

Collaboration

Winter 2015/2016

Journal of the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother

Vol. 40, No. 3



The role of flowers by Lizelle Raymond • The Mother's flowers and her messages by Richard Pearson •
The return of Hayy ibn Yaqzan: A symbolic reverie by Zacharia Moursi •
Mind, Overmind and Supermind by Debashish Banerji • Becoming Sri Aurobindo by Dave Hutchinson •
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About the cover

Front cover: Golden Opening; back cover: Symbol Garden Lotus. Photographs by Jim Page. A selection of his photography can be found at his website: jimpagephotography.com. He explains that "creating images with a meditation of awareness allows seeing with more than just the eyes. It reveals our connection to greater presence and sense of being. These experiences blend with photographic artistry and technique to reveal the beauty and spirit in nature. His work encourages others to explore beauty and spirit in nature as a reflection of the greater spirit of life."

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From the office of Collaboration

We start off this issue in the *Current Affairs* section with an announcement of the AUM 2016 taking place this summer at the Sri Aurobindo Sadhana Peetham in Lodi, CA. There is also an update on the Sri Aurobindo Mandir in Nepal, which suffered severe damage during the Nepal earthquake in April and is facing other hardships due to the political situation in the country and its relations with India. The section wraps up with a description of a new website focused on integrating Integral Yoga with science on the brain.

This is followed by *AV Almanac*, where we have two articles pertaining to developments in the Residents Assembly Service (RAS), which facilitates meetings and decision-making of the residents of Auroville on the major issues facing the community. The first gives a historical background of the RAS, while the second discusses a new initiative called the Active Residents Assembly which is open to all Aurovilians who commit to taking an active role in reading background material about issues and meeting together regularly to find solutions to the various problems facing the community.

In *Chronicles*, we have two articles about flowers and the Mother's relation and work with flowers. The first is by Lizelle Raymond, and is a translation of the Introduction to her book written in French, *Le Role des Fleurs*, published in 1953. The second is by Richard Pearson and discusses various sacred plants and flowers in various world traditions, as well as Mother's comments on these and other flowers.

In *Essays*, we begin with a wonderful fictional story by Zacharia Moursi, which is based on an old Islamic story. It pertains to a visit by a mysterious, wise man who leads the narrator towards a deeper understanding of spirituality. The second, very different in tenor, is a heady philosophical essay on the nature and relations between mind, overmind and supermind. The third essay, by Dave Hutchinson, is a reflection on Sri Aurobindo and how to follow in his footsteps on the spiritual path. The fourth essay is the final instalment of John Robert Cornell's *Land and Spirit: An American yoga for the 21st Century*. In this appendix, John Robert discusses how to hike in nature with an eye to discovering the hidden spiritual dimensions that it can reveal to the attentive explorer.

In *Source Material*, we have selections from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother relating to the mind of light and the superman consciousness, respectively, which are intermediate between the supramental consciousness and the human consciousness, and are an important background and supplement to Debashish's essay.

We close the issue with a collection of fine spiritual poems in *The poetry room*, followed by an eclectic collection of *Aprapos* quotations. Jim Page's photography graces the front and back covers, and Karen Cornell's drawings complement John Robert's essay.

Invitation to submit a short essay for publication

With the intention to make *Collaboration* more interactive and participatory, we invite you to submit a short essay of about 300-800 words for the next issue on *any topic related to Integral Yoga*. We would like to publish a few of the best submissions in a new section called "Salon." As with the submission of other articles to *Collaboration*, the editor may require or suggest changes to the essay prior to publishing. We hope that the relatively short length of these articles may inspire more writers who may be reluctant to write the longer essays which have become the norm in *Collaboration*. Depending on the response, we hope to include this new section of short articles in each of our future issues. For the next issue, please email your essay to the editor at: editor@collaboration.org before April 1, 2016.

Artists

Karen Cornell has been drawing and painting since childhood. She was a graphic artist in the software industry for many years. She specializes in computer graphics, pen and ink, and watercolor.

Jim Page's (jim@jimpagephotography.com) photographic vision yields images of landscapes, seascapes and unique flora. He lives near and is associated with the Sri Aurobindo Sadhana Peetham in Lodi, CA.

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

About SAA: The Sri Aurobindo Association distributes information about Sri Aurobindo, the Mother, and Auroville, and supports projects related to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Auroville, and Integral Yoga activities in America. Current members: Lynda Lester, president; John Robert Cornell, secretary; Margaret Phanes, communications officer; Mateo Needham, director; Ananda Bhishma, associate and treasurer.

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



Current Affairs

AUM 2016 to be held at Lodi, CA

The next All USA Meeting (AUM) Integral Yoga conference will take place June 30–July 4, 2016, in Lodi, California. Please check-out the AUM Website (www.collaboration.org/aum/2016/) and the AUM Facebook page (www.facebook.com/aumconference/) for more information.

Theme: Deepening Our Practice: Individual & Collective

Dates: June 30 – July 4

Place: Sri Aurobindo Sadhana Peetham in Lodi, California (sasp.collaboration.org)

Keynote presenters: Francis Rothluebber, Matthijs Cornelissen, Lynda Lester, Bahman Shirazi and Partho. Additional workshop presenters include Aurelio, Aurelei Braroo (children's program), John Robert Cornell, Brant Cortright, David Eby, Gaia Lamb, Julian Lines, Wendy Lines, Pravir Malik, Lopa Mukherjee, Margaret Phanes, Aviram Rozin, Nick Rytlewski, and Shree Srinivasan (children's program).

This next AUM is an outflowing of the Lodi Ashram retreat group that has been meeting for the last 20 years. The focus is on deepening the practice of our Integral Yoga sadhana. The presenters have been chosen because the theme is meaningful and inspiring to them and their presentations will reflect that. The aspiration of the organizers is that the attendees will find their own path of sadhana enriched and reinforced, and will return home with renewed aspiration and a deepened understanding and vision of their own practice. We are happy to inform you that there will also be a Children's Program at the AUM this year!

Update on the Sri Aurobindo Yoga Mandir in Nepal

by Larry Seidlitz

I met up with Ramchandra in the Ashram dining hall, where he volunteers when he comes to Pondy to take a break from his work running three ashrams in Nepal. He needed a rest from dealing with the devastation at his Ashram in Katmandu after the powerful earthquake, 7.8 on the Richter scale, which occurred on 25 April 2015. The epicenter was only 40 miles east of Katmandu, and left more than 9000 dead and more than 23,000 injured. He described to me the tremendous shaking of the earth, which moved the whole area three meters upward and to the south in a matter of seconds, with the experience of someone who now knows the power of Mother Nature and the frailty of human life. His first instinct was to call the children out of the shaking school building. He recounted that he was working with a group of about 20 boys on some construction work, who had been asking him

to break for lunch, but he insisted they finish what they were doing first. If he had acquiesced to their demands, they would have been eating in the area where the walls of the four storey dormitory crumbled and fell at noon time. Fortunately, no one at the Ashram was injured or killed. That was not the case in surrounding villages, where many people died. He mentioned that one village, a destination point for many foreigners, was leveled, and about 200 foreigners and 300 local Nepali's lost their lives.

Whereas his two other Ashrams received only minor damage, the main Katmandu Ashram, which houses about 30 adults and 100 children, sustained heavy damage in two of its primary buildings. One is a four storey dormitory for about 50 boys. The cement pillars and beams themselves are damaged and leaning precariously, rendering it uninhabitable. Afterwards, the boys stayed in tents, but with the colder weather have shifted to the school building where they study during the day and sleep during the night. The other heavily damaged building is a large six storey building which was still under construction, but which already was housing about 20 girls. In that building, the structural pillars and beams are still okay, but all the brick walls have fallen down. The girls have shifted to one of the other buildings. Work has not yet started to rebuild these two structures. There was also a cowshed in the lower part of the building which was heavily damaged but already a new cowshed has been constructed.

In addition to the building damage, the Ashram has been hit hard in other ways. One is that its sales of fresh organic vegetables, milk, and water to the surrounding region has dramatically fallen. Whereas the Ashram used to earn about 50 thousand rupees weekly at one Sunday market, now it earns only about 20 thousand rupees weekly selling at three Sunday markets. Ramchandra explained that many people have left the area and many others have become poorer and are trying to meet other expenses of rebuilding. The Ashram has also lost out on income coming from visitors. For example, one spiritual center from California usually sends three groups each year, but this year only one group has come. Such visitors had provided a reliable stream of income.

The Ashram is also facing other problems almost as devastating as the earthquake. Recently Nepal has made a new constitution, which Ramchandra says is one of the best constitutions in the world, but for petty political reasons the Indian government is not happy with it. For example, there is a large group of Indians in Nepal who wanted an autonomous region and special privileges, but these were not granted. In reaction, the Indian government has set up a blockade of exports to Nepal of important items such as cooking gas, diesel fuel, and gasoline. Other items such as cement needed for reconstruction are also very difficult to get now, and building costs have gone up threefold. This has rendered the task of reconstruction very difficult.

Ramchandra says that so far he has received about 50 lakhs of rupees in donations after the earthquake, but he needs about 150 lakhs (\$227,000) more to rebuild the damaged buildings. If you are interested in helping out, either financially or in other ways, please contact Ramchandra at: sriurobindo@gmail.com.



New website “Remember to breathe” applies the Mother’s “The Science of Living” to the brain

by Don Salmon

Regarding her writings on education, the Mother has said that she tried to avoid using yogic terminology in order to make the writings accessible to the most “intransigent positivist” (“positivism” refers to people who are nowadays referred to as “materialists” or just “skeptics”). She understood that integral education could be of benefit even to those who might be put off by anything resembling conventional religious language.

We’ve tried to follow Mother’s advice on our website, www.remember-to-breathe.org, presenting the principles of integral education in terms of the brain.

Always remember to breathe

Our website name, “Remember to breathe,” as we explain on the site, really means “remember, again and again, to bring your attention back to the “core” of your consciousness—the “core” being our term for the psychic being (or at least, the influence of the psychic on the surface nature—see below). As the Mother puts it in her essay on Psychic Education:

Whatever you do, never forget the goal which you have set before you... The will for the great discovery should be always there above you, above what you do and what you are, like a huge bird of light dominating all the movements of your being.¹

Physical education

We have a section on our website called “Healthy Habits” in which we encourage people to “remember to breathe” (bring attention to the core) while developing healthy habits. As the Mother writes:

Physical education has three principal aspects: (1) control and discipline of the functioning of the body, (2) an integral, methodical and harmonious development of all the parts and movements of the body and (3) correction of any defects and deformities.

Vital education

The “brain pages” on our website present the most up-to-date research we could find on how to develop the pre-frontal cortex (the site in the brain mediating what Sri Aurobindo refers to as the “intelligent will”) in order to harmonize our emotions, instincts and sensations. As the Mother writes:

This vital education has two principal aspects: The first concerns the development and use of the sense organs. The second the progressing awareness and control of the character, culminating in its transformation. The indispensable starting-point is a detailed and discerning observation of the character to be transformed.

Mental education

The Mother puts attention at the core of mental education, which we present on our website as mindfulness practice. The Mother describes five phases of mental education:

- (1) Development of the power of concentration, the capacity of attention.
- (2) Development of the capacities of expansion, widening, complexity and richness.
- (3) Organisation of one’s ideas around a central idea, a higher ideal or a supremely luminous idea that will serve as a guide in life.
- (4) Thought-control, rejection of undesirable thoughts, to become able to think only what one wants and when one wants.
- (5) Development of mental silence, perfect calm and a more and more total receptivity to inspirations coming from the higher regions of the being.

Psychic education

Of course, we’re not naïve enough to think that most people develop a constant contact with their psychic being by reading a few web pages. What we refer to as “the core” more closely approximates what Mother refers to as a “psychic influence” on the surface nature. But for the sake of this essay, we’ll add a quote from the Mother regarding the more “advanced” form of education which most, she says, may not yet be ready for:

The starting-point is to seek in yourself that which is independent of the body and the circumstances of life, which is not born of the mental formation that you have been given, the language you speak, the habits and customs of the environment in which you live, the country where you are born or the age to which you belong. Before the untiring persistence of your effort, an inner door will suddenly open and you will emerge into a dazzling splendor that will bring you the certitude of immortality, the concrete experience that you have always lived and always shall live, that external forms alone perish and that these forms are, in relation to what you are in reality, like clothes that are thrown away when worn out.

1. The Mother’s articles on Education quoted here can be found in the *Collected Works of the Mother*, Vol. 12, pp. 3-38.



AV almanac

The Residents' Assembly Service: its vision and its evolution

by Gaëlle Miollan

Both articles in this section have been reprinted from Auroville Today, December 2015 issue

The Residents' Assembly Service (RAS) facilitates the decision-making process of the Residents' Assembly (RA). The current team is the third since it was set up. Over the years, the vision and the role of the RAS have changed as new teams replaced older ones. Here Rakhal (a former member), and current members Inge and Slava share some of the RAS' history, the role it has now and its plans for the future.

The history of the RAS

The RAS, says Rakhal, was created around 2004 and its role, at first, was rather limited. It was to organize the decision-making process of the RA, count votes and announce the outcome. Over the years, the group got also involved in the facilitation of meetings.

The second team, in which Rakhal participated, evolved the role of the RAS further, attempting to organize new ways of meeting. One of their experiments was called 'the RA gathering', an event during which people were not only sharing, but also eating, and playing games together. "It brought a new sense of meetings, but it didn't last," says Rakhal.

The current team is now further evolving the role of the RAS. The members, Inge, Jesse and Slava, are supported by Hedia and Isha. But more people will be needed, says Slava. "The RAS should be strengthened. We need additional resources, more skills, and more brains in the room". Also a new mandate is being prepared which will soon be presented to the community. Promoting transparency is a major part of it. "It is very hard for a large number of people, such as the Residents' Assembly, to agree on decisions. People are often not well-informed; they sometimes have opinions about things they do not know. Here the RAS has a role to play," says Rakhal. "There is a tremendous amount of knowledge in the community and the RAS encourages the sharing of this knowledge. What's blocking is a lack of trust," says Inge. Slava agrees. "The RAS is helping Auroville to become more united through transparency, inclusiveness and participation."

All acknowledge that participating to the Residents' Assembly is a learning process, and so is to the RAS. "The RAS has an important role in this learning as it facilitates the decision-making process: the RAS can encourage learning or hinder it," says Rakhal.



Inside the RAS: From left, Slava, Inge, and volunteer Christa

What changed since the creation of the new team

One of the very important steps for the RAS, according to Slava, was the Retreat which the RAS helped to organize. "The Retreat notably improved the relationship between the RAS and residents as the latter got the feeling that they could rely on the RAS as they felt listened to." After Inge joined, the RAS started improving the way meetings were facilitated and began using online tools to get the views of the community. "What we have achieved is that discussion now starts online; the RAS is also facilitating small preparatory meetings between parties so everyone feels heard and respected. When people get to a general meeting, it is not a confrontation on the emotional level, and the issue itself can be solved," says Inge.

In addition to improving the atmosphere of General Meetings, Slava and Inge also try to improve community participation, both in terms of quality and quantity. Inge emphasizes the importance of 'homework'. For her, residents can only discuss topics meaningfully if they have information about them. That is the reason why Slava and Inge started to prepare meetings in advance, posting relevant information on a specially created website. "Making information and feedback public," says Inge, "promotes transparency". She feels it has opened up a lot of trust in the community. Also thanks to these online tools, the RAS got a better sense of how and how much people were participating because numbers were easier to get (for example how many people read the website). "People can now participate according to their own possibilities and willingness," says Rakhal. "The decision-making process has become more like the reflection of a collective intelligence, because it comes from several different perspectives and thus leads to richer and more durable decisions."

The future of the RAS

The work of supporting the RA, says Inge, "is just beginning". The RAS is now more supported by the community, also financially, but ideally, she says, the RAS team should consist



of five full-time people. "In the next two years there will be an increase in the amount of work for the RAS and then, it will diminish drastically." She feels that the job of the present RAS is to get through the blockage of lack of trust and transparency. "When this blockage is gone, the RAS will not be needed anymore because information will flow freely. By then, only a secretary department will be required—like an information centre—as there will no longer be any need to have to do what the RAS is doing now: collect the information by doing research on the ground."

Slava explains that the RAS would like to start a proper on-line platform called the 'Community Collaboration Space' which would be complementary to the existing Auronet. "Through this platform, Aurovilians could opt to only receive the information they are interested in, feedback on any topic of their choice and channel this feedback to the working groups concerned." The project is still in the early design phase.

In brief, says Inge, "the role of the RAS is to help realize Mother's Dream by supporting the RA becoming a collective manifestation of Aurovilians' inner growth."

The Active Residents Assembly initiative

by Alan

One of the strongest messages to emerge out of the Retreat discussions was the need to re-examine our present organizational structure, to make it more reflective of our core values and ideals and to strengthen the role of the Residents Assembly.

The Governance Task Force took this up and made one of its first priorities the creation of an Active Residents Assembly (ARA). The ARA is open to all Aurovilians and Newcomers, and its members commit to reading relevant background material and attending regular meetings to build agreements and solutions for the community's various problems and challenges. Although the ARA has no formal decision-making power, it is hoped that its work will increase the quality and participation in our Residents Assembly decision-making meetings.

