a moment when it comes up with so much concentration and such intensity that with this intensity of concentration suddenly there occurs a reversal, and then, instead of being on this side you are on that side, and when you are on that side everything is very simple; you understand, you know, you are, you live, and then you see clearly the unreality of the rest, and this is enough.

You see, one may have to wait for days, months, years, centuries, lives, before this moment comes. But if one intensifies his aspiration, there is a moment when the pressure is so great and the intensity of the question so strong that something turns over in the consciousness, and then this is absolutely what one feels: instead of being here one is there, instead of seeing from outside and seeking to see within, one is inside; and the minute one is within, absolutely everything changes, completely, and all that seemed to him true, natural, normal, real, tangible, all that, immediately,—yes, it seems to him very grotesque, very queer, very unreal, quite absurd; but one has touched something which is supremely true and eternally beautiful, and this one never loses again.

Once the reversal has taken place, you can glide into an



external consciousness, not lose the ordinary contact with the things of life, but that remains and it never moves. You may, in your dealings with others, fall back a little into their ignorance and blindness, but there is always something there, living, standing up within, which does not move any more, until it manages to penetrate everything, to the point where it is over, where the blindness disappears for ever. And this is an absolutely tangible-experience, something more concrete than the most concrete object, more concrete than a blow on your head, something more real than anything whatever.

This is why I always say... when people ask me how one may know whether he is in contact with his psychic being or how one may know whether he has found the Divine, well, it makes me laugh; for when it happens to you it is over, you can no longer ask any questions, it is done; you do not ask how it happens, it is done... (CWM, Vol. 7, pp. 191-196)

Sweet Mother, what is meant by “the Divine gives Himself”?

It means exactly this: that the more you give yourself the more you have the experience—it is not just a feeling or impression or sensation, it is a total experience—that the more you give yourself to the Divine the more He is with you, totally, constantly, at every minute, in all your thoughts, all your needs, and that there's no aspiration which does not receive an immediate answer; and you have the sense of a complete, constant intimacy, of a total nearness. It is as though you carried... as though the Divine were all the time with you; you walk and He walks with you, you sleep and He sleeps with you, you eat and He eats with you, you think and He thinks with you, you love and He is the love you have. But for this one must give himself entirely, totally, exclusively, reserve nothing, keep nothing for himself and not keep back anything, not disperse anything also: the least little thing in your being which is not given to the Divine is a waste; it is the wasting of your joy, something that lessens your happiness by that much, and all that you don't give to the Divine is as though you were holding it in the way of the possibility of the Divine's giving Himself to you. You don't feel Him close to yourself, constantly with you, because you don't belong to Him, because you



belong to hundreds of other things and people; in your thought, your action, your feelings, impulses... there are millions of things which you do not give Him, and that is why you don't feel Him always with you, because all these things are so many screens and walls between Him and you. But if you give Him everything, if you keep back nothing, He will be constantly and totally with you in all that you do, in all that you think, all that you feel, always, at each moment. But for this you must give yourself absolutely, keep back nothing; each little thing that you hold back is a stone you put down to build up a wall between the Divine and yourself. And then later you complain: "Oh, I don't feel Him!" What would be surprising is that you could feel Him. (CWM, Vol. 7, pp. 247-48)

Book Reviews

Oneness

Reviewed by Larry Seidlitz

Reprinted from Auroville Today, June-July 2013

Oneness is Martha Orton's new book which explains, clearly and concisely, one of the most central concepts in Sri Aurobindo's spiritual philosophy. What does it mean when we say that all is one, how do we reconcile this with our everyday experience of diversity and conflict, what are the real-world implications of the oneness of existence, and how can oneness become a living truth in our experience of ourselves and the world? These are the central questions of this book and are among the most central questions of human existence and spiritual philosophy.

Martha walks us through these issues step by step in 15 short, accessible chapters. She is not content to present them solely through philosophical abstractions, but persistently explains the philosophical and spiritual concepts in reference to the ground realities of our human experience. As such, although the philosophical material here discussed is deeply profound, she presents it in a way that allows readers to follow her and appreciate the implications of what she explains for their life.

In the first chapter we find that oneness is a descriptive term for the more abstract philosophical concept of the Brahman. She says that in *The Life Divine*, Sri Aurobindo "progressively reveals a deeper understanding of Brahman, the reality of Oneness, and the implications of this truth." Martha does the same in this book; she not attempt to philosophically prove that Oneness exists, but bases the assertion of its existence on the experience of spiritual teachers "described in the Vedas and Upanishads and also in literature of spiritual mystics in other traditions." She also discusses some of the recent scientific discoveries which support this assertion. She explains that even among those who have not realized this Oneness, many people have had a sense of its reality, with resultant far-reaching effects on their lives.

In another chapter she illustrates how we can find glimpses of the reality of Oneness in everyday life, for example, in the innate tendency to reconcile conflict, to find agreement and seek harmony, to feel others suffering or enjoy their happiness, to engage in acts of kindness and charity. Movements towards unity and harmony bring us happiness, joy, and a feeling of nearness to the Divine, whereas their opposites tend to result in unease and distress. All these clues to its existence are evident in our day to day life, but Oneness nevertheless remains illusive and lost in the plethora of phenomena we confront.

Dealing with such a foundational pillar of our existence, the book necessarily brings in a full range of related issues that are necessary to reconcile our fragmented human experience with the reality of the Oneness of all. It tackles all the important philosophical and spiritual issues: the nature of Brahman as Sachchidananda; the interrelations among the transcendent, the cosmos, and the individual; the distinction between ego and the true spiritual individual; the nature of the mind and its role in creating the appearance of division; the involution of the Divine Oneness in matter and its progressive evolution through life, mind and spiritual awakening; the natures and relations of the inner being, the psychic being, and the outer nature; the ranges of spiritual mind linking human mentality to the supermind; the cosmic consciousness; the apparent duality and underlying unity of purusha and prakriti. There is even a short chapter which summarizes the key processes of Integral Yoga leading to the experience of the psychic being, the spiritual realization of Oneness, and finally supramental transformation leading to the full restoration of Oneness in our experience of existence.

The beauty of the book is that it works its way, step by logical step, through all this material in a masterful and concise way which makes it relatively easier to grasp than in more expansive philosophical treatises. By covering all these essential issues in Sri Aurobindo's spiritual philosophy so concisely, and grounding them in human experience, it helps us to more clearly perceive and move towards that illusive Oneness which ties it all together.

Oneness (2013, 139 pages) by Martha S.G. Orton is published by iUniverse, Inc., Bloomington, IN, USA. It is available as an e-book at <http://books.google.co.in> and scribd.com, or as a paperback from Auromere.com and other online sellers and stores in the US.

The New Spirituality

Reviewed by Carel Thieme & Guy Ryckaert

Reprinted from Auroville Today, June-July 2013

When Georges Van Vrekhem passed away on 31st August 2012, he left behind a number of unpublished essays. Some of these were planned to be used for his talks in Auroville at the end of 2011, when he was to embark on a second series of 11 lectures



on a wide variety of topics related to Sri Aurobindo and The Mother.

Cyclone Thane, which hit Auroville on 30th December 2011, disrupted these plans and his talks were postponed; they were delayed again in the second quarter of 2012 due to his health condition. Georges planned to restart the lectures in September 2012 but, unfortunately, his passing away decided differently.

It was our intention to publish these lectures as a sequel to the book *'Preparing for the Miraculous'*, which contains his first series of eleven lectures at Auroville. With Georges' passing, we decided to publish these essays as we found them, and added some articles that were previously published in the magazines *Auroville Today*, *Mother India* and *The Advent*, and in the book *The Journeying Years* by Dianna Bowler.

Thus, *The New Spirituality* contains eleven unpublished essays on Sri Aurobindo and The Mother, two articles on how to write about Sri Aurobindo and The Mother, three on Auroville and two on World War II. It also has two In Memoriams (Satprem and Amal Kiran), and four autobiographical texts.

The essays deal with topics such as The Aurobindonian Revolution; Sri Aurobindo and the Future of Humanity; True Philosophy; Matter; The Closing of the Western Mind; The Fall; The Integration of the Four Varnas and the New Dharma; Overman: the Transitional Being; The Metamorphosis of an Avatar; Aswapati and Sri Aurobindo; and On Occultism. The two articles on World War II – Lest We Forget and Churchill's Mission – reveal fairly unknown aspects of the work of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother. Very touching are Georges' texts about his own development, such as Moments that do not fade – Meeting The Mother.

We publish this material in honour of Georges and in recognition of his immense work in helping to understand the life and work of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother. We hope that this posthumous publication will inspire all his readers within and outside Auroville.

The New Spirituality is available at the Visitors' Centre, Auroville, from Auroville Press (email aurovillepress@auroville.org), and in the US at Auromere.com.