The ARA pays particular attention to the way they meet together as, in the past, community meetings have often been fraught with personal disagreements. ARA members agree on the need to create a spirit of harmony and solidarity in their interactions, and to seek solutions that integrate and reconcile all sides of an issue or problem. They also aspire to give intuition a major role in the discovery of integral solutions.

The Vision statement of the ARA is as follows:

As committed members of the ARA, Aurovilians offer their participation towards renewing and enhancing the capacity and effectiveness, as well as the Spirit, of the Residents Assembly, with an aim for building Human Unity and Peace in the community. Members participate with openness to learning and growing in a spirit of Sincere Service, Collaboration and Goodwill, where the

evolution of a Learning Society becomes central to the collective development

The community's response to the ARA initiative has been promising. So far, over 100 people have signed up and two introductory meetings have been held. In the first meeting, participants began the process of deciding which topics they would like to take up first. Many of the issues, like housing, increased youth participation and a better community decision-making process, were clearly interrelated.

No clear decisions were taken at the first meeting, and those members of the ARA who did not attend were invited to send their suggestions. The second introductory meeting evinced a strong spirit of harmony and the eventual decision to allow a small team of ARA members to choose the topic for the first full meeting, as well as to plan the process for how we would meet together.

Ultimately, we do not know what will emerge from the ARA experiment. The pull of old meeting habits remains strong. At the same time, now there is a very strong aspiration to move beyond the old polarities and our narrow personality-based preoccupations to seek solutions that will benefit the community as a whole and lead us closer to our ideals.

It should be noted that the ARA is only one part of the proposed changes to be made to the Residents Assembly and the decision-making process. The other changes include expanding the role of the Residents Assembly Service (RAS). This would allow it, among other things, to more efficiently gather all the relevant information on a particular issue, to share it with the larger community and to receive and review feedback.

ARA's list of 10 major challenges facing the community

1. The need for a clear and inclusive decision-making process ratified by the RA which fosters the spirit of unity. Without this, we won't be able to change what needs to be changed or reorganized.
2. Housing: the housing problem is one of the major bottlenecks for Auroville's growth.
3. Managing our water resources. A plan of action needs to be decided upon.
4. Selecting the right people to occupy administrative positions. This is imperative as the wrong people do not have the discrimination to choose what is appropriate for Auroville.
5. Move from a "each one to himself" kind of society to a society where people care for each other.
6. Clarification of the status and direction of our development group/TDC.
7. Establishing trust between us and overcoming fear.
8. We need to establish trust between the larger community and the work groups.
9. The collective needs to be empowered.
10. Increase the influence of our ideals in our everyday lives. Finding new ways of encouraging people to act in accordance with our ideals.



Chronicles

The role of flowers

by Lizelle Raymond

Now that the French edition of Flowers and their Messages has been published,¹ it is finally time bring to light the inspired Introduction to Lizelle Raymond's Le Role des Fleurs, published in 1953, surely seen by the Mother. It is translated from the French by Repiton Prêneuf and reproduced from Mother India, February 1954 issue.

Amongst all the offerings made to the Divine, the flower is the most subtle, and also the most mysterious; for, in its simplicity, it carries the vibrations of the *akasha*, the ethereal element itself,—that is, all that is most abstract, pure, and perfect. It is, above everything else, the *form* behind which is the *sound*, the all-powerful creative mantra.

Moreover, the flower represents all the other elements of nature, of which it is a perfect synthesis: air, water, fire, earth; it also corresponds to the different senses of man, for it can be seen by its colour, smelt by its perfume, tasted by its honey, touched by the fingers which pluck it, and even heard by those who have enough patience and an ear subtle enough to perceive the unfolding of its petals. There are some flowers—the evening primrose, for instance—which open in a few minutes, and which one can see trembling on their stalk, so strong is the life vibration which seizes them at the time of their opening.

The flower is the psychic consciousness of nature, expressing the highest and the lowest, the most precious and the most diminutive. It is a big non-revealed power.

If the flower is the Name itself—each vibration of the sound having inscribed itself in the heart of the flower inside a triangle where it has taken shape—it is also the Number expressed by its petals, by its stamens, by the sepals of its calyx. All its components have a precise significance: the familiar lotus with five petals is the

“Supreme descended on earth,” whereas the gods created by man have a thousand-petalled lotus as a seat in his temples. The flower discloses to us psychic qualities much before we are able to see them for ourselves. Quite at hand, for instance, chrysanthemums symbolize energy; petunias stand for enthusiasm, phlox for skill in works, zinnias for endurance, etc. Other flowers speak more of soul qualities: the thoroughness of vervains, the wider and wider opening of barleries, the receptivity on all planes of gladioli, the surrender of hollyhocks, up to the ultimate goal of mystical life where the rose plays the crucial role of the meeting between the Divine and the worshipper, at the central point of the cross, where the unthinkable takes a form and is projected in the innumerable manifestation. The Rose always gives itself. It is at the same time the call of love for the Divine, and the abandon of the Divine who always gives himself unreservedly. All the mystics pluck roses in the secret garden of spiritual experience, and give them to us, a symbol of the quaternity, the necessary link without which there would be no intimacy between God and the worshipper.

* * *

The Mother has often been asked how she had given each flower its deeper significance. She sees it, whereas we don't, in that point of unity where, from the captured lights, the flowers have taken birth with their exact significance. She *knows* what can be tangibly transferred of the extreme values, which are indeterminate on the positive as well as on the negative side. She has also often been asked “Why” and “How” she gives such and such flowers to certain disciples and not to others. The questions even go so far as to aim at piercing the mystery of what is transmitted by the given flower, or of what is hidden in the heart's cave of the sadhak and ignored by himself.

Here one enters into a symbolism where all explanations are good in order to say the following very simple thing: there is the impulse of the one who asks

something or expects something and there is the answer or the gift, the granting. Between the two, the Mother is the instrument; she is “what acts,” remaining at the same time beyond all thinkable opposites, beyond all emotions that can be felt. The one who receives a flower from her hands knows that it is a living *mantra*, which will act profoundly, at its time; all depends on the opening, on the sincerity, on the surrender of the one who delivers himself to the divine influence. There is here a process of transmutation, of stimulation, which is evident. The flower is the active agent which accomplishes the aim, because

the divine grace is acting,
the hand which gives is love.

The flower thus establishes a direct connection between the Mother who gives and the disciple who receives, or, inversely, between the disciple who offers and the Mother who accepts—in a language whose effectiveness comes from its expressing itself in silence. The mute message of the flower is neat, precise, often as sharp as a razor's edge; but it can touch what must be touched without any words provoking revolts or absurd oppositions of the rebellious nature. All the flowers are beautiful, those symbolizing qualities to be acquired as well as those signifying obscurities to be overcome; for such aspects exist only in the objectivised relativity of the disciple who sees the road still to be covered and the point from which he started. At the very moment he receives the flowers they become for him literally the steps of the stairs of light he has to climb. The adjustment comes progressively, in the love of the Divine Mother, the creatrix of manifold forms, outside time's measure because to the guru who helps in the transformation a day or a month are not so different in value. The only thing that counts is the hour of the awakening, the moment of the opening when the flower, however beautiful, disappears and only its sweet perfume remains.

On the heights where the Mother gives power to the flowers, these mantric



conceptions are indisputable; from there the importance of the flowers exchanged between the Mother and the disciples, as well as the understanding in which the flowers have their absolute value.

Little children in the Ashram bring flowers to the Mother because they like them for their beauty; but very often they even play with the significances and they know quite well, in case of need, where to find the force or quality which they require. They come to Mother with the pure offerings in their hands, without their flowers getting suddenly charged with the secret desires of the soul, the heart or the body, with the subtle and often unconscious lies, as happens frequently with grown-ups. And the latter know it quite well! In the great family of disciples, the moving humility with which everyone prepares their bouquet before bringing it to the Mother is perhaps the most spontaneous expression of self-surrender, of aspiration materialised. A minute analysis, expressed by a flower, loses its harshness without losing its acuteness, for “what must be done will be done,” sooner or later, in one way or another. The flower is only a “bridge over the abyss” between inexpressible values.

Early in the morning, each of the gardener-disciples brings to the flower-room a full basket of flowers plucked in the Ashram gardens. These are sorted with care. The stalks are cut, the leaves removed. The corollas are disposed according to their colour and size. The smallest details assume great importance at this “flower-fair” where the dealers give everything for nothing, with an affectionate patience, where the buyers have no money and bring a refined fastidiousness, for their psychic being must be satisfied above all. The children are in a hurry and anxious because the school bell is about to ring; the teachers, the workers, have a set time for beginning the daily task. Everybody, however has enough time to scrutinise the flowers offered to them, to examine each in detail, because one can never be too exact in expressing clearly... what is still in the mounting aspiration! The more so does it fall on the flower to crystallise this aspiration which seeks to shape itself, to

be the rigorously exact figure of the *chakra* consciously or unconsciously evoked, of the Name itself in its form as rarefied as can be...

“This petal is shrunk,” a disciple says to the gardener; “this flower is pale, give me another. This morning I simply must have: *joy in the vital* and *spiritual healing*, it is very important...” And indeed it is very important. The offering of a flower sums up all that is implied in the traditional sacrifices which are now obsolete—be it a pair of doves or a white buffalo, the Vedic horse or the produce of the earth: cakes, honey, fruits and perfumes, water, salt or incense. There is “what is offered to the Divine,” and “what the Divine gives” in his turn to the beloved disciple as a token of alliance. Here in the Ashram, the flowers are the “Sign of the manifested Spirit,” the rainbow which fills the open hands, the promise of realisation in the supreme compassion. “The grass thrills with joy, the air quivers with light, the trees raise to the sky their ardent prayer, the singing of the birds becomes a canticle... The flowers bring with them the smile of the Divine...”²²

The offerings have their altar—the Samadhi of Sri Aurobindo in the Ashram courtyard, a place of peace and Presence, of ardent communion between the Spirit and the form. Twice a day the variegated carpet of fresh flowers is laid anew, with a slightly raised centre where a design of scarlet pomegranate flowers make the emblem of two intercrossing triangles which is the seal of the Master. Also every morning the Mother receives a number of disciples who, day after day, are in need of her and of being at the heart of the direct teaching given by her, during the long period of inner work, difficult progress, deep transformation of the being.

But this transformation can cover a much larger field; the flowers can become the sacrifice of an expanse covering the earth and growing universal. During the whole of the last World War and the two years which followed it, the Mother had all the flowers growing in the Ashram counted with minute accuracy, corolla by corolla, button by button and a meticulously drawn list was made. The disciples

in groups, counted the flowers, thousands of each kind, with blind patience and perfect calm. Visitors used to join them at certain times of the year. In full baskets the flowers were brought to the Mother—a huge offering mute and secret, an ardent sacrifice of beauty to counterbalance the brutal delivery of Nature in one of her crisis of destruction. The neutralising Force was acting through the eternal smile of compassion; love was enveloping the dark night, love was answering the calls, calming down the pangs of what was being born and what was dying—huge sacrifice in the accomplishment of the Word. “All that comes from the Divine must return to the Divine.” Tears had become the perfume of offered flowers.

* * *

In the Ashram, three times a week, all the disciples, the children of the school and the visitors, pass in a file, before the Mother. This movement is called “the Blessings.” Some disciples bring to the Mother a tray covered with a mosaic of flowers, being sure that one of them will be handed back to them. Others hold a few flowers, enclosed in their joined hands as if in a cup. Others bring nothing at all. These latter are the wave of the river, the witnesses of the experience in its flow, the faithful and patient sadhaks who do not exteriorise their wishes because they know a deep inner quietude. They are the believers who know that the hour shall come. There are also in the file people who are passers-by of a day, who are urged by curiosity, and suddenly get stirred because they feel that something is happening which cannot be explained to them, which cannot be given to them. But they are seized by the beauty of the scene and by the tangible serenity which emanates from it.

Usually, at “the Blessings,” the Mother gives the same flower to all, unless she has a special message to convey to someone. It is often a red hibiscus, a button which never opens, symbolising divine solicitude in its promise of blossoming; or the white flower of the jasmine tree signifying the psychological perfection which will



be reached when all the parts of the being consent equally and are harmonised.

Some disciples touch their foreheads with the flowers they receive, also their eyes, their lips and their heart. Others get away in a hurry, suddenly shy because her hand has touched them, her eyes have seen them. Mother has given, and she has received—she has created.

* * *

The flowers have no other function in the Ashram but to convey a rigorous teaching of which none speaks because each one lives it according to his own measure, his own capacity. The language of the flowers, like that of the hieroglyphs, requires a key. This key is that of the most absolute sincerity which sooner or later draws the line between the things that belong to the imagination and the emotions, and those that belong to the spontaneous movement of the being itself when it cries out: “Lord, enlighten us, guide our steps, show us the way towards the realisation of Thy law.” There are many things to clear until the moment of the creative life kindles up. The first steps only can be escorted until the walking becomes more assured; afterwards it is a question of direct experience alone. There was a time—some 20 years ago—when Mother was writing mantric phrases with flowers for a very small number of disciples. These phrases are still meaningful, living, with the same intensity of aspiration; they can be landmarks on the path of integral yoga.

But this teaching, essentially subjective and individual, must remain a harmony and an equilibrium in all its degrees. May the words which convey the effort of the whole being in travail, in full transformation, remain impregnated with the perfume of the flowers, with their beauty, and above all with the smile of the Mother who gives them, for that is as it should be.

1. *Le Mere, Les Fleurs et leurs Messages*, Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram 2014.

2. *The Mother, CWM*, vol. 1 (*Prayers and Meditations*). Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 2003.

The Mother's flowers and her messages

by Richard Pearson

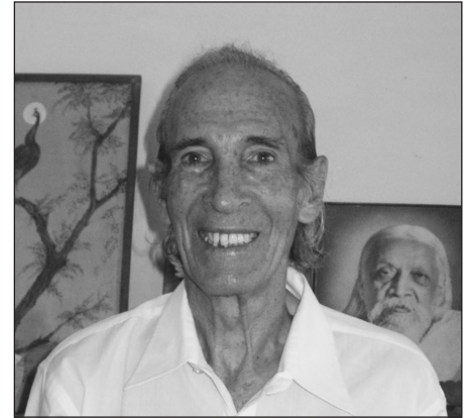
Beyond thought, beyond, far beyond, away from feelings and emotional impressions of the heart, there is a subtle portion within that knows in a different way and is the lever of our transformation. It is in this region I feel, that the Mother works through the flowers. These are the transforming vibrations that envelop us equally in surging waves and have uplifted us throughout the ages.

* * *

After the Mother decided during 1970-71 to revise all the flowers to which she had given names in French, she took up five flowers each day and dictated a short sentence for each one. This is what we have called her commentary. Here too we realise that when she uses the word “Nature” it brings, I feel, an identity with Mother Nature and human nature. Each one is always a revealing message in itself, a happy blend of identity, often with a touch of humour and simplicity, yet always kindling in us a greater aspiration and élan, a feeling of wanting to be closer to what the Mother flower is giving. By such a growing identity, I mean a state of receptivity to receive what the Mother has put in the flower, as seen by her own state of identity when she first gave these names. This no one can ever fathom. It is true that all beautiful and dainty flowers cheer us up besides bestowing a presence all around us of life, of beauty and a touch of Mother Nature.

* * *

During the second world war and even for a year or so after that, the Mother was counting and noting in very long lists all the flowers carpeting the ground, I believe. [Not all but certainly those from Ashram houses, like Aspiration, Transformation, Service]. These were collected



and offered to her. In her words: “It was a pact with Nature so that she may put all her gifts, *biens*, in French, under Sri Aurobindo’s influence.” This deep intimate rapport between the Mother and Mother Nature is beyond human understanding. We may simply note here in her own words: “I have made a rather interesting experiment in this way. You see, it [the noting of the numbers of flowers] was a kind of arrangement with me and Nature... it was something Nature would give me for my work... Take for instance the Transformation flowers; note that if one is quite attentive, one will see that in different season one flower is replaced by another with a similar or close significance, and you can go round the whole year in this way, if you know how to make use of things. There are also things that are always there... But naturally, for this to work in all sincerity, it had not to pass through the head, because when their head starts working, men spoil everything.” (1) And yet, our mind even then likes to understand, likes to explain and is happy with a neatly wrapped tidy box of its findings. It is a game, though interesting on a certain level.

Let us look at the way all Nature, in particular flowers, was valued in the past. All civilisations, even so-called tribal groups descended from earlier lost ones, have known Nature by an inner intuition. Conscious of the Sun, the Moon, the planets and constellations, flowers, leaves, trees and natural minerals as living beings, there was an deep intimacy, natural and spontaneous. So, in India, China and Japan, in fact Middle Eastern ones too,



flowers always accompanied the worship of gods, goddesses and spirits of Mother Nature. So in earlier days, Europe, including Russia, had sacred plants and flowers.

The Mistletoe of the Druids in ancient Gaul, *Viscum album*, is a good example. Only a maiden in white attire was given the honour of plucking a branch from where it thrived as a parasite on oak or other large trees; that too, we are told, with a gold sickle. The Mother names this flower “the sign of the Spirit,” and comments thus: “The Spirit says: ‘I am here!’” We all know how the flowering around Christmas and New Year led to its being hung for joy at homes in later times: “Kiss me under the Mistletoe,” more an expression of happiness in finding love and expressing the joy of togetherness.

The Basil, *Ocimum basilicum*, began earlier as most sacred. Now it only conjures up the taste of Italian cooking or a nice hot tomato soup and a tasty salad. “Basilic,” in French, comes closer to the true origin as “*basilicum*,” brings us immediately before the sacred sanctum—the altar. Later, in the Middle East and Europe, it was commonly a token of faithfulness between young lovers

Basil is named by the Mother: “Joy of Union with the Divine.” It is a pity that we cannot capture the feeling given by the French, “*Allegresse de l’union avec le Divin*.” There is a subtle charm in ‘*allegresse*’ which seizes on us as does the expression ‘*allegretto*’ in music. The commentary tells us: “Generously scented, it fills the heart with joy.”

The Middle East also has given us several sacred plants, worshipped from time immemorial, and often still kept as a presence of the Divine in our lives or an accepted traditional form of worship. The Myrtle has been a sacred fragrant plant too, in bygone times: the Mother recognised this in the plant itself when she named the little white mildly fragrant flowers: To live only for the Divine, with this comment: “This means to have overcome all the difficulties of one’s individual life.”

In India, it is the Tulsi, *Ocimum sanctum*, that has come down through the ages so established in tradition that the Mother herself could not tell whether the name

Devotion she gave was because of the nature of the plant—or simply the indelible feeling stamped on this plant by countless generations of devotees’ pious worship and veneration. “Difficult to say,” she remarked. Even to this day Indian Hindu families specially grow Tulsi at the garden entrance to their homes. Besides, temples too always have little stalls selling leaves of Devotion too, for devotees to offer.

I remember that in the Ashram in earlier times, at Darshan-time, the only offering made before the Mother and Sri Aurobindo was a garland of Devotion. The following day, Garland day, the Mother would give these back to the disciples. In the commentary we come to realise how important is the fragrance, though not so noticeably strong in the leaves and flowering spikes of Devotion as in the wild plants, and specially powerful in all dried spikes when rubbed between the palms. She says: “Modest and fragrant, it gives itself without asking for anything in exchange.” In her talks, she admits that “it is partly the fragrance that helped me give significance to flowers.”(2)

The Rose—that queen of blossoms—has stolen the hearts of men by its sheer fragrance and exquisite beauty. The Mother has named all roses Love for the Divine (except a strange green rose with sepals instead of petals: Timidity in the attachment for the Divine). In her commentary for roses, she addresses Mother Nature in this most sensitive way: “The vegetal realm gathers together its most beautiful possibilities to offer them to the Divine.”

Perhaps an earlier rose is the Country Rose or Edward Rose, called Surrender, having its origins in China or Persia. Perfume, attar, was distilled from the petals of these flowers since very early times. From the point of view of sadhana it is of capital importance: “To will what the Divine wills is supreme wisdom.” We may say that perfect surrender means absolute and total love, or that perfect love is absolute surrender.

The Sacred Lotus—believed by a lost civilisation to be the first flower upon earth, has an unparalleled history in India as well as in China and later in Japan. It is the throne of Mahasarawati and equally

Mahalakshmi. Lord Buddha is shown too seated in a lotus. Even the leaf is compared to man’s true state of consciousness—living in the world yet not touched by it as the lotus leaf, being in water, is not wet and drops of water fall from it, like pearls released.

When Champaklal showed two paintings to the Mother: one of a white lotus, the other of a pink one, she took them to Sri Aurobindo. He wrote below the white one: Aditi. For the other, it is the Mother who wrote below the pink one, Avatar. It is Aditi—the Divine Consciousness and Avatar—the Supreme manifest upon earth in a body. For the first she says: “Pure, immaculate, gloriously powerful,” and for the second, in all simplicity: “The pink lotus is the flower of Sri Aurobindo.”

* * *

No account of the Mother’s work with flowers can be complete without mentioning the Psychological perfection. As early as 1929 she had defined, for each of its five petals, the quality for her to bring forward and nurture. It was given nearly every day to each one during Blessings. Gardeners planted this Frangipani in the houses near the Ashram, and the one in the Ashram and that at Prasad House still spread their gentle fragrant blossoms, often carpeting the ground. This Pagoda tree, as it is also called, is grown in Buddhist temples and that is where it was seen by Plumier who was struck by its beauty and fragrance as he saw it on a moonlit night, hence the botanical name *Plumeria*.

In the flower game she played with a small group of disciples, she would place a small number of flowers in her hands and ask each to form a sentence with their meanings. This is one of the first: “Love the victor will manifest when there will be established the five-fold psychological perfection and when, through loving consecration (Radha’s consciousness), there will be a complete love in the physical for the Divine and complete faithfulness to the Divine.” (3) The hibiscus, named Love the victor, was later changed during her revision to Victorious love, as in the French, *l’Amour victorieux*. The Divine Grace is



not mentioned anywhere in the record of that game. It is, however, a common Indian hibiscus, sweetly called *Stholo podo* in Bengali. This means the Lotus upon the earth. It is also a completely identical hibiscus that opens pure white and turns pink during the day, *Hibiscus muabilis*. Did the Mother name this one first Love the victor? In Lizelle's book, there are two names given as there is a rarer one that may have come later, opening pink and remaining pink. We can only guess and fruitfully ponder over her commentary for that Divine Grace: "Thy goodness is infinite. We bow before Thee in gratitude."

The Mother had given in the beginning the following virtues to each petal of Psychological perfection: Sincerity, Faith, Devotion, Aspiration and Surrender. Later during a long talk in the Playground, she specified: "So here's my proposal: we put surrender first, at the top of the list, that is, we accept what Sri Aurobindo has said,—that to do the Integral Yoga one must first resolve to surrender entirely to the Divine, there is no other way, that is the way. But after that one must have the five psychological virtues, five psychological perfections, and we say these perfections are:

Sincerity or Transparency,
Faith or Trust—Trust in the Divine,
naturally,
Devotion or Gratitude,
Aspiration or Courage,
Endurance or Perseverance.

One form of endurance is faithfulness, faithfulness to one's resolution—being faithful. One has taken a resolution; one is faithful to one's resolution. That is endurance. There you are. If one persists, there comes a time when one is victorious. Victory is for the most enduring." (4)

* * *

In some groups of flowers there is a goal to reach. For instance, our royal Dahlia's, which are now grown to perfection, yet in many modern gaudy hybrids they reflect perhaps also our tumultuous times. To begin with there are the very small

singles with a hard centre, called Vanity; then follow the larger ones, fully double, but still small, Pride. This is followed by Dignity, larger still and of several colours and shades of meanings. After that is the magenta royal Nobility, followed by Aristocracy, with very large flowers of varied colours and having artistically curved petals. Finally we attain Superhumanity, "The aim of our aspiration." These are the large pure white and fully double Dahlias.

It may be the path to follow, the promise of things to come, as in the orchids: Attachment for the Divine, culminating with the large white fragrant *Cattleya* ones: The aim of existence is realised. "It does not exist except by and for the Divine."

The Mother is there to break new ground,—as she writes, "leaving the past far behind us." Thus we find it is the hibiscus group to which she has given the largest number of significances. Dynamic power, the single red one, I believe to be the oldest. It is always offered to Kali in temples and household Puja places. In the Ashram, two or three other ones were already named in very early times: Identification with the Divine consciousness, a fully double pink blossom with a very light border, and Mastery over the things of the earth, later taken out by her. The former soon became Consciousness one with the Divine consciousness. As far as numbers go, the next are roses. And then, just think of it, petunias, Enthusiasm, singles, doubles and bicolored ones. This is indeed needed and essential to achieve any goal. And these are closely followed by Endurance, the zinnias! Regarding breaking with the past, recent or ancient, I would like to add that when asked about the name for the apple, Divine wisdom, the Mother preferred it not to be included.

* * *

Over the years, the Mother has given names to the flowers that were grown and offered to her most often, following the consciousness needed for the sadhana at that time. Memorable for me was Pavitra's remark, obsessed as I was with the meanings given by her to flowers. He said sim-

ply: "Do you think Mother has given these names for the flowers or for us?" I have come to realise the truth of what he said then. Not just for individual or collective growth and opening, but also for new initiatives, new advances, the new creation she was continually forming. The most striking example is the number of new names given to Hibiscus flowers when Auroville was in its initial stages. Later she gave a wider sense when she put the New Creation or Power in place of the word Auroville. For in stages these messages lead us to Divinite, Godhead: "Pure and perfect, it puts out its force in the world." It was the first one to be called the Auroville flower.

* * *

The Mother's meanings give us much more. It is my growing conviction that she has manifested a complete integral yoga for all times to come, complementing Sri Aurobindo's stupendous work and in the most material form, truly sanctioning the future. For in those early formative years, while Sri Aurobindo was spending a good deal of his nights replying to letters, the Mother was bringing forward the blessings of her flowers. As early as 1929-30, she had already established from the flowers she was given the Connection between the Supramental and the Material Being (a gold-yellow mottled red Canna), as well as the Body-consciousness undergoing the Supramental transformation (a large sunflower, yellow with large brown-orange center), the Supramental light in the cells (a yellow Lantana)... and there was so much more to come!

* * *

"Flowers speak to us when we know how to listen to them, it is a subtle and fragrant language." —The Mother

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1. CWM, vol. 6 : 231-234.
2. *Mother's Agenda*, vol. 2, 02/04/1961.
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Essays

The return of Hayy ibn Yaqzan: A symbolic reverie

by Zacharia Moursi

Introduction

Hayy ibn Yaqzan (Arabic: Alive son of Awake) is the name of the protagonist of one of the masterpieces of the Arabic literature of the Golden Age of Islam. Its topic has been taken up, in succession, by a few of the most cosmopolitan Arabic minds. The first of these was the illustrious physician/philosopher of the 11th Century, Ibn Sina (Latin: *Avicenna*). Today the story is mostly associated with the Andalusian philosopher/physician of the 12th Century Ibn Tofail, whose version had a profound influence on the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment in Europe. It is the story of an infant whose mother abandons it on a raft to protect his life. The child lands on an inhabited island and is raised by a gazelle without any contact with human beings. When his gazelle mother dies of old age, he tries desperately to revive her and dissects her body to find out what caused her death. This incident taught the growing child to exercise his reasoning faculties in understanding the workings of Nature. With time, he matures and reaches the highest ranges of mind and intuitively the Unity of all creation and the necessity for the existence of a Maker who is the Origin of all things. Later on, a religious castaway lands on the island and joins Hayy. He teaches him human speech, and together they discover that the knowledge Hayy acquired through reasoning fully agrees with the Knowledge the religious man received from his Holy Scriptures. Ibn Tofail's story "Hayy ibn Yaqzan" became, five centuries later, the model for Daniel Defoe's "Robinson Crusoe" and, still later,

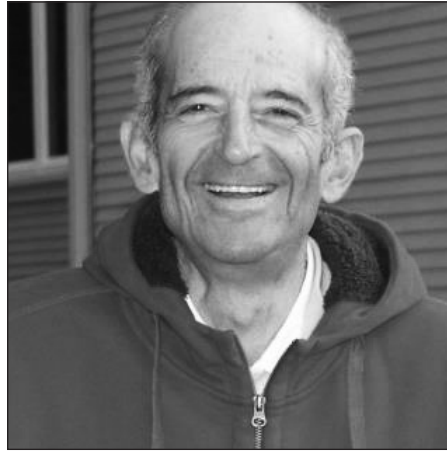


Photo courtesy Zacharia Moursi.

other stories like *Jungle Book* and *Tarzan*.

Readers interested to know more than the above summary, will find good materials on the web and YouTube such as the full text of Ibn Tofail in several languages, and the original Arabic text in the form of an audio book.

I offer my symbolic story "The Return of Hayy ibn Yaqzan" as an ardent prayer that the spirit of the Golden Age of Islam, characterized by an intense seeking for Knowledge and Unity may return and replace the current spirit of defeatism, apathy and isolation.

* * *

One day, long ago, Hayy suddenly stood in front of my house, as if he had materialized from nowhere. The house, a fine mansion that had belonged to countless generations of my family, was at the time quite dilapidated, though some signs of its bygone glory were still recognizable. My immediate ancestors had not done much to maintain it; and I, the only resident now, hadn't fared better either. To keep up appearances, I tried to keep the front yard facing the elegant quiet street in good shape, while totally neglecting the huge garden at the back of the house. The garden was all covered now by tall weeds; only a few old trees were still distinguishable in the general disarray. Only two wings of the house were used, one by myself; the other by occasional friends and family when they paid me a visit.

It was a warm and sunny spring afternoon; I was happily planting flower bulbs in the front yard, when I noticed a man standing there looking hesitantly around. I had not heard any car that might have dropped him off where he stood; and I was somewhat surprised by his sudden appearance. He was neatly dressed, had thick dark black hair and a dark tan; I thought he must be quite strong to be able to move around with such a heavy suitcase.

Advancing towards the fence, I offered my help. He asked me, in good English and an accent I could not identify, if I knew of any apartment in the immediate neighborhood he could rent for a few months. He introduced himself by his first name and added that he liked the area because of its neatness and quietness and that he would much rather have private quarters than stay in a hotel. His dignified face, and the way he spoke, filled me with so much trust and confidence, that I spontaneously suggested to him my vacant guest wing. He stepped in, inspected the rooms and seemed quite satisfied. A sudden inspiration moved me to tell him: "If you like, you are welcome to have my rooms; I will not charge you any rent, if you promise to help me, in return, with some manual work around the garden and the house." He jumped at my suggestion saying that renovating old houses was exactly what he loved to do, whenever he got the chance. We marveled at having reached such a fortunate arrangement for both of us in less than ten minutes.

* * *

In the following days, I rarely saw Hayy. I used to leave for work early in the mornings; and when I came back in the afternoon, I was always delighted to discover some improvements in the property that were not there the day before. We did meet occasionally in the kitchen, which he was entitled to use. Otherwise, Hayy was quiet and retiring; hardly any sounds came to me from his quarter. The only signs of his presence were the lights showing in his windows or from under his door. From the quantity of books he received regularly



at the post office, I assumed he must be filling his evenings with reading or doing some kind of research.

The ingenuity and caliber of the work Hayy was investing, day after day, in a house not his own, filled me with gratitude and appreciation. He had already done unasked in a few weeks work whose value would easily cover his rent for a year. My wish to know him better grew steadily, and I finally asked him if he would care to share dinner with me. Cooking for two, I said, was, after all, hardly more effort, and surely more satisfying, than cooking for myself alone. He thankfully accepted.

Our relationship entered a new phase. We developed the habit of spending some time chatting together after dinner. In the beginning, he had a lot to tell me about the projects he would still like to carry out for me. The material expenses for these projects were always modest and within the range I could afford, and I gladly went along with everything he suggested.

Slowly the ice of formality and reserve began to recede in front of the warmth and the cordiality steadily growing between us. At first we talked about general topics. Hayy seemed not particularly interested in the current news, but showed, on the other hand, great interest in the global issues of the day. He loved to link these issues to events of world history and to reflect upon their probable developments in the future. Whenever I dared to ask Hayy personal questions, he evaded either by skillfully changing the topic or by giving enigmatic replies which left me as much in the dark as I had been before. The few times I insisted on getting from him a clear response, he simply ignored my question and leaned back, with closed eyes, in his armchair. One time, on protesting that all I knew about him was his first name, I told Hayy I needed, for legal reasons, to know at least his full name; he

was, after all, my tenant. Unperturbed, he said: "Nonsense, my first name should do; it is the name people have associated me with in the last eight hundred years!" I must admit that I did not appreciate his sense of humor. But I had learned my lesson. I decided to stop putting him under pressure and to be more cautious in approaching him in the future. Fortunately, I did find an approach that worked.

My new approach consisted in sharing more of my own life, without expecting Hayy to reciprocate. I had always wished for a close friend with whom I could converse about deeper issues of the heart. One evening, I casually mentioned to Hayy that, from time to time, I have bouts of unpleasant thoughts, feelings of loneliness and apprehensions of aging and death. To my gratification, he listened

with great attention and concentration. He asked me to say more and listened silently, occasionally giving an approving nod or an expression of genuine empathy. He was very reticent in offering ready-made solutions, and whenever I specifically asked for advice, he used to say: "I do not believe in the utility of advice. Do not worry though. Someday soon you will find yourself the answers to all your questions. There is only one piece of advice that I can give you, and it is the only one you will ever get from me: to become conscious of the Divine Presence in yourself, and to surrender totally to this Presence. To live this highest knowledge concretely is a major achievement; it does not happen overnight. If you really want it, you must want it with all your heart, and you must have a lot of patience and perseverance. But you will be helped, and one day you will reach your goal."

* * *

Days and weeks sped by. The house was being gradually transformed in front of my eyes. Every time I went into the garden, I was overwhelmed by waves of bliss and gratitude. This outer change reflected positively on my inner state and gave me ultimately the strength to make some important decisions. I stopped taking new assignments at work and started joining Hayy in completing the outstanding renovation projects. I felt carried by a new force hitherto unknown to me. My health improved considerably; headaches, insomnia, and depressions seemed now a thing of the past. I wondered how the encounter with one human being, who concretely demonstrates to us true love and selflessness, could influence our lives in

such a dramatic way. Hayy's single example was enough to efface countless disappointments and setbacks I had experienced in the past.