The Mother's Yoga 1956-1973

Reviewed by Larry Seidlitz

Reprinted from Auroville Today, August 2013

The Mother's Yoga is a new two-volume compilation from *Mother's Agenda* that focuses on the *Agenda's* core content—the Mother's "yoga practice to prepare her physical body for the new Supramental consciousness." Compiled by Loretta of Auroville, in hard cover with a fine physical presentation, this work brings together in a condensed form the Mother's descriptions of her yogic experiences and their development from 1956 to 1973. Thus, the content of this set of books is among the most fascinating and important in spiritual literature.

The selections are quoted verbatim from the *Agenda*, are arranged chronologically by date, and include the volume and page numbers from where they were taken. This differs from the unpublished compilation, *Notebook on Evolution*, which was privately distributed and is available on the internet. In the *Notebook*, the translated text is somewhat different and its selections are undated except by year, making it difficult to locate the corresponding text in the *Agenda*. The present work also is more than twice the length of the *Notebook* and includes most but not all of its passages. Most of the selections are relatively lengthy and continuous with no text omitted within them, so it doesn't feel like a patchwork.

This compilation does not include any of Satprem's side comments which are included in the *Agenda*, nor does the compiler add any new ones. In this respect it differs from Satprem's *Mind of the Cells*, which is more a summary and interpretation of the contents of the *Agenda* given through Satprem's perspective along with many quotes. As in the *Agenda*, the present work does include Satprem's helpful descriptions of the Mother's gestures and moments of prolonged silence, as well as her emphases on certain words, indicated with all capital letters. It also follows the method of the *Agenda* in putting Satprem's questions or comments to the Mother in italics, and while I felt this was sufficient to distinguish them from Mother's remarks, someone pointed out to me that they are not set off with extra space from the Mother's, making it less easy to differentiate.

Of course, any compilation involves the necessity to make many choices about what material to include and what to exclude. It is a selection of the relevant content, and there are no clearly defined lines to distinguish relevant from irrelevant material. While it is easy to exclude discussion on obviously different matters, in many cases the choices are not so clear. In a few extracts, one finds really interesting and useful commentary about human psychology or aspects of spiritual practice, but which do not seem directly related to the Mother's yoga. In other cases, one can find in the *Agenda* comments very relevant to her yoga but which have been excluded. But given such inevitable difficult and disputable choices, the selections taken here seem to cohere very well and also to flow nicely, such that one gets a better sense of the developing progression in Mother's yogic experiences and in the changes occurring in her body consciousness.

For those who have avoided tackling the *Mother's Agenda* due its massive length or other factors, this shorter two-volume set may be for you. Of course, there is fascinating material in the *Agenda* that has been left out, but this set has the benefit of being focused on the essential. As well, for those who have already read the *Agenda*, this provides easier access to the most important material, and by bringing it together more concisely, gives a different and powerful reading experience.

The Mother's Yoga, Vols. 1-2 (2012, 886 pages) is compiled by Loretta, published by Mother's Photographs, Auroville, and printed at All India Press, Puducherry. Available in Auroville at Savitri Bhavan and soon to be available in the US at Auromere.com.



“...But it is done...”

Reviewed by Larry Seidlitz

Reprinted from Auroville Today, September 2013

The title of this book, which is a quote from the Mother, and its subtitle, “Victory of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother,” reveals the theme of this new commentary upon and compilation from *Mother’s Agenda* by Jyoti Madhok and Kireet Joshi: the accomplishment of Sri Aurobindo’s and the Mother’s Avataric work and mission. This “real work,” the authors conclude, “was to open the consciousness of the cells by fixing the supramental consciousness in the body consciousness.” (p. 108)

[Previously] we reviewed another compilation from *Mother’s Agenda* titled *The Mother’s Yoga 1956-1973*, which also focused on the Mother’s work of physical transformation. Whereas that book was a pure compilation, without commentary, and more comprehensive—886 pages in two volumes—the relatively brief commentaries in this new book help lead the reader through a selection of essential extracts in only 123 pages, while highlighting Mother’s statements that the main work was completed, and is now only a matter of time for its complete working out and expression in the outer nature. This is important because one often hears the suggestion that the Mother’s work of physical transformation could not be completed due to the disciples’ unreadiness.

I liked both of these compilations because they helped me extract the essential message of *Mother’s Agenda*, which at 13 volumes of conversations covering a wide range of issues and experiences, can be confusing and distracting. While the *Agenda* is packed full of interesting and important material, one often loses sight of the central process of transformation. In both these compilations, at their preferred levels of conciseness, we can more easily follow the main thread of transformation.

It may also be useful to contrast this book with *The Mind of the Cells*, which was Satprem’s compilation and commentary on Mother’s transformation. Satprem’s compilation has relatively more commentary; in the present book the authors’ comments are quite brief and serve mainly to bridge the connections between the quoted passages. In addition, Satprem’s commentaries continually put the extracts into a kind of biological evolutionary perspective focusing on the emergence of the next species, and seem relatively more interpretive in their nature. In the present text the comments appear more straightforward, sometimes stating the essential significance of the experience in psychological or yogic terms, sometimes summarizing a period in the progression of Mother’s experiences. Finally, there seems to be some difference in emphasis. I find in Satprem’s selections a greater emphasis on the inner battle, on the inner and outer resistance to the transforming force, and on the contradictions between the present world of falsehood and the emerging supramental world. In contrast, in this compilation, I find a greater emphasis on how all the opposi-

tions are an integral part of the evolutionary process and become acute as they are taken up and transformed through this process. For example, after mentioning some difficulties in her physical functioning, the Mother says, “And all this is what we may call the ‘transfer of power’: it is the old power that withdraws. But then until the body adapts to the new power, there is a period which is, well, critical. As all the cells are in a state of conscious aspiration, it’s going relatively fast, but still... the minutes are long.” Other passages reveal how various physical problems show her specific obstacles which must be overcome. I believe both compilations are very valuable and that they are complementary.

At the end of the book there is an Appendix on the significance of Auroville. Here are distinguished several different levels of its significance. It was not only a counterpoint to the destructive tendencies in humanity that seemed to be leading to a widespread war, and not only focal point for the transformation of human difficulties, but also was to become “the cradle of the superman.” In Georges Van Vrekem’s terms, this would be translated as the “overman,” the intermediate being between the humanity and the supramental being who would manifest through other means than the ordinary human birth and development. The final quote of the book is perhaps the most significant for Aurovilians: “...the attempt will be to get those who will live in Auroville to collaborate.”

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Letters on Yoga: The Complete Works Edition

by Bob Zwicker

As an editor of the new edition of *Letters on Yoga*, people sometimes ask me about it. Here are the answers to the questions most frequently asked.

How does the new Complete Works edition differ from the old Centenary edition?

1. About one-third of the letters are newly added.
2. There are four volumes of letters, not three.
3. There are more headings, which serve as a roadmap. Each of the four volumes is titled—the titles indicating the nature of the letters in them. Within each volume, the text is divided into parts, sections, chapters and groups. The group is the basic unit, which has letters related to a specific subject.

And how are the two editions the same?

The two editions are the same or similar in several ways.



1. The overall organisation of both editions is approximately the same. First come the letters explaining Sri Aurobindo's teaching—its philosophical and psychological foundations. Then come the letters on his method of Yogic practice. Next come the letters on the characteristic experiences and realisations of the Yoga. And last come the letters on the transformation of the lower nature and the difficulties of the Yoga.

2. The letters "stand alone"—there are no questions before them to provide context. In leaving out the questions, we have followed the practice established in Sri Aurobindo's life time. He himself revised most of the letters on Yoga published during his life, and in revising he made each letter stand on its own without the question. This "no question" practice applies, it may be noted, only to the Letters on Yoga volumes. In other volumes of letters (on himself, on the Mother, on the Ashram, and on poetry and art), the question has been provided when available and appropriate.

3. The names of persons mentioned in the letters have been replaced by the initials X, Y, Z, etc., with this exception: in the new edition the names of a few well-known persons have been retained, especially recent spiritual figures such as Sri Ramakrishna and Ramana Maharshi.

4. The letters are undated.

Why is the new edition taking so long?

1. The number of letters written by Sri Aurobindo to disciples and others is huge. It took years simply to read and assess the correspondences in our collection. Manuscripts, microfilms, typescripts, books and journals were checked. In the end there was enough letters for eight volumes.

2. The transcriptions of the letters are as accurate as possible. Our proofreading teams spent more than a decade and untold thousands of hours reading and rereading the letters in an effort to make them accurate.

3. Before publishing the letters on Yoga, we published the other four volumes of letters: Letters on Poetry and Art, Autobiographical Notes and Other Letters of Historical Interest, Letters on Himself and the Ashram and The Mother with Letters on the Mother.