I can recall only one incident in which Hayy went totally out of his reticence. I provoked him one evening by saying: "What are all these books you receive? One would suspect you must be trading in them!" He smiled and said: "I am glad you asked; I was waiting for an opportunity to tell you about my other interests. For ages I have been very active in building philosophical bridges, that is, in finding a synthesis between seemingly conflicting views which had divided people into camps ready to fight each other to the last breath. The ancient conflict between Matter and Soul or Nature and God has troubled humanity since times immemorial; but seems now to have been widely resolved. Then came the great conflict between Religion and Science, but humanity seems to have gone beyond that one as well. An increasing number of scientists succeed these days in harmonizing their science with their spiritual convictions. Humanity is now ready

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for the Grand Synthesis, namely the ancient knowledge, particularly well-developed in India, that God and His Creation are One. If this knowledge is concretely applied, and not confined to the realm of metaphysics, it would solve all the problems afflicting the world today. I am one of many who are currently working towards narrowing the gap between the notion of God the One and Only and that of God the One and All. With some goodwill and flexibility, one can see that if God is everything, He will also necessarily be The One and Only, since nothing could exist outside Him. What I have just said might sound like irrelevant metaphysical chatter to you; but in fact, if well understood and applied, it will remove a great deal of the suspicion and alienation still separating major religious groups today, thus paving the road towards establishing a united humanity and a lasting peace on earth."

* * *

One marvelous autumn day, Hayy and I were silently contemplating the garden, now awash in the bright colors of trees, flowers and butterflies and the happy sounds of birds, frogs and bees, when he suddenly declared: "As you remember, my plan has been, from the beginning, to spend only a few months here. Soon I will have to leave; the call to my next assignment is becoming more urgent. The last day of this month will be my last day here."

Though I had been expecting this announcement for some time, it struck me with great force when it finally came; I had to pull together all my inner resources to control my emotions. In my agony, a faint hope shimmered through my head and made me appeal to Hayy to become the co-owner and heir to my property. My hope was that sharing the property with him would guarantee keeping our contact alive. Hayy's face lit up. He said: "What

you have just said makes me very happy, but not for the reasons you would expect. I am deeply comforted to see how much progress you have made inwardly and outwardly in the last months, and I know now for sure that you will be able to progress further on your own. I cannot accept your offer, for which I thank you warmly all the same. Financially, I am well cared for, and I always receive what I need for my work. To do the kind of work I do, one



should not have attachments of any kind. I have no doubt though you will be guided and shown the best way for investing your money to the welfare of all, thus securing your own happiness."

A long pause ensued. I felt strongly the inappropriateness of words in such a moment of the soul. In addition, Hayy was in deep concentration, and I did not want to shake him out of it. He finally looked at me and said with a big smile: "I still have one request: that we spend some time meditating together in the remaining days. I suggest we meditate, for half an hour each day. We can do it after supper. It

would be a great help if we refrain from all unnecessary talk. Should your meditation bring up relevant issues you would care to share, you are welcome to do that the next morning. In these meditations, I will try to establish an inner contact to you. If I succeed, it would make it easier for me to contact from wherever I may be in the future."

His wish to maintain contact dispersed much of my gloom, and I willingly accepted his proposal. I had never done any serious meditation before, though I had developed, in the course of my education and career, some capacity for concentration. I welcomed the opportunity of meditating with a friend, whom I highly admired and who had grown to be my mentor and guide.

Already by the first meditation, I noticed a great difference. Very soon, a solid peace came down that shut out quite naturally all stray thoughts. I felt as if I had invisible wings with which I could travel instantly to distant places I had visited in earlier travels. My travels were not limited to space alone; I could as easily travel in time. In a later meditation, incidents, totally forgotten or suppressed, suddenly surfaced in my mind, in all their colorful details. I saw them now in a different light and could intuit in them significances I had never thought of before. I understood how they had influenced the overall flow of my life. Whenever painful memories surfaced, I could infuse them with new meanings, thus imbedding them in peace. In later meditations, I relived the highlights of my relationships with departed relatives and friends and recognized the deeper reasons for the experiences we shared together. In some meditations, I did not get into trance at all; I just sat quietly reviewing my life, giving thanks for all its blessings and asking for guidance and help in surmounting whatever obstacles I seemed to have



at that time. I invariably experienced the next day, or soon after, that these obstacles were either removed or they proved to have had no reality in the first place.

In one of the meditations I saw my entire life as one natural sequence of events pointing in a certain direction, and I knew with certainty how I should design my future life. I decided in the meditation itself to retire at the first opportunity; I had worked long enough, and it was time for me to live according to the dictates of my soul, and not according to the necessities of life. I wondered why I had delayed taking this decision so long, since my financial situation had always been secure. A new framework for my life stood complete; all I needed was to fill in the details.

* * *

The last day came. When it arrived, I resisted with all my strength getting sentimental about Hayy's imminent departure. All I can remember about the last meditation is that it was peaceful and blissful and much longer than all our previous meditations.

When I opened my eyes, the room was dark. My trance must have lasted for an hour or so. Hayy was not in his chair; I assumed he must have retired to his room to prepare for his early departure next morning. I went to his room and found no light shining from under the door. He must have already gone to bed. I decided to sleep on the living room sofa, to be sure I would hear him next morning and drive him to the nearby train station. When I woke up, the sun was already high in the sky. I jumped from the sofa and went directly to his room. The door was shut. All this seemed very strange to me; I opened the door and looked inside. Everything was absolutely still, and the room gave me the impression that it had not been touched for some time. I looked around for any farewell note he might have left me, but could find none. I rushed to the station in the hope his train might have had a delay. The station was very quiet; only individual passengers were moving about. I went to the ticket counter to ask

about the destinations of the trains which left early that morning. I was told there hadn't been any. The last train had left the station the evening before.

I came home with heavy heart. The house was sparkling in golden light. I took a stroll in the garden and was immediately welcomed by the teaming and blissful life of plants, birds and insects. From the way Hayy had arranged things so he could disappear unnoticed, I knew I would probably never set eyes on him again. But he had expressed his wish to keep inner contact, and I was sure I would receive an inner sign soon. To avoid falling back into loneliness and gloom, I decided to start that same day preparing for big changes in my outer life. Since that day, I have kept up my meditations; they seemed to me the most probable means of contact.

* * *

The last months had brought many surprises, but the last big one was yet to come. About a month after his disappearance, I happened to be in the university library not far from my house. While casually browsing the shelves in the World Literature section, I chanced on a book titled *Hayy ibn Yaqzan*. The title resonated strongly with something deep inside me; I was immediately drawn to the book and opened it at random. My eyes fell on the following paragraph:

"He next considered those Bodies which have neither Sense, Nutrition nor Growth, such as Stones, Earth, Water, Air, and Flame,upon which Contemplation it appeared to him that all Bodies, as well those that had Life, as those that had not, as well those that moved, as those that rested in their Natural places were One."

A few pages later I read: *"And when he perceived that all things which did exist were the one Maker's Workmanship, he looked them over again, considering in them attentively the Power of their Author, and admiring the Wonderfulness of the Workmanship, and such accurate Wisdom and subtle Knowledge. And there appeared to him in the most minute Creatures (much more in the greater) such Footsteps and*

wonders of the Work of Creation, that he was swallowed up with Admiration, and fully assured that these things could not proceed from any other than an Agent of infinite Perfection, nay that was above all Perfection...."

Suddenly lightning tore through my whole being. In a flash, I knew at last who Hayy was. All his mysterious assertions such as "having been known by that name in the last eight hundred years" and "having worked for ages on building philosophical bridges" acquired suddenly their true significance. He had come into my life to show me, by example, what it takes to guide and help other people, and he always insisted I should discover the Inner Divine Guide within myself, to be able to stand on my own feet. Since this stunning recognition, I have endeavored to follow Hayy's example and to realize his maxim.

* * *

Twenty years have passed since; I am now what people commonly call an "old man"—I have to say that old age is not that bad after all. Until this day, I have never shared my experience with Hayy with anyone; I saw no point in exposing myself to incredulity and ridicule. But major changes have happened in the world in these last years, and people from all walks of life and from the four quarters of the globe, have been increasingly opening to spirituality. I am now convinced that a few of these know that symbols, ideals and dreams can sometimes influence and change our lives much more strongly and positively than mere facts and so-called concrete realities. To these few I dedicate my story.

Notes

My warmest thanks go to John Robert Cornell for his perceptive editing of this story.

The two paragraphs cited above are taken from the excellent English translation of "*Hayy ibn Yaqzan*" made by the Orientalist Simon Ockley in the early 18th Century.



Mind, Overmind and Supermind

Debashish Banerji

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Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* begins with the aspiration of one person, Aswapati. Aswapati, the king, is an extraordinary person. In Sri Aurobindo's interpretive world, he comes to us from the Veda and his name, which means Lord of the Horse, partakes of the symbolism of the Veda. Here it stands for divine Force and Aspiration. From the beginning, he is introduced to us as someone who feels his kinship with a divine principle of consciousness. He is, in Sri Aurobindo's presentation, an avatar, a human being who carries within himself a divine source of consciousness, close to the surface, which begins manifesting itself from his childhood. Quite early, he begins experiencing a powerful aspiration and greater powers of consciousness that are latent in humans, moving him towards a universal identity. These constitute the early yoga of Aswapati and lead him to the experience of the soul's release, the freedom of the spirit, and a greater operation of his nature through its power of unity with the cosmos. Having attained to this liberation and experienced a perfect creation at the source of all becoming, Aswapati asks himself the question on the origin of the universal condition of Ignorance and Falsehood, why it is that human beings do not find themselves living this divine perfection, or experience an uninterrupted growth of consciousness into liberation, universality and godhood, and why instead, they find themselves in a condition of suffering, discord, failure and eventual death, with no clue about this divine existence which is their source and essence.

Aswapati feels that the answer to this question lies not so much in any error or ignorance of human individuals but in the cosmic condition. There must be some power of consciousness that is responsible



Photo courtesy Debashish Banerji.

for this universal condition of the cosmos and its creatures, including humans. This question causes him to quest beyond his personal needs, to embark on an odyssey through the universal planes of conscious being. This journey constitutes "The Book of the Traveller of the Worlds" in *Savitri*, a large and important part of the epic. What we experience as the cosmic condition is a state in which beings are fragmented and lead finite lives, bracketed by the two darknesses of pre-birth and death. Each such finite and temporary form of consciousness is discrete and separate from the others, living in a state of multiplicity, without either unity, harmony or integrality. This is a state of discord, a confusion of contested wills—each creature itself carries a multiplicity of unintegrated wills and these are at war within the individual and with others. All these beings cohabit or inhabit concurrently one universe and, therefore, are constantly in conflict or compromise. We find it very difficult to arrive at any happy cohabitation of our planet and we strive through this discord to arrive at some provisional understanding. As the Greek philosopher Heraclitus said "War is the father of all things."

How and where does this condition arise and what keeps it in place? This is what makes Aswapati voyage through the spatial ranges of consciousness, seeking an answer, since he knows that it is possible for human beings to arrive at a consciousness where this is no longer necessary. Yet humanity takes its condition for granted, it has inhabited this cosmos for millions

of years and has been stuck as if for ever in this condition of Suffering, without ever mirroring the integrality or harmony of Being that Aswapati knows could be our native condition. It is interesting to consider that it is this universal condition of Suffering that drove the Buddha to seek for an answer and it is this same condition that now drives Aswapati, and later Savitri, in the epic *Savitri*. Yet, whereas, Buddha's solution was one of a freedom from the cosmic condition which left it vacant, Aswapati's seeking is for a different solution, one which transforms the human condition to a divine life in a divine cosmos. This is what gives its aim to Aswapati's travels through the universal planes of consciousness, which are called 'worlds' by Sri Aurobindo because each such condition of consciousness is an ontology held in place by a combination of forces with a specific modality of being behind them. Each world is a being and an operation of energy and these two share a characteristic relation which defines this world in experience.

Through Aswapati's travels, Sri Aurobindo describes for us his own explorations of consciousness, since the problem he puts into Aswapati's mind is that which gave meaning to his own life. Sri Aurobindo asks this question because he realises that human individuals may find various solutions to the problem of suffering on earth; but we cannot find a solution to the problem of harmony on earth unless we discover some universal principle of consciousness, which is absent in our present condition but can be made available and embodied by us. The planes of consciousness through which Aswapati moves, though distinctive and alien to the law of the earth, are nevertheless, also all present here, and experienced, in however attenuated a form in our lives. So, what we find in the descriptions of Aswapati's journey, is the entire spectrum of consciousness that characterizes cosmic Ignorance, marked by a sense of radical separation and a discord of wills jostling for supremacy in a single domain. These worlds are seen to form gradations which move through three ascending modes of



consciousness, those of Matter, Life and Mind.

Aswapati moves along the ascending gradations of these worlds and as he does so, Sri Aurobindo describes the properties, forces, characteristics and personae that belong to these worlds. First he travels through a world of subtle Matter, then through the worlds of Life, and finally the worlds of Mind. Human beings are constituted of all these modes of consciousness – we are physical beings with a life-force and a mind. Humans have been commonly characterized as rational animals – it is the animal part in us, only partly under the control of the rational part that constitutes our life-being. Yet, it is our mentality which makes us characteristically human. This is what makes the worlds of Mind particularly important in this journey, since human beings find their peculiar vantage from these worlds, and at the same time, these worlds grant greater power and freedom over the cosmos to human beings, though they are also marked by intrinsic limitations. However, Sri Aurobindo's interest in describing the properties of the Mind worlds is not limited to their operation in human beings, but opens to cosmic planes of Mind that go beyond the human consciousness and link the human to the superhuman, the mental to the supramental and Divine. It is through the exploration of these mind-worlds, that Sri Aurobindo gives us a map of all the possibilities of cosmic mentality that lie between the human and the Divine, discovering in the process the parting of the ways, that bifurcation of consciousness which Aswapati seeks, where the One loses itself in the fragmentation of Being that has been known as the sacrifice of the Purusha. This is where the integrality is lost, leaving a chaos of multiplicity.

Sri Aurobindo finds this parting of the ways at the heights of the plane of Mind. The planes of Mind, as Sri Aurobindo presents them in the journey of Aswapati, are seen at first to have properties that we are familiar with as the properties of mind. In Sri Aurobindo's psychology, the modalities of consciousness expressed by Matter, Life and Mind are different in

kind, but each being itself an expression of pure Consciousness, are also related through cross-linkages. In the evolution of the grades of Consciousness, each new form of Consciousness that emerges retains a relationship to existing planes of consciousness through similitude. This establishes a cross-linkage by which communication between levels of Consciousness may occur. Mental consciousness, thus, has operations and properties within it that resemble or are near to the properties of Life and Matter. We now know of this layered morphology of mind also through cognitive brain science. This is at the individual level, but Sri Aurobindo asserts that these individual properties are instantiations of universal planes of Consciousness. Thus, in Aswapati's journey, we find him moving through the planes of Mind and observing in them properties which resemble the material and vital principles. At first he comes across a plane of Mind which seems to operate in fixed habits, in monotonous repetitions, which are stereotyped. These are the characteristics of what Sri Aurobindo calls the Physical Mind. This mirrors or limits in mentality the movements of Matter and the dumb repetitions of its movements in a formulaic fashion.

The next level of mind-consciousness that Aswapati reaches has properties that are more characteristic of the Life-plane, a changeful rash adventurous spirit that lends itself to desire. It supports and justifies through its rationality the irrational drives of the life-impulse for possession, enjoyment, survival, and the carrying out of a desiring will. Passing through this phase, Aswapati discovers a more native action of the Mind characteristic of its primary property of intelligence and rationality. Here the Mind shows itself to be a pure seeker after truth. Though ignorant in itself, it is a seeking for truth and this seeking proceeds through an abstraction of empirical sense-experience into ideas and a process of classification and relation of these ideas leading to the formation of systems. These systems grant the mind a better handle over the world, the human ability to control nature, life and matter.

This brings us to the summit of what we ordinarily consider to be mental in human beings. But other properties of mind are also experienced by humans. We receive in rarer moments of our mental life visionary imaginations, or are uplifted by ideals. These visions and ideals provide our aims for perfection in personal and collective lives. These idealisms come from planes of Mind beyond that of pure rationality which only seeks for the laws that make up this cosmos. Aswapati in his journey through the Mind climbs to these planes which he discovers to be transcendent of subjective differences and universal. These mind-planes send messages that we receive at the summits of our own mental activity.

Going beyond the rational mind, he comes upon a mind-plane which Sri Aurobindo calls the Higher Mind. The grand intuitions received by great philosophers or theoretical scientists come from this plane. Worldviews, metaphysical schemes, grand systemic theories of science that integrate many laws, come from this cosmic plane of mental consciousness. It carries a density of Logos, a sense of the ordering power of an Idea behind the cosmos. But such a single idea remains elusive, rather it inspires the intuitions of a multiplicity of schemata, all generated from this plane of Higher Mind. We realise that these are all relative schemes, models of an elusive reality; we sense a relativism affirmed by the 18th c. Enlightenment philosopher Immanuel Kant who said that Reality is transcendent to us, we can never know it as-it-is. What is possible to us are mental models of Reality. This correspondence of perceptions, fitting into a world picture with predictable laws, are accepted as mind's legitimate function. These schema come to us from the Higher Mind.