4. It took a lot of time to arrange these letters in a clear and readable order.

The preparation of these letters has been the work of a dozen dedicated persons. The new edition as accurate, complete and well-ordered as possible. Doing the work has been a privilege and a joy for us. We know that these letters can be a great help in understanding and practising the Yoga.

Editor's note: The Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo in 37 volumes is being published by the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, and is available from SABDA (<http://sabda.sriarobindoashram.org/>). Thirty volumes have already been published, including the first of the four volumes of Letters on Yoga; two more volumes of Letters are in press.

The poetry room

Rebirth

Not soon is God's delight in us completed,
Nor with one life we end;
Termlessly in us are our spirits seated,
A termless joy intend.
Our souls and heaven are of an equal stature
And have a dateless birth;
The unending seed, the infinite mould of Nature,
They were not made on earth,
Nor to the earth do they bequeath their ashes,
But in themselves they last.
An endless future brims beneath thy lashes,
Child of an endless past.
Old memories come to us, old dreams invade us,
Lost people we have known,
Fictions and pictures; but their frames evade us,—
They stand out bare, alone.
Yet all we dream and hope are memories treasured,
Are forecasts we misspell,
But of what life or scene he who has measured
The boundless heavens can tell.
Time is a strong convention; future and present
Were living in the past;
They are one image that our wills complaisant
Into three schemes have cast.
Our past that we forget, is with us deathless,
Our births and later end
Already accomplished. To a summit breathless
Sometimes our souls ascend,
Whence the mind comes back helped; for there emerges
The ocean vast of Time
Spread out before us with its infinite surges,
Its symphonies sublime;
And even from this veil of mind the spirit
Looks out sometimes and sees
The bygone aeons that our lives inherit,
The unborn centuries:
It sees wave-trampled realms expel the Ocean,—
From the vague depths uphurled
Where now Himalay stands, the flood's huge motion
Sees measuring half the world;
Or else the web behind us is unravelled
And on its threads we gaze,—
Past motions of the stars, scenes long since travelled
In Time's far-backward days.

—Sri Aurobindo



Meditation with the Mother*

A look formidable,
intense and penetrating
every inch of the way,
sets afire my body,
life, mind and soul,
dissolving every atom
of separate existence
with its vehement call,
and commands my being.

Calm and still, it works
in one concentrated gaze
till there remains nothing
but a splendid glow
of golden Fire sparkling.
A Fire of Consciousness,
radiantly luminous,
illumines my being.
I bathe in its coolness
and feel light and pure—
free of all thoughts
and every feeling,
but conscious still
of Fire, all-pervading.

Then, comes a smile,
soft and sweet,
intimate and endearing,
to nestle me on her lap,
where in deep peace I lie
of never-ending oneness,
invincible and safe.

The soft touch of her fingers
wakes me in mute adoration
to drink deeply her tender Love.
And I kneel and bow
at her pusissant feet,
giving her all I am
and all I have
in silent surrender.

Her power of Will
raises me up
to regard her
in her full glory
of Consciousness-Force
and supernal Bliss.
I remain awhile
charged by her splendour

fixing my eyes into
her divine eyes of
Grace and Beauty.

As she captures me
by her steady gaze of Light,
pouring herself incessantly
till my being is soaked
with her presence marvelous,
infinite and ineffable,
I am conscious of her alone,
unique and absolute.

Then, she seals it all
with her indelible kiss
filling my being
with her inviolable Bliss.

—Kailas Jhaveri

*The meditation with the Mother was on 17 August 1964.

Spirit of Change¹

as consciousness continues along its habitual grooves
and life mimics history's dying memories,
a spirit of change works its transfiguring grace
pressing infinity upon a finite world
awakening eternity's gaze within the vision of time,
a vast power mingling with every atom's move,
penetrating the heart of all unseen things,
the microcosms which build into the macrocosm's eye,
the forces which vibrate within a vastness supreme,
calling forth from within the sun-birth of matter's cells;
a spirit that dwells in the circulating air,
which inhales an unknown presence inhabiting all
and strikes its blows upon satisfaction's lies,
purifying the aged truths of humanity's ways
in the transforming fires of divinity's dawn;
stalking falsehood with its illuminating Truth
it grows in the years and appears in the obvious,
an invisible worker of commonplace miracles,
dissolving all obstacles with a mere touch;
it tilts perception towards a newly lit view,
fashioning beliefs and thoughts by harmony's rhythm,
arranging every atom by the Divine's omnipotent Will,
it smiles in the child born for the Future;
it is a wave of living truth, conscious and free,
which finds as much delight in a rock as in a hand
and seeks to manifest the unknown in earth's unknowing cradle.