Higher Mind, however, is not the last bastion of cosmic Mind. Beyond Higher Mind, are ranges of Mind where a rigid necessity governing things through laws or even a probabilistic logic is overpassed in a visionary beauty whose forms are significant with an archetypal order. Aswapati passes beyond the Higher Mind to such a plane which Sri Aurobindo calls



the Illumined Mind. But even these planes of significant form are not the Truth consciousness, but a world of living symbols that encompass great Truths of Reality. Succeeding this Aswapati reaches another plane of Mind which Sri Aurobindo calls Intuition. With the plane of Intuition we come intimately near to the Truth. A body of ancient Indian sacred texts that are given the greatest importance are known as the Upanishads. The name "Upanishads" translated, literally means "to sit near." This has been popularly considered to refer to the way the teachings of these texts were transmitted from teacher to student, through the intimate and loving residential relation of the guru and disciple, the guru-shishya parampara. But there is a deeper meaning to the name which takes its roots in the plane of Intuition. It refers to the fact that the Upanishads voice a kind of utterance, which is intimate to the home of Truth. In other words, the languaging of these texts comes from the Intuition plane of Mind consciousness. Thus this plane of consciousness brings us into contact with a knowledge, which needs little or no external aid, not even a significant vision but something closer to a self-evidence, a knowledge by identity. We start entering the home of a Truth where nothing is "outside" or "alien," all is sensed as the One Being there is, an emergence out of the Ignorance in which we find ourselves struggling for knowledge. Our Knowledge is intuited from an intimacy of an experience of the oneness of all things.

The plane of Intuition rises further into the highest summit of mind, what Sri Aurobindo calls Overmind. Overmind is a global mind-consciousness. It has also been called the cosmic consciousness. At the level of Overmind, there is a sense of Spirit, of the One Being that is cosmic and that contains all Reality. Things are known not merely through vision, or through any kind of external contact, or even through an internal contact, as in intuition, but we begin experiencing a knowledge by pure identity.

However, even this mind-plane is a delegate of true spiritual knowledge because Overmind is an operation where

Knowledge and Ignorance meet. This indeed, is the parting of the ways which Aswapati is in search of. This meeting of the ways and parting of the ways of Knowledge and Ignorance is where the One becomes the Many or the Integral becomes fragmented. But if the One can "become" Many, there must be an even greater source of Mind, where the One and Many may co-exist without diminishing each other. If this were not the case then it would be impossible for us to arrive at a divine life upon earth. If there is to be a divine life on earth, it cannot be through the abolition of difference in some great uniformity. It has to be a Reality in which the One can be experienced as infinite difference because it is the Infinite One. This indeed is the truth of a Consciousness beyond the Mind, because the Mind is bound by the law of finites and their non-contradiction. To the experience of the Mind, there is the One on one side and the Infinite on another, the two form exclusive realities. On our side, the side of Ignorance, we experience the Multiplicity devoid of the Unity, on the side of a world-negating Spirit, there is the experience of the undifferentiated One, the erasure of the Many. Both these realities are exclusive and excluding of each other if experienced through the Mind.

At the level of Overmind there is sensed a vast plane of infinite Forces and possibilities of one Reality, but each of these is a figure of that Reality, a representation. These representations at their very heights are the Ideals which form the high goals of human existence and which attract our aspirations. As Aswapati climbs into the lower rungs of the Overmind, these Ideals reduce themselves to two and reveal themselves as 'the Deathless Rose' and 'the Immortal Fire,' Perfect Beauty and the Will-to-Power as self-exceeding. The Deathless Rose subsumes a perfect order of multiple laws and forces in an effortless creative and miraculous Beauty. This miraculous harmony of all the innumerable seeming contradictions of world-existence is one of the great Ideals that draws the human aspiration. This is what makes Sri Aurobindo assert in *The Life Divine*, "All problems of existence are es-

entially problems of harmony." The other primary Ideal is the indomitable Will of the Flame of Divine Aspiration, a will to self-exceeding, Knowledge and "the adventure of Consciousness and Joy."

These two primary ideals stand at the summit of a sub-plane of the Overmind. Each represents an infinity in itself, as if the entire One. In the Overmind, there are other such archetypes, each of which is a representation of the Supreme Divinity, yet they all work in harmony, possessing an innate sense of the primordial unity of which they are an expression. But they cannot merge back into that Integral Unity to recreate the cosmos. The original Creative Power is above Overmind in a plane which has generated this Consciousness, this world of Mind with all its planes, at the summit of the cosmos. Thus in the Overmind, we find a multiple reality of Ideals which are independent figures of the One, but working together in harmony.

However, these figures or representations as emanations or projections of Truth, present a symbolic appearance inhabited by a life which does not originate in Overmind but in the Truth of Spirit. Thus an illusory quality haunts the Mind consciousness. At the heart of the Overmind, there is this negation, a sense of the cosmos generated from a projection. Sri Aurobindo calls this power of projection the Overmind Maya, contrasting it with the creative power of the Truth Consciousness, which he calls the Divine Maya. The Divine Maya does not proceed through emanations or projections, but rather through manifestations or embodiments of the Truth Consciousness.

Aswapati rises further into a plane of Overmind which represents this last shell of representational illusion. Sri Aurobindo calls this the Self of Mind. Here a vast sense of Doubt destroys for him the meaning of the entire creation. Even though he has established all the ideals of the Overmind, he feels their irrelevance. The entire cosmos appears to him an illusion. But this is not the highest peak of Overmind and Aswapati rises to the Truth of Overmind, where it is seen a delegate of the Supermind, the Truth or Knowledge Con-



sciousness. Here, the shell of projected representations is seen to take its origin in the Truth Consciousness. Here we see why Overmind is the meeting place of Knowledge and Ignorance, which Sri Aurobindo sometimes call the Knowledge-Ignorance or Vidya-Avidya. There are planes of the Overmind which are more steeped in the reality of the Ignorance where the powers and properties of cosmic being are separate and have their independence and lose contact with each other; and there are planes of the Overmind where these powers and properties experience themselves as representations of the One and are thus in harmony with each other.

Rising beyond Overmind, when one enters the Supermind one finds there this fullness of the integrality of the infinite One. There the One Consciousness has differentiated itself into innumerable possibilities of itself but none of these loses its sense of being the One or its sense of being one with all the others, that also know themselves as the One. A complete integrality characterises the Supermind. In *The Life Divine*, Sri Aurobindo describes this difference between Supermind and Overmind:

The integrality of the Supermind keeps always the essential truth of things, the total truth and the truth of its individual self-determinations clearly knit together; it maintains in them an inseparable unity and between them a close interpenetration and a free and full consciousness of each other: but in Overmind this integrality is not there. And yet the Overmind is aware of the essential Truth of things; it embraces the totality; it uses the individual self-determinations without being limited by them: but although it knows their oneness, can realise it in a spiritual cognition, yet its dynamic move-

ment, even while relying on that for its security, is not directly determined by it. Overmind Energy proceeds through an illimitable capacity of separation and combination of the powers and aspects of the integral and indivisible all-comprehending Unity. It takes each Aspect or Power and gives to it an independent action in which it acquires a full separate importance and is able to work out, we might say, its own world of creation. (*The Life Divine*, SABCL, vol.18, p. 279)

In these lines we see the primary property of Overmind, which makes it different from Supermind and gives to it the foundation for the world of separation, also known as the Ignorance. Sri Aurobindo continues:

It is this power of Consciousness which is beyond spiritual Mind or Overmind, in what Sri Aurobindo calls Supermind, where the possibility of a divine life exists ...

And still we can recognise at once in the Overmind the original cosmic Maya, not a Maya of Ignorance but a Maya of Knowledge, yet a Power which has made the Ignorance possible, even inevitable. (Ibid.)

We see here that it is the Maya, the creative force, the magician energy at the heights of the Overmind which receives its power of Knowledge, of the oneness of all things, from the Supermind. It knows itself to be the parent of the cosmos.

For if each principle loosed into action must follow its independent line and carry out its complete consequences, the principle of separation must also be allowed its complete course and arrive at its absolute consequence; this is the inevitable descent, *facilis descensus*, which Con-

sciousness, once it admits the separative principle, follows till it enters by obscuring infinitesimal fragmentation, *tucchyena*, (Rig Veda, X.129.3) into the material Inconscience,—the Inconscient Ocean of the Rig Veda,—and if the One is born from that by its own greatness, it is still at first concealed by a fragmentary separative existence and consciousness which is ours and in which we have to piece things together to arrive at a whole. ... it is only by the evolution in us of the concealed superconscious powers of cosmic Truth and the Reality in which they are one that the harmony and unity we strive for can be dynamically realised in the very fibre of our being and all its self-expression and not merely in imperfect attempts, incomplete constructions,

ever-changing approximations. The higher ranges of spiritual Mind have to open upon our being and consciousness and also that which is beyond even

spiritual mind must appear in us if we are to fulfil the divine possibility of our birth into cosmic existence. (Ibid, p. 285)

It is this power of Consciousness which is beyond spiritual Mind or Overmind, in what Sri Aurobindo calls Supermind, where the possibility of a divine life exists because here the one and the many can coexist as powers and possibilities of integrality. The one infinite being knows its oneness and its infinity in itself and in each of its parts. All its parts are the one, each of its parts is all the others and the one itself is all its parts and has entered fully, integrally into all its parts. This is why Aswapati will find that the only way to change the cosmic condition of Ignorance is to call down this Power, this Consciousness of Supermind into the Ignorance and he does this by coming into



contact with Supermind, and invoking its Shakti, the Supramental Shakti or Divine Mother to be incarnated here in a human embodied form, so as to change the conditions of the Ignorance, replacing them by the properties and principles of the Truth-Consciousness, or Supermind.

This establishes the relation between Supermind, Overmind and Mind and the reason for the work of Aswapati in *Savitri*. Both in *The Life Divine* and in *Savitri*, Sri Aurobindo also gives us wonderful descriptions of the ranges of the mental planes above the human mind creating a stair of the levels of Mind reaching up to Overmind and Supermind. It is an opening to these higher mind-planes that makes it a possibility for the human consciousness to arrive ultimately at the fullness of knowledge. In *The Life Divine* he says

.... we perceive a graduality of ascent, a communication with a more and more deep and immense light and power from above, a scale of intensities which can be regarded as so many stairs in the ascension of Mind or in a descent into Mind from That which is beyond it. We are aware of a sealike downpour of masses of a spontaneous knowledge which assumes the nature of Thought but has a different character from the process of thought to which we are accustomed; for there is nothing here of seeking, no trace of mental construction, no labour of speculation or difficult discovery; it is an automatic and spontaneous knowledge from a Higher Mind that seems to be in possession of Truth and not in search of hidden and withheld realities. One observes that this Thought is much more capable than the mind of including at once a mass of knowledge in a single view; it has a cosmic character, not the stamp of an individual thinking. Beyond this Truth-Thought we can distinguish a greater illumination instinct with an increased power and intensity and driving force, a luminosity of the na-

ture of Truth-Sight with thought formulation as a minor and dependent activity. If we accept the Vedic image of the Sun of Truth,—an image which in this experience becomes a reality,—we may compare the action of the Higher Mind to a composed and steady sunshine, the energy of the Illumined Mind beyond it to an outpouring of massive lightnings of flaming sun-stuff. Still beyond can be met a yet greater power of the Truth-Force, an intimate and exact Truth-vision, Truth-thought, Truth-sense, Truth-feeling, Truth-action, to which we can give in a special sense the name of Intuition; for though we have applied that word for want of a better to any supra-intellectual direct way of knowing, yet what we actually know as intuition is only one special movement of self-existent knowledge. This new range is its origin; it imparts to our intuitions something of its own distinct character and is very clearly an intermediary of a greater Truth-Light with which our mind cannot directly communicate. At the source of this Intuition we discover a superconscious cosmic Mind in direct contact with the supramental Truth-Consciousness, an original intensity determinant of all movements below it and all mental energies,—not Mind as we know it, but an Overmind that covers as with the wide wings of some creative Oversoul this whole lower hemisphere of Knowledge-Ignorance, links it with that greater Truth-Consciousness while yet at the same time with its brilliant golden Lid it veils the face of the greater Truth from our sight, intervening with its flood of infinite possibilities as at once an obstacle and a passage in our seeking of the spiritual law of our existence, its highest aim, its secret Reality. This then is the occult link we were looking for; this is the Power that at once connects and divides the supreme Knowledge and the cosmic Ignorance. (Ibid, pp. 277-78)

Becoming Sri Aurobindo

by Dave Hutchinson

This may be a short talk. I have the answer right here on a 3x5 card. Let's see . . . how to become Sri Aurobindo?

Learn a dozen languages; toss in Latin, Greek, and Sanskrit to salt the mix. Then write several thousand-page books covering philosophy, poetry, and literature. No, wrong card.

Here it is. Create a time machine, go back to 1872, get born in northern India... No, wrong card.

Ah, got it. Learn how to read minds, change the course of history, and transform matter. That's it. Simple, really.

I think it's a fine ambition to become Sri Aurobindo. The only problem is how to do it.

For 20 years I have studied piano with a singular person, equal parts artist, musician, and teacher. Sometimes he says "Do it like this," and can demonstrate an exact method. Sometimes I listen to him play a piece, and imitate. At other times, however, there is no method, no form. Then the teaching becomes "Just do it." Play in 5/4 time. Really? How? Stretch and compress the phrases. See the music as a journey, a poem, a painting. Right. Just do it—but how?

There's a basic paradox between the form and the spirit, the surface and the essence. You can have perfect technical skill and be a terrible musician. On the other hand, it's possible to play a simple children's song with such heart and soul that it brings people to tears.

How do you become Rubenstein, Beethoven, Mozart, Bach? The question begins to sound familiar.

Maybe growing up, becoming a person is a process of chipping away at the rough stone of our nature until our true face emerges.



When we pick up the bad habits of our parents, we're introduced to our first koan: "Don't do what I do, do what I say." For most of us, imitating Sri Aurobindo isn't a matter of watching him. There's nobody to watch. We have his words. We read his words in order to learn how to eat, walk, dress ourselves, cut our hair.

Except... the first thing we learn in this yoga is that it's notoriously lacking in social laws. *The Synthesis of Yoga* doesn't tell you whether to eat fish on Friday, let alone how long your skirt should be. Nobody today dresses like Sri Aurobindo did outside of Pondicherry, and few there do either.

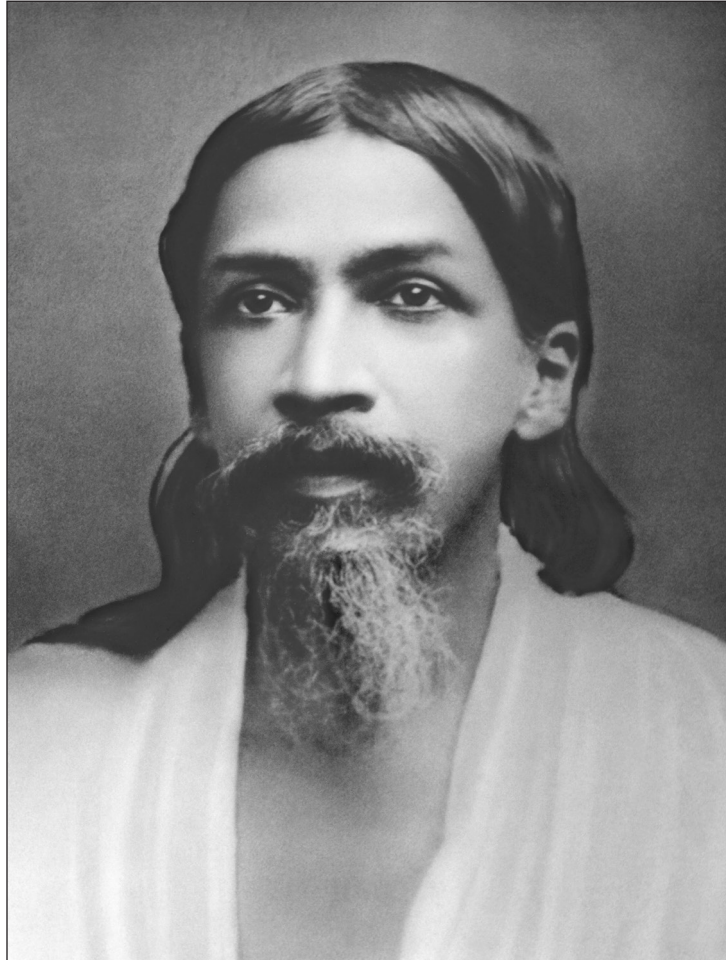
No, the first thing you learn is that true yoga means going inside, stepping back from the surface of things. We don't read to learn how to dress and speak. We read to imitate the mind, the inner consciousness, the soul. Reading is a good start in this direction, since the mind is one step inward from hard-scrabble physical forms.

It's rewarding to spend decades immersed in Sri Aurobindo's writings, his language, turn of thought, the multi-dimensional layerings of *Savitri*, the thousand-page train of thought in *The Life Divine*, and use them to mold your mind. If you can't do anything else, that's a decent step on the path to transforming matter and changing history.

Or even just mediate on a single passage. Here's one of my favorites:

This infinite and eternal Self of things is an omnipresent Reality, one existence everywhere; it is a single unifying presence and not different in different creatures; it can be met, seen or felt in its completeness in each soul or each form in the uni-

verse. For its infinity is spiritual and essential and not merely a boundlessness in Space or an endlessness in Time; the Infinite can be felt in an infinitesimal atom or in a second of time as convincingly as in the stretch of the aeons or the stupendous enormity of the intersolar spaces. The



knowledge or experience of it can begin anywhere and express itself through anything; for the Divine is in all, and all is the Divine. (*The Synthesis of Yoga*, pp. 115-116)

We can forgive the legions of writers who try to imitate those rolling cadences, the antique and evocative terms like infinitesimal, intersolar, endlessness. No wonder they fall in love with the words.

There is a risk in imitating language,

however: you stop short at the surface. The mind has layers, like a good cake. A rose is not always a rose, a word may mean its opposite; and in most of the poem *Aswathi* is actually Sri Aurobindo. So even in the wondrous realm of language, you have to go within, become a scuba diver or a balloonist, explore. It's easy to imitate

Sri Aurobindo's cadences, the nineteenth-century style of construction, the vocabulary, without delving into the essence. It's a bit like using churchy thees and thous.

Which Sri Aurobindo do we become?

Not an easy question. It's a bit like asking yourself "Which Einstein—the frizzy-haired eccentric? The thinker? The stuffy elder, refusing to accept later theories of quantum reality?" Peter Heehs wrote a biography titled *The Lives of Sri Aurobindo*, and as the title it implies, there were a number of them. This infinite self can be felt in each form; we are each of us fractals of infinite dimension, layer upon layer.

The real thing we want to imitate is not what he says, not what he does, not even what he thinks, but what he is. The essence of the great person, the great teacher and

yogi. Become the avatar, the superhuman, the destroyer of death. And maybe rest on the sixth day, or the sixth incarnation. That's not too much to ask, is it?

Every time I've suggested that they become superhuman to erstwhile Integral Yogis, except for one, eyes roll and tongues splutter. "You're kidding, right?" Well, no, not really. There are two important principles in this yoga. First, if one person can do it, anyone can do it. Second, the universal, the essential, the divine, is available to each of us at every moment.



Talking of the divine and the universal is all to the good, but we're left with the same conundrum: how do we get from here to there? How do we follow in the footsteps of the great teacher? How do we imitate that person, take the same journey?

Maybe we can get some clues from the process of imitation itself. Imitation comes naturally; nobody has to teach you how to do it. Every kid learns to talk and laugh like her parents, dress like her friends, and think like her books. You can tell where a person is from by her accent, the way she wears her scarf, or the knick-knacks on her shelf. Why? Because we mammals naturally, unconsciously imitate others.

This goes beyond the individual. History is fascinating because patterns stretch for decades or centuries. Consider the culture of cruelty in the 14th century, or the burst of spiritual reform and philosophical thought in the 6th century BC. Or the expansion of science and experiment in the 16th century, and the atmosphere of peace and interconnectedness today. Patterns that spread through entire populations, and persist for decades.

Every adolescent itches to break familiar patterns, emerge into the clear air, unfold newly made wings and fly away into unknown lands. After a while every form feels constrictive. *The Synthesis of Yoga* starts with this admonition: "all truth and practice too strictly formulated becomes old and loses much, if not all, of its virtue; it must be constantly renovated by fresh streams of the spirit revivifying the dead or dying vehicle and changing it, if it is to acquire a new life. To be perpetually reborn is the condition of a material immortality."

To be perpetually reborn. Generations of teachers use a simple method: "Do it like me." That's useful in every situation—"Do it like this" is the most common way to train another person. In highly skilled professions, where we are putting together intricate structures, taking precision actions, or coordinating a complicated system, the easiest and most

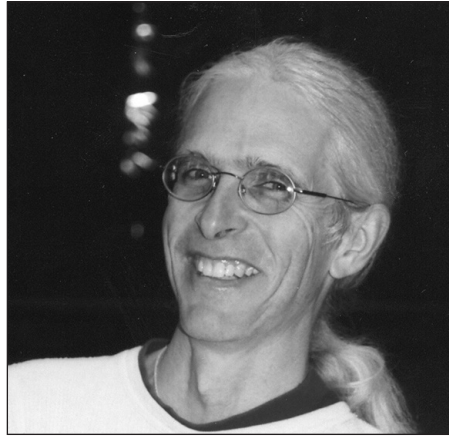


Photo courtesy Dave Hutchinson.

natural method is "Do it like this. Follow my example."

And so goes the spiritual life. We live in a holy place, Jerusalem or Pondicherry or the top of a mountain; put on the robes, learn to walk and talk in the step and rhythm of time past. At least, we tell ourselves, we're doing something.

But is it the right thing?

There are lessons to be learned from Sri Aurobindo's external life. For one, he continually experimented. In the early years, when he was first feeling out the process of direct transformation by consciousness, its powers and functions, limits and possibilities, he tried all sorts of things. Sure, he made mistakes. Birds fell off branches, ants got lost, people had a few unusual thoughts pop into their heads. But slowly he learned to change the shape of his body, of consciousness, the shape of world events.

In all of these experiments he took careful notes, ran a sanity check to determine if each method worked. Spiritual practice is rife with fantasy, and one rock-solid way to keep ourselves on the straight and narrow is documentation. Was that a five minute meditation, or five hours? Check the clock.

Writing helps. More than that, it's a sadhana, and he used it throughout his life. Take your highest flights and jot them down. Or turn them into an epic poem, as he did. Writing slows the mind, gives our foggy thoughts a definite form, gives us something to work with. Sri Aurobindo used writing as an tool not just in his mas-

ter works, but in everyday correspondence. Want to become the avatar? Write an email; put your best self into it; change a life one word at a time.

This is a specific type of meditation in action, open to everybody, every day. Write from your highest self. Put yourself into the best state possible—and then write. Over the years I've found that this is not only possible, but extraordinarily useful. It produces words with real power, and it changes you at the same time.

Try things. Thinking is one activity, doing is another—even if thought is a kind of action. Try going within; what do you find? Try giving yourself up to the universe, to love, to joy. What's that like? Sri Aurobindo did all sorts of experiments; he paced his rooms for up to 12 hours a day so that yoga would come down into the body, out of the upper regions; he tried divination, which he called sortilege; he tried automatic writing, which is a form of séance. He even used the power of consciousness to keep his teeth clean. Outrageous stuff. But through it all he noted what worked and what didn't, tested, adjusted, struck out in new directions.

Another way to become Sri Aurobindo is to keep at it, persevere, don't give up. He had an ungodly amount of difficulty, problems to overcome, resistance in his own personality and being. It took decades of work, and he candidly admitted that there were periods of six months or a year in a slump, no progress, no glory, slogging through the mud and dirt, problems recurring after he was sure they were solved. But eventually the road always rises, a way is found, the way ahead becomes visible. It's a simple but useful precept: keep at it. No step on this path is wasted.

Adaptation is necessary, and not just if you plan on sticking around for a million years in your shiny new transformed self. When you're in the woods, the key survival skill is to adapt. Stop hiking when you're exhausted; get shelter when it snows. Simple, but easy to forget. To adapt, you first have to be aware of what's going on, both inside and outside. To be aware, you have to listen to the world. There seems to be a theme emerging here.



Sri Aurobindo had all sorts of changes in his life. He went from being a penniless student in England, to a fiery revolutionary, to an editor and writer, to the head of an ashram. And those are just the outer changes—only a fraction of the inner ones have been documented. They would fill ten times the volumes already written.

The best advice that I got from the *Record of Yoga* sounds like a greeting card but is a reliable occult technique: listen to your highest voice. Not just any voice; the highest one. Sri Aurobindo listened to lots of voices. Not only voices, but writing, literally on the wall of his imagination, the inner wall of vision. And he had dozens of people giving him advice here in the default world.

What did he do with all those voices, that advice? He listened, and kept on asking “Which is the most true, the highest, the best?” I can’t think of a single better principle. Forget the ten commandments, or the Laws of Manu; don’t worry about being vegetarian or treading this or that noble numbered path. Just listen to your highest self.

Listening is a wonderful discipline. It is the key to understanding and learning from other people, and your inner Self. The minute you stop talking—maybe I should follow this advice and quit here!—you begin to hear, observe, learn. It cuts through selfishness, enlarges perspective, opens the heart, connects you to people. It’s the royal path to the soul, not to mention the key to all sorts of professions. Just listen.

It’s easy to see no farther than the tip of your nose. How to become Sri Aurobindo? In short, Don’t be narrow. (I wanted to say “Don’t be evil,” but that’s already taken by a corporation). If one thing characterizes him, it’s wideness. Read history, learn about other cultures, points of view, philosophies. The best way to see where you are is to step one level higher and look around. All the more important today when the future is expanding in front of us like a light cone, bringing unthought of possibilities in the realm of consciousness.

Go back, way back, to the oldest ideas

—mine the golden apples of the Veda—and go forward, explore the singularity, transhumanism, quantum matter. Don’t be narrow.

We adore Sri Aurobindo’s rationality, his penchant for paragraphs, chapters, whole books that can be parsed and visualized like geometrical structures. But he was a poet at heart, and loved the jolt of a metaphor, the heart-breaking joy of an image, the brain-splitting impossibility of a paradox. Develop the energy to find the divine right now, this second, he said; but also the patience to wait for eternity. Transform reason into ordered intuition. Transform the animal into the driver.

Transformation is a keynote in this yoga, but there’s a twist. It’s mainly top-down. Sri Aurobindo expended a lot of ink on this point: you can go far with the mind—but not all the way. To transform everything, reach above the mind and open up to that essential. Becoming Sri Aurobindo means cracking the ultimate problem: what is the most super-intelligent, super-conscious, super-powerful essence to the universe? Once you find it, become that. On the way there are lights and wideness and the touch of the divine. It won’t come free; we all have to pay our dues to mother nature.

So give yourself time. Have the patience of a rock, and the energy of a gazelle. The ferocity of a lion, the heart of a mother. Develop a mind of light, capable of piercing any darkness. Find the enthusiasm of a toddler on a summer morning, the calm of an ocean’s depths, the surrender of a napping kitten. It’s all there, an infinity of qualities, hiding in the secret unexpected corners of our being, waiting to come out and play. Invite the avatar for a cup of tea, and maybe he’ll camp out in the back room of your self. Then, when you wake up in the morning, who will be there? What have you become?

For man to become divine in consciousness and act and to live inwardly and outwardly the divine life is what is meant by spirituality; all lesser meanings given to the word are inadequate fumbings or impostures. —Sri Aurobindo

Land and spirit: An American yoga for the 21st Century

by John Robert Cornell

Continued from the last issue.

Appendix

Reclaiming the connection

*A cry came of the world’s delight to be,
The grandeur and greatness of its will to live,
Recall of the soul’s adventure into space,
A traveller through the magic centuries...*

Conscious intention

How do we reclaim the ancient connection between human sensibilities and the natural world when we direct so much effort to avoid the inconveniences of that connection and cede so many hours to worlds that are artificial, inane, even debased? How do we become willing, active participants in the evolutionary future?

First there has to be the intention, a conscious choice to give to the land our time, to immerse our children in its wonders and challenges while we can. We do not become conscious collaborators with that underlying Force without intention.

And we can make conscious what we already do. In America we still have the advantage of great swaths of countryside publicly set aside for our reinvigoration. We still have the trips to the country, the park, the seashore.

“The touch of Earth is always reinvigorating to the son of Earth, even when he seeks a supraphysical Knowledge,” says Sri Aurobindo.

We can walk. We can look. Consciously. If consciousness is the whole reason of terrestrial evolution, we can rejoin the efforts of the earth by bringing conscious intention into our reconnection with nature.



Photo courtesy John Robert Cornell.

There are a thousand ways to do it. In the future more people will seek the guidance of the ancient voices of the land. Meanwhile, walking and focusing are available to anyone in reasonably good health.

Drawing the land with breath

Here is a way of walking that reduces fatigue and disentangles from the hooks of the past, the worries of the future, and the lure of elsewhere. It promotes the reconnection we are after. After a while it turns into a habit of being present while walking. It is useful for hiking in the back country, but it works any time you go for a walk. And it's not difficult to learn.

Children can pick up this method quickly. I taught it to my nine-year-old daughter when we were climbing up Bright Angel trail from Indian Gardens in the Grand Canyon. She was out of breath, hot, and tired. The trail climbs relentlessly and we still had a long way to go. After she got the hang of the method, there was no more complaining. We shot up out of the canyon faster than

we had gone down. We passed everyone along the trail with nothing more than a steady pace.

The secret of this walking is a practical harmony among three elements: your breath, your pace, and the terrain. You find this harmony with a deliberate intention, the intention to take your time and to breathe consciously. The rest comes almost automatically.

Take your time.

If you are pressing to fit your walk into a tight schedule, this method does not work. Pressing ahead may be appropriate for the nine-to-five world, but here we are after something different. We want a wider, deeper consciousness than the flatland of our "normal" life. We want to open a passage to the inner being. We want to use intention to expand our time into three-dimensional harmony and presence rather than schedule and arrival during this walk.

So take the time to be present as you walk.

How?

Notice what is happening right now and adjust to it. Let's limit "the present" in this description to those three elements: breath, pace, and terrain. Everything else will follow naturally. You'll need the resources of your awareness focused on these elements rather than on the future or the past in order to enter this harmony.

As you start the walk, breathe consciously instead of automatically. Continue conscious breathing through the whole walk.

We want to remove control

of breath from the autonomic nervous system and give it over to conscious direction.

First, take deeper breaths than normal. Make them deeper and slower but still comfortable. This is more effective if you use your diaphragm as well as the muscles of your chest to draw in the breath. Push down the diaphragm to make your belly

expand with your chest when you inhale. Release diaphragm and belly when you exhale. Long, slow, steady breaths.

Try breathing in for three seconds and out for three seconds. If you don't need so much air, four seconds in and four out, stretching each breath over a longer time. Find an initial breath length that gives enough oxygen and settle into that breathing pattern as you walk until circumstances change.

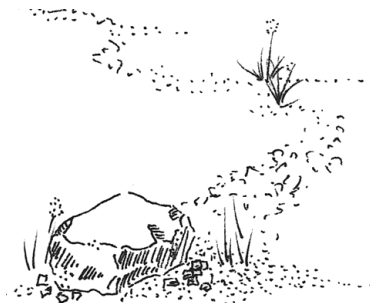
Next, extend your awareness into the details as much as necessary. Counting helps. Count the seconds on the in-breath: One, two, three. Lungs are full. Count on the out-breath: One, two, three. Breath is expelled. Counting helps maintain focus.

This breath is slower and smoother than ordinary, unattended breathing. This is a controlled, deliberate deeper breathing, without the slightest involuntary gasping for breath. When you climb a hill or incline, adjust the breath's speed and depth until you have a smooth, deep, comfortable inhalation and exhalation that take care of your oxygen needs without hyperventilating.

In the beginning you probably can't carry on a conversation with someone else while doing this. Conversation boomerangs you back to flatland and automatic breathing. Conscious intention slips away. But later, with practice, as the extended awareness promoted by this kind of walking becomes your new "normal," it's easier to maintain during a conversation.

When you pay attention to your breath like this, you will notice as soon as the first sign of breathlessness appears. Shortness of breath is the single most important clue in this practice, the signal of disharmony. As soon as you notice it, you can readjust your breath and your pace to the terrain. If you make that adjustment immediately, you can go on for miles, even climb out of the Grand Canyon. You become part of the trail instead of struggling with it.

This deeper breathing is the first stage of the method. Deeper breathing means more oxygen and more energy. Oxygen debt in the muscles—insufficient oxygen for the amount of exercise—leads to





shortness of breath and fatigue. As long as comfortable deep breathing can supply the oxygen you need for the terrain, you will not get short of breath nor tire quickly. If you are healthy, you can walk for a long distance this way.

When the terrain gets steeper, you may start to get out of breath even with this regular deep breathing that works on level ground. Shortness of breath is always the clue: Time to make an adjustment.

You have two main adjustments at your command: the amount of air you inhale and your pace. When you reach the edge of the first dimension, your breathing comfort, adjust the second dimension, the speed of your walk. As the terrain gets steeper or more difficult, slow down your walking pace. Reduce the amount of exertion, the speed, until your lungs can provide enough oxygen for your pace without breathlessness, while staying within your comfort range of breathing.

Here is a summary so far: Tune the depth of your breath and the amount of exertion to the terrain. The steeper the terrain, the deeper the breathing and the slower the pace. The easier the terrain, the shallower you can breathe and the faster you can walk without fatigue. Consciously control the depth of your breath all the way. The slightest hint of breathlessness is the clue that your awareness abandoned your breath and that you need to make an adjustment to your breath or your pace.