—Noel Parent



Supreme Identity¹

reaching through an immobile pore of translucent light
God reveals His presence within the God-seeker
unveiling Her nature behind creation's mask
greeting Himself in All through an intimate pursuit
chasing His own image in a two-sided mirror
dissolving the boundary between source and reflection
a multi-hued projection of self-awareness
cloaked in the guise of an assumed ignorance
merging Divine halves in one glorious Vision
a single Face gazing from within its existence
two hands of the same Body turning life's inner key
Unity's Door opening from opposing sides
cast seeds blossoming unto a Divine renewal
a Supreme traveler of the worlds returns
to His vast home of infinite beginnings
catching the thread of time by its swift-moving tail
joining two ends of an expanding journey
uniting each second's call for eternity
moving forth by His will of a gradual awakening
in each formulated speck of life's consciousness
heaven and earth playing as one Supreme Identity.

—Noel Parent

Naked¹

from the depths of a stifled yearning Heart,
a cry exhaling the Soul's need to breathe
awoke in a dark shell of forgotten self -
life's sense enwrapped in separation's guise.

an obscuring blanket covers spirit's lights
and consciousness masquerades as diverse puppetry
where layers of form and non-form condense
into clothed illusions of fixed appearances,
a constant tension of skin and soul
blinding vision from Truth's disguise -
a darkened covering of hypnotized form
clinging to its own intoxicated image,
suffocating infinity in a cloak of ego's truths:
desires, passions, perceptions, beliefs -
living entities assuming personality's look,
masks of habit concealing freedom's edge:
all binding shadows upon life's naked gaze.

in a golden moment of flooding awareness,
a birth of empowered vision opening,
a surrendered will of self-offering woke,
liberating movements of a secret fluid Force:
the Divine Power's intimate omnipotence

piercing through layers of embattled sense,
illuminating a clear sight in transparency's poise,
catching the dense edges of identity's forms
where vibrations cling upon division's boundaries.

a hidden Being sheds its confining layers:
darkened robes of personality peeling away,
a release of all bound identities
casting off veils of time and space -
a leap of detachment shedding the past
where millennial memories dissolve in union's Vast,
revealing an immense wideness of Being
where the Person's unlimited realms live
unfettered and pure in a nude Delight.

Floating freely within the eternal Moment,
a new breath breathes in divinized cells,
stripping form of limitation's confining hold,
where self-barriers melt upon a glimpse of Consciousness
and the mirage of separation vanishes.

from the dawning crest of Being's pure Appearance,
the unhindered descent of a luminous Force flows,
a cascading fountain of transforming Grace
penetrating life through the body's cosmic opening,
where atoms dance upon liberty's verge,
an infinite vessel touching Unity's uncovered Vast,
as the bare Face of Existence peers within All.

—Noel Parent

The single theme²

My songs have but a single theme:
Your love, Beloved, and your grace;
The world is but a dream in dream,
And Truth's the beauty of your face.

They say my themes are narrow, small,
For they can hardly understand
That You, O Love, are all in all,
And all the worlds are in your hand;

That when I sing of You, I sing
Of worlds beyond and worlds above,
That even my poorest song can bring
Eternal answers from your love.

—Thémis

¹From *Transcendent Sky* (2013) by Noel Parent, available at:
<http://truthyoga.wordpress.com/books/>



On first reading Sri Aurobindo's Synthesis of Yoga²

Words that are no longer words
But music from another world,
Slow plangent waves
That roll into the shores of time
From all infinity drawn near,
Swelling the mind to silence.

Be still, be still to garner the sweet prose within
And know the thronging air grow bold
With kindred helping souls.

Read on and feel your being rise to catch the music.
Rise, shining soul, into the depths of heaven.
Pause there a while, in the silence,
The silence between the phrases,
With mind grown blind.

And gravid with light and with knowing
Descend once again from the stars,
Descend the darkening stairway;
There are curtains ruffling your mind.

Yet you know when you have finished reading,
Within, you carry man's fate,
Have been cradled in the hands of God,
Let gently down through the darkness
And set here to radiate.