By tuning your body to the terrain like this, you are already more in harmony with the land that you are crossing. You are reflecting its ups and downs in your breath and your stride. You are its mirror. Like an artist, you consciously trace its contours with the instruments of your body.

It may seem like paying attention to breath and pace like this would automatically divert your attention from the details of the terrain. In fact the opposite is true. When you don't reflect the terrain consciously with your physical instruments, you will find that you are not really present. You are goal tending, trying to get it over with, trying to get somewhere by a certain time, trying to keep up with a group, mentally competing with yourself

or someone else, or some other form of absence from the present moment and the present scene. On difficult terrain you will soon find yourself short of breath.

To maintain the growing contact with the terrain, you have to find your own pace, your individual relationship to your breath and your earth. Keeping up with someone else's pace or even subtly competing won't work. Returning to the practice will. Just re-tune your breath and pace to the lay of the land. This is a solitary practice at first. It does not work well in company unless everyone is on board.

The last element of this method is an extension of the other two: harmonizing your breath and your stride with each other. It's simple, and it may happen naturally, without thought or effort:

Use your stride to time your breathing.

Coordinate your pace and your breath so that your steps become the metronome for your breathing. They count your in-breaths and out-breaths. For example, on flat terrain, you might take four steps per in-breath and the same number of steps per out-breath. As you begin to climb a gradual slope, your breath becomes deeper and your pace slower, but you are still taking the same number of steps per breath. When these adjustments are no longer sufficient to prevent you from starting to gasp, reduce the number of steps per in-breath from four to three or two. Make the minimum adjustment necessary to maintain comfortable deep breathing without breathlessness.

How fast you go doesn't matter, except as a reflection of the terrain. At the extreme on very steep ground, you may be taking only one full deep breath, in-hale and exhale, for a slow single step. This does not mean taking a step and then breathing in and out. Your stride continues without pause, but in this example it

is very, very slow. It is slow motion but continuous, stride and breath still mirroring each other and the terrain.

Using this method, you pay enough attention to your body and its oxygen needs so that you don't ever get out of breath.

Before long this form of breathing and attunement becomes a walking meditation. A subtle connection develops between the inside and the outside. You begin to feel that you are floating up a trail that before appeared daunting.

Practiced faithfully, after a while it becomes an enjoyable habit. And then more than enjoyable: Automatically you slip into a soft-eyed state of awareness. Background lighting and colors along the path come to the forefront of your consciousness. You are more present to your feelings about

the surroundings. You are more open to the sense of beauty, awe and wonder. The hard-edged separation between you and the land blurs. You are more present to the visitation of grace. The boundaries of your surface being thin. Cracks appear. Passages and contacts open to your inner being, a larger truer you, inherently more connected to everything around you.

You come home—right here where you are walking.

Here is a summary of the method:

- Hand over control of the breath to conscious intention.
- Deliberately lengthen and deepen the breath, keeping it always within the range of comfort.
- Synchronize the depth of your breath with the steepness of the terrain.
- Synchronize your pace with the steepness of the terrain.
- Synchronize your pace with your breath.
- Shortness of breath is the clue to make an adjustment.





The benefits for coming into the present are many. You open a passage to your inner being and reconnect more deeply to your surroundings. Here is an example:

Karen and I are headed to Columbia Rock and beyond on Upper Yosemite Falls trail.

Leaving the tram stop at noon, soon we are 300 feet above the valley floor.

Now at a shady spot of granite surrounded by oak and a little bay laurel, I wait for Karen to catch up. South, across the valley below, Glacier Point, Cathedral Rocks, and a falls west of Cathedral Rocks catch the eye. Below and across the valley, the road follows a bend in the Merced River. The river gleams green and gold. Nice breeze. I drink half of my quart of water.

We reach Columbia Rock but Karen is not feeling well, so we hike back down to the tram stop at Lower Yosemite Falls trailhead.

She takes the tram back to camp. I refill my water bottle and set out again at 2:30, hoping to reach the base of the upper falls.

The trail follows the north edge of the valley floor between the parking lot and Sunnyside Campground.

After Sunnyside I start back up the switchbacks. A blond girl with cautious eyes passes. Then two young teens coming down. "How far to the bottom?" the freckle-face boy wants to know.

"You're almost there."

When I see his disbelieving look, "About a minute to go."

This lower trail is through a low, gold-cup oak and bay laurel forest with warm brown leaves on granite and sand. Dappled light filters through branches and leaves. Having already climbed a thousand feet with Karen a little while ago, still I am floating back up this trail doing the breathing practice. It gets everything inside into rhythm with my stride. I am just floating. The climbing is effortless as water sliding down a smooth stream bed, but I am going up instead of down.

Everything is in harmony. I could go on like this right up into the air. Then again, maybe I'd better bring it down into my body. No aches, even my body

is flowing up on the breaths. The heightened consciousness turns on or becomes available. The center of awareness seems to be in the air above my body; it is like a dream of flying. Nothing but the intention to move forward is necessary. There is a deep, satisfying fullness. It's not an exhilaration, not an explosion. It's very smooth and fluid.

Am I just out of my body? I wonder. But the body is participating in the fluidity. There is no pain anywhere. The main disturbances are other people. Their passing interrupts the rhythm of the breathing and walking. I don't notice anyone else in this state.

It's very quiet, satisfied, complete. Very little thought. Just a rich seeing, and a feeling of being spread out in the forest, especially in the light and the air.

"You're going up again?" It's the young man and woman who were at Columbia Rock when we were there earlier. They were going on up toward the upper falls when we started back down.

"How far up did you go? Was it beautiful?" I turn to look at her pretty face. Long auburn hair.

He offers a friendly smile.

The trail dashes across a bleached granite rockfall of broken, chalk-white boulders sprinkled with black freckles. Cool breeze. I feel content.

The last fifty yards to Columbia Rock ascend a fine, golden gravel in the sun. No trees, no dappled light. The gravel slides back down with every step. This last pull is beginning to grate. I am straining to get there, losing my grip on the here. By 3:40 I make Columbia again, drenched with sweat and half out of the rhythm.

A few scrub oaks shade my tote stool and snack just behind Columbia Rock. A crested jay hops down to join me for lunch. Closest look I've ever had at one of these energetic birds. Streaks of blue line his black crest in front. He tries everything he can think of to coax a handout: dropping to the rock on the ground three feet away, cocking his head, flitting his wings prettily, flying across in front of my nose no more than a foot and a half away: "I'm here! I'm ready now! Don't you see me?"

Nothing works. Finally he jumps down to the rock. He draws up his feathers and delivers a loud, sustained squawk, thrashing his wings in displeasure. Then he flies off with another jay.

The show and rest over, I am ready to continue climbing.

I never fully regain the smoothness on the way up from Columbia to the upper falls. I start to think about the time and when to return. Even done without total attention, the breathing helps negotiate the rest of the climb.

The trail switchbacks steeply up through more backsliding gravel that the park service has reinforced with metal fencing and rocks, but I never get out of breath. Then the path flattens out into another oak forest and around the bend of the cliff into a notch that still hides the falls from view. Flowers appear along the side: white monkeyflower, paintbrush, stonecrop. A tiny stream slides down a big boulder just above the trail on my left. Lots of people are returning from points above. A woman with an English accent nicely understates the spectacle ahead. Half Dome looms off to the right.

Then there it is. The fall hurtles over the brink far overhead in a tight white rope. It hits a ledge 100 feet from the top and explodes out and down the cliff face. The diving veil of water plays with the wind and with lips and ledges along the descending cliff. Narrow at the top, the falls ends generously, half as wide at the bottom as it is high. Multiple miniature falls spring from the ledges like magic and then disappear again. Mostly the falls is flying mist, diving in slow motion, spread out in surrender to clean air, buoyed by it momentarily, with spears and comets of spray shooting by in abandon. The wind catches the diving mist and blows it to the side like ethereal tresses. At the base of the fall, spray rolls and curls like Halloween fog, or like a low cloud driven dancing and changing across the mountains by the wind. Multiple white streams at the bottom direct boiling water back to the middle of the dropping valley and down to the lower falls. One lone fir, windblown and straggly, stands witness to the spectacle.



One could sit here for hours without seeing the same pattern repeat, but the air is cool and the sun obscured by a large gray cloud. It's getting late. I'm tired. Time to start back down.

More people on the way back, mostly hurrying up the trail as I return to the easy rhythm of breath and stride. One radiant smile from a young beauty who looks to be from south India. No problem with my knees. Back to the tram stop, my shirt soaked, even the map in my pocket is wet, yet something inside my chest is full and satisfied.

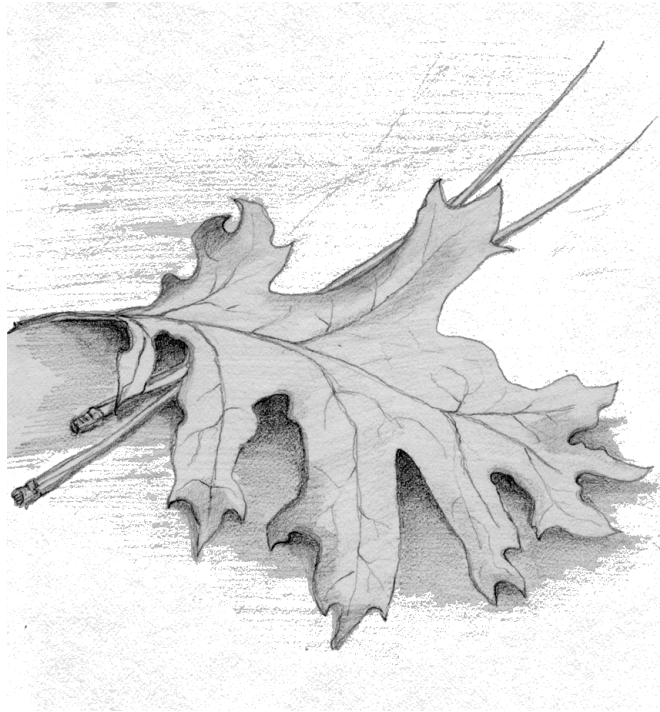
The question

Chapters two and three mention the question, another way to intensify consciousness. Not really a method, the question is more a simple response of my denseness to promising surroundings or to a sudden remembering anywhere: I'm back in flatland. I'm traveling blind here. Where are You? I don't see You.

So the question is a call, a request for the divine, the sacred presence to reveal herself. I say "herself," but could just as easily say "Himself" or "itself" or "That," since there is no question of gender here. We use human language to call something beyond the limitations of language and biology.

One tries to abolish any limiting conditions from the request. This is not magic; there is no command here. It's a request to the Beloved, or whatever relationship one has with that greater Force and Consciousness, to show Yourself. It implicitly acknowledges how hard it is to see beyond the flatness of the ego to the larger truth.

The question rests on experience and faith. Experiences anchor faith, experiences of sensing Something More than appearance, about to break through the thin veneer of the surface self or actually erupting through it into awareness. Faith sustains us through periods when we are stuck in flatland, faith that those remem-



bered eruptions are glints of the abiding mystery of the world and the Maker rather than self delusion or some incomprehensible anomaly.

Asking the question implies a willingness to listen for the answer. If I am not going to listen for the answer, the question is nonsensical or insincere. And I have to be ready to receive whatever form of answer comes. The reply may not be a proclamation in sonorous English. It may not be in language at all or even in the form of an idea. Everything, every part of the being has to open its eyes to look for the reply. But the response won't be a trick. It will be something beneficial and perhaps instructional.

The question somehow draws consciousness back inside from where it normally sits outside: Pushed out in front of me or into the thought world, my ego awareness objectifies everything, hardens lines and separates, maintains safe existential distance and boundaries between everything else and me.

The question reverses the direction. It draws awareness back inside and close around the body, sometimes right above it. There is a three-dimensionality about this

awareness. Peripheral sense—peripheral vision, for example—becomes more important than a narrow exclusive focus. Awareness becomes a broad field alert for a reply instead of a thought trapped in object or sense.

When we become aware of this surrounding, penetrating, and containing awareness field, we may notice two things about it. It contains everything; this is the beginning of unity. This is Richard Nelson's "same fixed gaze that contains us." And it is awake! The field has a consciousness, and it is recognizably distinct from the ego consciousness.

This surrounding, penetrating, and containing awareness field has the potential to become the new... thing. The new actor. The new presence in the scene.

The new, truer existent. Formerly "me/ego" occupied that central place. Everything orbited around the me-sun. When we allow control and centrality to slip over to this larger consciousness, "me" may still be there but it is no longer absolute lord. We discover that it is not running the show. It's one of the contents of the field of consciousness.

So the question operates like the poetry discussed in chapter four. It probes the fault-lines in the veneer of surface consciousness looking for the trapdoor to this containing consciousness larger than "me." Sometimes it carries one through to the other side. Then it's an open sesame. The door yields, consciousness shifts, and one is standing in another reality, watching the star-charts inside the stone or looking at the starry night inside baby Krishna's mouth.





Source Material

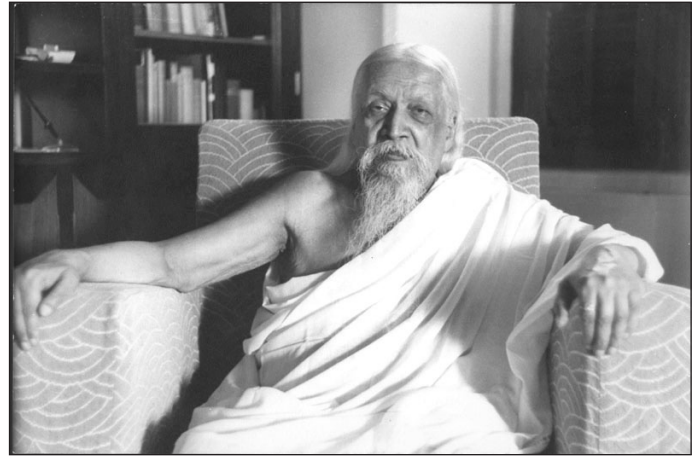
Mind of Light

by Sri Aurobindo

The following selections are from the Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo, Vol. 13 (Essays in Philosophy and Yoga), Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1998.

A new humanity means for us the appearance, the development of a type or race of mental beings whose principle of mentality would be no longer a mind in the Ignorance seeking for knowledge but even in its knowledge bound to the Ignorance, a seeker after Light but not its natural possessor, open to the Light but not an inhabitant of the Light, not yet a perfected instrument, truth-conscious and delivered out of the Ignorance. Instead, it would be possessed already of what could be called a mind of Light, a mind capable of living in the truth, capable of being truth-conscious and manifesting in its life a direct in place of an indirect knowledge. Its mentality would be an instrument of the Light and no longer of the Ignorance. At its highest it would be capable of passing into the supermind and from the new race would be recruited the race of supramental beings who would appear as the leaders of the evolution in earth-nature. Even, the highest manifestations of a mind of Light would be an instrumentality of the supermind, a part of it or a projection from it, a stepping beyond humanity into the superhumanity of the supramental principle. Above all, its possession would enable the human being to rise beyond the normalities of his present thinking, feeling and being into those highest powers of the mind in its self-exceedings which intervene between our mentality and supermind and can be regarded as steps leading towards the greater and more luminous principle. This advance like others in the evolution might not be reached and would naturally not be reached at one bound, but from the very beginning it would be inevitable: the pressure of the supermind creating from above out of itself the mind of Light would compel this certainty of the eventual outcome. The first gleamings of the new Light would carry in themselves the seed of its highest flamings; even in the first beginnings, the certainty of their topmost powers would be there; for this is the constant story of each evolutionary emergence: the principle of its highest perfection lies concealed in the involution which precedes and necessitates the evolution of the secret principle.

For throughout the story of evolution there are two complementary aspects which constitute its action and are necessary to its totality; there is hidden in the involution of Nature the secret power and principle of being which lies concealed under the veil cast on it by material Nature and there is carried in that Nature itself the inevitable force of the principle compelling the process of emergence of its inherent powers and characters, the essential features which constitute its reality. As the evolutionary principle



emerges, there are also two constant features of the process of the emergence: there are the gradations by which it climbs out of the involution and manifests more and more of its power, its possibilities, the force of the Godhead within it, and there is a constant manifestation of all types and forms of its being which are the visible, indicative and efficient embodiments of its essential nature. There appear in the evolutionary process organised forms and activities of Matter, the types of life and the living beings, the types of mind and the thinking beings, the luminosities and greatnesses of the spiritual principle and the spiritual beings whose nature, character, personality, mark the stages of the ascent towards the highest heights of the evolution and the ultimate largest manifestation of what it is in itself and must become by the force of time and the all revealing Spirit. This is the real sense and drive of what we see as evolution: the multiplication and variation of forms is only the means of its process. Each gradation contains the possibility and the certainty of the grades beyond it: the emergence of more and more developed forms and powers points to more perfected forms and greater powers beyond them, and each emergence of consciousness and the conscious beings proper to it enables the rise to a greater consciousness beyond and the greater order of beings up to the ultimate godheads of which Nature is striving and is destined to show herself capable. Matter developed its organised forms until it became capable of embodying living organisms; then life rose from the subconsciousness of the plant into conscious animal formations and through them to the thinking life of man. Mind founded in life developed intellect, developed its types of knowledge and ignorance, truth and error till it reached the spiritual perception and illumination and now can see as in a glass dimly the possibility of supermind and a truth conscious existence. In this inevitable ascent the mind of Light is a gradation, an inevitable stage. As an evolving principle it will mark a stage in the human ascent and evolve a new type of human being; this development must carry in it an ascending gradation of its own powers and types of an ascending humanity which will embody more and more the turn towards spirituality, capacity for Light, a climb towards a divinised manhood and the divine life.