—Maggi Lidchi

That tender pulsing²

There is a tender pulsing in the heart of life
A hidden meaning that escapes our mind,
That hums and glows in great and littlest things but for which
The tongue no words can ever find;
Within us is an ageless spring
That sends it forth in myriad ways.
Behind it lies a power
That emanates a thousand rays.
All hidden mystic from our sight
Which make our hearts take flight,

It chimes at root of rock and sea
Of earth and sky,
It sings in flower, fern and fire,
Is working to transmute us all,
And thus fulfill the world's desire.

No brain has found it that has sought.
No hand takes it apart.

No instrument avails
For it is whole or it is naught.
It winks at you a moment
Only to depart.
It is both bold and very shy,
As indeterminate as the sky.
Nothing can bind it.
It is not even life itself
But the thing behind it.
And were it not
We would all fall to pieces.
The world would rot
For it is this
The secret bliss
That upholds universes.

—Maggi Lidchi

The Trance

His wonderings wandered on the waves
To the farthest rim of creative Thought.
He seized the mysteries of the Unknown,
Forcing the reluctant Unknowable to unfold.
With his hands of mastery he lifted
The veil off life's beautiful face,
Placing a golden tiara of Truth
On her head that she may know her way
And no longer grope and stumble,
Sure of her step and its measure. .
Now a route was mapped, a course chartered,
The shoals were crossed, the surge conquered,
To reach the vast expanse of a limitless Core
Where all the waves were different shades of Light,
And all the sounds cadences of Supreme Delight.
Light without shade opened to vaster lights,
Delight without sorrow sported with deeper delight.
Where OM revealed its secret potencies
And God's kingdom stood unveiled,
He the Tapaswin attained to the golden realm
And discovered suddenly that he himself
Was the Way, he himself the Aim.
Light massed around his brow,
Peace reigned with its depths undisturbed.
Divinity ran like a sweet fire in his veins.
Immortality was the dawn-goddess of his world,
Infinity his equal companion and his intimate friend.
As he stood in light, absorbed in peace,
A divine desire coursed in his blood
To bring the luminous glory of the heights
To the shadowy abysses of life upon earth.
A tempest of divine love raged in his heart



That now compassed all creation within itself.
Nothing was hid from the Seer's eyes,
All stood revealed to the purity of his sight,
Time was a book he could open at will,
To read the sequence and finis of life.
Its faces that were dark at first and dull
Slowly became a marvel of Love,
Till he reached the end of the book
To discover that all was bliss.
His heart content, the Yogin opened his eyes.

—Shyam Kumari

The secret of the skies²

Whisper in my ear
The secret of the skies.
Speak to me of roses
That bloom in Paradise.
Earthly things I crave not,
No more they beckon me.
All my hopes are centred
In the wondrous Self of Thee.

Whisper in my ear
The secret of the skies.
Tell me of the Golden Path
That somewhere hidden lies.
My soul's deep aspiration
Soaring ever cries
To Thee, O Lord, to manifest
They splendoured immensities.

Whisper in my ear
The secret of the skies.
Speak to me of Love divine
That never fades or dies;
Of the Lights that know no shadow
And far above abide.
Oh reveal to me the Truth
No cloud can hope to hide.

Whisper in my ear
The secret of the skies.
The sweetness of Thy smile,
The marvel of Thine eyes.
I am filled with endless longing,
Above this self to climb.
Unveil to me Thy Presence,
Flood with Thy bliss all Time.

—Lalita

Sacrificial fire

I could have waited for silent Time
To turn my leaves from green to brown
And the autumn's chilly hand
To take them away one by one.
I could have waited for memories
To fade away by and by,
Drifting slowly from fall to spring
Letting Time renew my life.

But I desired a hero's death—
Death that annuls in a wink
All that hurt and left me sad,
All that cheered and made me young,
All the walls and grooves and traps,
All that bound me to the past,
All the dreams and all regrets
That are best left behind.
Log by log I set the stage
And lit the sacrificial fire
And into its flames plunged headlong
To emerge free of all desire.
I have died a numberless deaths
In the span of a single life,
And I am born again and again
Into a purer and truer light.

—Lopa Mukherjee

Thy hands of glory²

Thy hands of Grace have ever led me on;
The storms and tempests have all come and gone.
Happy like a god I sing Thy glorious name,
Drunk with the wine of dream-begotten flame.

I seek no favour, never, and I fear not
The angry frown and fret of fate distraught.
When the dark clouds gather and loudly threaten,
Shelter I find at Thy feet, my safe and splendid Haven.

Sweet Mother, in my heart's white joyous gleam
I see Thee and know that because of Thee I am.
I am Thy child and Thine alone, enfolded by Thy Power,
Waiting on Thy Divine gesture each golden hour.

—A. Venkataranga

²From Hofman, L., & Agni, V. (eds.) (2007). *Devotion: An anthology of spiritual poems*. Auroville: Integral Enterprise.



Apropos

You have only to aspire, to keep yourself open to the Mother, to reject all that is contrary to her will and to let her work in you—doing also all your work for her and in the faith that it is through her force that you can do it. If you remain open in this way, the knowledge and realisation will come to you in due course. —Sri Aurobindo

The most important thing for an individual is to unify himself around his divine centre; in that way he becomes a true individual, master of himself and his destiny. Otherwise, he is a plaything of forces that toss him about like a piece of cork on a river... —The Mother

People take different roads seeking fulfillment and happiness. Just because they're not on your road does not mean they are lost. —Dalai Lama

At the center of your being you have the answer; you know who you are and what you want. —Lao Tzu

We can walk through the darkest night with the radiant conviction that all things work together for the good. —Martin Luther King Jr.

We ought, once for all, heartily put our whole trust in GOD, and make a total surrender of ourselves to Him, secure that He would not deceive us. —Brother Lawrence

You will have peace to the extent that you have God, and the further you are away from God the less you will be at peace... Thus you may measure your progress with God by measuring your peace or the lack of it. —Meister Eckhart

A person will know when they are moving towards the Tao, the great creative force within themselves. For those who truly give from the heart, will be rewarded with true abundance beyond physical desires. —Taospiritualawakening.com

Knowing others is wisdom. Knowing oneself is enlightenment. —Lao Tzu

He who lives in harmony with himself lives in harmony with the universe. —Marcus Aurelius

As soon as you stop making everyone else responsible for your happiness, the happier you'll be. —Nina Guilbeau

Worrying doesn't take away tomorrow's troubles, it takes away today's peace, fulfillment and happiness. —Lessons learned in life

If we are not responsible for the thoughts that pass our doors, we are at least responsible for those we admit and entertain. —Charles B. Newcomb

Within each of us there is a silence as vast as the universe. We long for it. We can return to it. —Jack Kornfield

It is not the same to talk of bulls as to be in the bullring. —Spanish proverb

How can a person's life keep its course if they will not let it flow. Those who flow as life flows know. They need no other force; they feel no wear, they feel no fear, they need no mending, no repair. —Lao Tzu

Love is always bestowed as a gift freely, willingly and without expectation. We don't love to be loved; we love to love. —Leo Buscaglia

In nature there are neither rewards nor punishments; there are consequences. —Robert Green Ingersoll

Happiness cannot be captured or held. When cornered it flees and when chased it is allusive. Yet when ignored it follows and when given away it returns two-fold. —Taospiritualawakening.com

Everything that seemingly happens externally is occurring in order to trigger something within us, to expand us and take us back to who we truly are. —Anita Moorjani

Life is a gift, and should be cherished, lived and experienced. Though experience often reveals itself as pain in this world, it is still purposeful, it still has its place in the evolution of our spirit. —Michael Poeltl

Be content with what you have. Rejoice in the way things are. When you realize there is nothing lacking, the whole world belongs to you. —Taospiritualawakening.com

You are one thing only. You are a Divine Being. An all-powerful Creator. You are a Deity in jeans and a t-shirt, and within you dwells the infinite wisdom of the ages and the sacred creative force of All that is, will be and ever was. —Anthon St. Maarten

All that we are is the result of what we have thought. The mind is everything. What we think we become. —Buddha

I have just three things to teach: simplicity, patience, compassion. These three are your greatest treasures. Simple in actions and in thoughts, you return to the source of being. Patient with both friends and enemies, you accord with the way things are. Compassionate toward yourself, you reconcile all being in the world. —Lao Tzu

Think not of the amount to be accomplished, the difficulties to be overcome, or the end to be attained, but set earnestly at the little task at your elbow, letting that be sufficient for the day. —Sir William Osler

Since the tapestry of all time has already been woven, everything I could ever want to happen in my life already exists in that infinite, nonphysical plane. My only task is to expand my earthly self enough to let it into this realm. So if there's something I desire, the idea isn't to go out and get it, but to expand my own consciousness to allow universal energy to bring it into my reality here. —Anita Moorjani

Knock, and He'll open the door. Vanish, and He'll make you shine like the sun. Fall, and He'll raise you to the heavens. Become nothing, and He'll turn you into everything. —Rumi