In the birth of the mind of Light and its ascension into its own recognisable self and its true status and right province there must be, in the very nature of things as they are and very nature of the evolutionary process as it is at present, two stages. In the first, we can see the mind of Light gathering itself out of the Ignorance, assembling its constituent elements, building up its shapes and types, however imperfect at first, and pushing them towards perfection till it can cross the border of the Ignorance and appear in the Light, in its own Light. In the second stage we can see it developing itself in that greater natural light, taking its higher shapes and forms till it joins the supermind and lives as its subordinate portion or its delegate. In each of these stages it will define its own grades and manifest the order of its beings who will embody it and give to it a realised life. Thus there will be built up, first, even in the Ignorance itself, the possibility of a human ascent towards a divine living; then there will be, by the illumination of this mind of Light in the greater realisation of what may be called a gnostic mentality, in a transformation of the human being, even before the supermind is reached, even in the earth-consciousness and in a humanity transformed, an illumined divine life.

Supermind and Mind of Light

The essential character of Supermind is a Truth-consciousness which knows by its own inherent right of nature, by its own light: it has not to arrive at knowledge but possesses it. It may indeed, especially in its evolutionary action, keep knowledge behind its apparent consciousness and bring it forward as if from behind the veil; but even then this veil is only an appearance and does not really exist: the knowledge was always there, the consciousness its possessor and present revealer. This too is only in the evolutionary play and on the supramental plane itself the consciousness lives always in an immediacy of knowledge and acts by a direct immediacy of knowledge. In Mind as we see it here the action is very different; it starts from an apparent absence of knowledge, a seeming ignorance or nescience, even, in material Nature, from an inconscience in which any kind of knowing does not seem at all to exist. It reaches knowledge or the action of knowledge by steps which are not at all immediate but rather knowledge at first seems utterly impossible and foreign to the very substance of this Matter. Yet, in the blindness of Matter itself there are signs of a concealed consciousness which in its hidden fundamental being sees and has the power to act according to its vision and even by an infallible immediacy which is inherent in its nature. This is the same Truth that is apparent in Supermind but is here involved and seems not to be. The Mind of Light is a subordinate action of Supermind, dependent upon it even when not apparently springing direct from it, in which the secret of this connection becomes evident and palpable.

The Truth-consciousness is not only a power of knowledge; it is a being of consciousness and knowledge, a luminous many-sided dynamis and play of the omniscient Spirit; in it there can be

a spiritual feeling, a spiritual sensation, a spiritual essentiality of substance that knows and reveals, that acts and manifests in an omniscience which is one with omnipotence. In Mind this Truth-consciousness and these workings of the Truth-consciousness can be there and even though it limits itself in Mind and has a subordinate or an indirect working, its action can be essentially the same. There can even be a hidden immediacy which hints at the presence of something absolute and is evidence of the same omnipotence and omniscience. In the Mind of Light when it becomes full-orbed this character of the Truth reveals itself, though in a garb that is transparent even when it seems to cover: for this too is a truth-consciousness and a self-power of knowledge. This too proceeds from the Supermind and depends upon it even though it is limited and subordinate. What we have called specifically the Mind of Light is indeed the last of a series of descending planes of consciousness in which the Supermind veils itself by a self-chosen limitation or modification of its self-manifesting activities, but its essential character remains the same: there is in it an action of light, of truth, of knowledge in which inconscience, ignorance and error claim no place. It proceeds from knowledge to knowledge; we have not yet crossed over the borders of the truth-conscious into ignorance. The methods also are those of a self-luminous knowing and seeing and feeling and a self-fulfilling action within its own borders; there is no need to seek for something missing, no fumbling, no hesitation: all is still agnostic action of agnostic power and principle. There has been a descent from full Supermind into Mind, but this Mind though a self-limited is not yet an agnostic consciousness unsure of itself or unsure of its workings; there is still a comprehending or an apprehending consciousness which goes straight to its object and does not miss its mark or have to hunt for it in the dark or in insufficient light: it sees, knows, puts its hand immediately on things of self and things of Nature. We have passed into Mind but Mind has still not broken its inherent connection with the supramental principle.

Still there is an increasing self-limitation which begins even with Overmind: Overmind is separated by only a luminous border from the full light and power of the supramental Truth and it still commands direct access to all that Supermind can give it. There is a further limitation or change of characteristic action at each step downwards from Overmind to Intuition, from Intuition to Illumined Mind, from Illumined Mind to what I have called the Higher Mind: the Mind of Light is a transitional passage by which we can pass from supermind and superhumanity to an illumined humanity. For the new humanity will be capable of at least a partly divinised way of seeing and living because it will live in the light and in knowledge and not in the obscurity of the Ignorance.

As soon as Sri Aurobindo withdrew from his body, what he has called the Mind of Light got realised in me.

—The Mother (CWM, Vol. 13, p. 63)



The superman consciousness

by the Mother

On the 1st [January 1st, 1969], something really strange took place And I wasn't the only one to feel it, a few people felt it too. It began just after midnight, but I felt it at 2, and others at 4 in the morning. It was ... I told you a few words about it last time, but the surprising thing is that it didn't correspond to anything I expected (I didn't expect anything), or to any of the things I had felt. It was something very material, I mean it was very external—very outward—and luminous, with a golden light. It was very strong, powerful. But its character was a smiling benevolence, a peaceful joy, and a sort of blossoming in the joy and the light. And it was like a “happy new year,” like a wish. I must say it took me by surprise.

It lasted—I felt it for at least three hours. Afterwards, I stopped concerning myself with it, I don't know what happened. But I told you a few words about it, and I spoke to two or three others: they had all felt it. Which means it was VERY material. They had all felt a sort of joy like that, but an amiable, powerful joy, and ... oh, so sweet, very smiling, VERY BENEVOLENT ... something ... I don't know what it is. I don't know what it is, but it's a kind of benevolence; so it was something very close to the human. And so concrete! So concrete. As if it had a taste, so concrete was it. Afterwards, I didn't concern myself with it anymore, except that I told two or three people about it: they had all felt it. Now, I don't know whether it has mingled or ... It hasn't gone, it doesn't give the feeling of something that comes only to go away.

It was far more external than the things I usually feel, far more external Hardly mental at all, I mean there was no sense of a “promise” or ... No. It would rather be like ... My own impression was that of an immense personality, immense (meaning that for it, the earth was small, like this [Mother holds a small object in the hollow of her hands], like a ball), an immense personality, so very benevolent, and coming to ... (Mother seems to gently raise the little ball in the hollow of her hands). It was the impression of a personal god (yet it was ... I don't know) who comes to help. So very strong! And so sweet at the same time, so understanding.

And it was very external: the body felt it everywhere, everywhere (Mother touches her face, her hands), all over like this.

What has become of it? I don't know.

It was the start of the year. As if someone on the scale of a god (someone, that is) had come to say “Happy new year,” with all the power to make it a happy year. It was like that.

But what was it? ...

So concrete ...

I don't know.

Is it ... is it the personality (because it didn't have any form, I didn't see any form, there was only what it brought along [Mother feels the atmosphere with her fingers], sensation and feeling, these two things—sensation and feeling), I wondered if it wasn't



the supramental personality ... which will, then, manifest later in material forms?

Since then, the body—this body—has been feeling (it has been permeated by that everywhere, a lot), it has been feeling much more joyful and less concentrated, living more in a happy, smiling expansion. For instance, it speaks more easily. There's a note ... a constant note of benevolence. A smile, you know, a benevolent smile, and all that with a GREAT FORCE I don't know...

It was luminous, smiling, and so benevolent because of its POWER: I mean that generally, benevolence in the human being is something slightly weak, in the sense that it doesn't like battle, it doesn't like struggle – but this wasn't like that at all! A benevolence that imposes itself (Mother brings her two fists down on the armrests of her chair).

It interested me because it was entirely new. And so concrete! Concrete like this (Mother touches the arms of her chair), like what the physical consciousness usually regards as “others,” as concrete as that. Which means it didn't come through some inner being, through the psychic being: it came DIRECTLY onto the body.

What is it? ... Yes, it may be that The body's feeling since that took place has been a sort of certitude; a certitude as if now it no longer were in an anxiety or uncertainty to know. “What will it be? What will this Supramental PHYSICALLY be like?” the body used to wonder. “What will it be like physically?” Now, it no longer thinks about it, it's happy.

Very well.

Is it something that's going to permeate the bodies that are ready?

Yes ... I think so, yes. I feel it's the formation that's going to permeate and express itself—permeate and express itself – in the bodies ... which will be the bodies of the Supramental.

Or maybe ... maybe the superman? I don't know. The intermediary between the two. Maybe the superman: it was very human, but a human of divine proportions, you understand.

A human without weaknesses and shadows: it was all luminous—all light and smile and ... sweetness at the same time.

Yes, maybe the superman.

(*Mother's Agenda*, January 4, 1969, Vol. 10, pp. 4-5)



* * *

It was on the 1st of January after midnight. I woke up at 2 in the morning, surrounded by a consciousness, but so concrete, and NEW, in the sense that I had never experienced that. It lasted, quite concrete and present, for two or three hours, and then it spread out and went to find all those who could receive it. And at the same time I knew it was the consciousness of the superman, that is, the intermediary between man and the supramental being.

It has given the body a sort of assurance, a sort of trust. That experience has made it steady, as it were, and if it keeps the true attitude, all the support is there to help it.

(*Mother's Agenda*, January 8, 1969, Vol. 10, pp. 9-10)

* * *

There is in it a consciousness (something VERY precious) that gives lessons to the body, teaches it what it has to do, that is, the attitude it should have, the reaction it should have I had already told you a few times how difficult it is to find the procedure of the transformation when there's no one to give you indications; and it's the response, as it were: "he" comes and tells the body, "Have this attitude, do this, do that in that way." So then the body is happy, it's quite reassured, it can't make a mistake anymore.

Very interesting.

It has come like a "mentor"—and PRACTICAL, wholly practical: "This is to be rejected; this is to be accepted; this is to be generalized; this for all inner movements. And it even becomes very material, in the sense that with certain vibrations, it says, "This is to be encouraged"; with others, "This is to be channeled"; with yet others, "This is to be got rid of" Small indications of that sort.

(*Mother's Agenda*, January 18, 1969, Vol. 10, pp. 12-13)

* * *

Just one thing, this atmosphere, this [superman] Consciousness is very active, and active like a mentor, as I already told you. And it's going on. One of these last few mornings, for a few hours early in the morning, it was ... Never, never had the body been so happy! It was the complete Presence, absolute freedom, and a certitude: these cells, other cells (gesture here and there showing other bodies), it didn't matter, it was life everywhere, consciousness everywhere.

Absolutely wonderful.

It came effortlessly, and it left simply because ... I was too busy. It doesn't come at will—what comes at will is what we might call a "copy": it looks like it, but it's not THE Thing. The Thing ... There is something wholly independent of our aspiration, our will, our effort ... wholly independent. And this something appears to be absolutely all-powerful, in the sense that none of the body's difficulties exists. At such times, everything disappears. Aspiration, concentration, effort ... no use at all. And it's the DIVINE SENSE, you understand, that's what having the divine sense

means. During these few hours (three or four hours), I understood in an absolute way what having the divine consciousness in the body means. And then, this body, that body, that other body ... (gesture here and there, all around Mother), it doesn't matter: it moved about from one body to another, quite free and independent, aware of the limitations or the possibilities of each body—absolutely wonderful, I had never, ever had this experience before. Absolutely wonderful. It left because I was so busy that ... and it didn't leave because it had just come to show "how it is"—that's not it: it's because life and the organization of life (gesture like a truckload being dumped) engulf you.

I know it's there (gesture in the background), I know it is, but ... But that's a transformation as I understand it! And clearly, in people it could express itself—not something vague, clearly—in this man, in that woman, in ... (same gesture here and there), quite clearly. And with a Smile! ...

The cells themselves were saying their effort to be transformed, and there was a Calm (How can I explain this? ...) The body was saying its aspiration and will to prepare itself, and, not asking but striving to be what it should be; all that always with this question (it's not the body that asks it, it's ... the environment, those around—the world, as if the world were asking the question): "Will it continue, or will it have to dissolve? ..." The body is like this (gesture of abandon, hands open upward), it says, "What You will, Lord." But then, it knows the question is decided, and One doesn't want to tell it—it accepts. It doesn't lose patience, it accepts, it says, "Very well, it will be as You will." But That which knows and That which doesn't answer is ... something that can't be expressed. It is ... yes, I think the only word that can describe the sensation it gives is "an Absolute"—an Absolute. Absolute. That's the sensation: of being in the presence of the Absolute. The Absolute: absolute Knowledge, absolute Will, absolute Power ... Nothing, nothing can resist. And then this Absolute (there's this sensation, concrete) is so merciful! But if we compare it with all that we regard as goodness, mercy ... ugh! that's nothing at all. It's THE Mercy with the absolute power and ... it's not Wisdom, not Knowledge, it's ... It has nothing to do with our process. And That is everywhere, it's everywhere. It's the body's experience. And to That it has given itself entirely, totally, without asking anything—anything. A single aspiration (same gesture, hands open upward), "To be capable of being That, what That wills, of serving That"—not even "serving," of BEING That.

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

So there.

Apart from that, all the rest is as usual.

(*Mother's Agenda*, February 15, 1969, Vol. 10, pp. 63-65)



Poetry room

Hell and heaven

In the silence of the night-time,
In the grey and formless eve,
When the thought is plagued with loveless
Memories that it cannot leave,

When the dawn makes sudden beauty
Of a peevish clouded sky,
And the rain is sobbing slowly
And the wind makes weird reply,

Always comes her face before me
And her voice is in my ear,
Beautiful and sad and cruel
With the azure eyes austere.

Cloudy figure once so luminous
With the light and life within
When the soul came rippling outwards
And the red lips laughed at sin!

Com'st thou with that marble visage
From what world instinct with pain
Where we pay the price of passion
By a law our hearts disdain?

Cast it from thee, O thou goddess!
Earning with a smile release
From these sad imaginations,
Rise into celestial peace.

Travel from the loveless places
That our mortal fears create,
Where thy natural heavens claim thee
And the Gods, thy brothers, wait.

Then descend to me grown radiant,
Lighting up terrestrial ground
With the feet that brighten heaven
When the mighty dance goes round

And the high Gods beating measure
Tread the maze that keeps the stars
Circling in their luminous orbits
Through the eternal thoroughfares.

All below is but confusion
Of desires that strive and cry,

Some forbidden, some achieving
Anguish after ecstasy.

But above our radiant station
Is from which by doubt we fell,
Reaching only after Heaven
And achieving only Hell.

Let the heart be king and master,
Let the brain exult and toil;
Disbelieve in good and evil,
God with Nature reconcile.

Therefore, O rebellious sweetness,
Thou tookst arms for joy and love.
There achieve them! Take possession
Of our radiant seats above.

—Sri Aurobindo

The silver call

There is a godhead of unrealised things
To which Time's splendid gains are hoarded dross;
A cry seems near, a rustle of silver wings
Calling to heavenly joy by earthly loss.

All eye has seen and all the ear has heard
Is a pale illusion by some greater voice
And mightier vision; no sweet sound or word,
No passion of hues that make the heart rejoice

Can equal those diviner ecstasies.
A Mind beyond our mind has sole the ken
Of those yet unimagined harmonies,
The fate and privilege of unborn men.

As rain-thrashed mire the marvel of the rose,
Earth waits that distant marvel to disclose.

—Sri Aurobindo

The call of the impossible

A godhead moves us to unrealised things.
Asleep in the wide folds of destiny,
A world guarded by Silence' rustling wings
Shelters their fine impossibility:

But parting quiver the caerulean gates;
Strange splendours look into our dreaming eyes;
We bear proud deities and magnificent fates;
Faces and hands come near from Paradise.



What shines above, waits darkling here in us:
Bliss unattained our future's birthright is,
Beauty of our dim souls grows amorous,
We are the heirs of infinite widenesses.
The impossible is our mask of things to be,
Mortal the door to immortality.

—Sri Aurobindo

Untitled

In vastitude of the unhorizoned soul
Reigns a supreme concordance ecstasy
And from Time's clutches free, eternal, whole,
Reflects the many-hued sky-Mystery.

Figures of infinite beauty laugh like Dawn,
Shadows of earth recede far, far away;
Thoughts cease and, motionless, a silent lone
Majesty holds unconquerable sway.

In constant flux, a timeless mystic Bride,
Queen of the seas girdled with emerald waves,
She casts her might of heaven-begotten pride
Upon the seeking heart's dun prison-caves.

A song of rapture and release she brings
With the large fire-sweep of her lightning wings.

—Nirodbaran
(with Sri Aurobindo's corrections)

Untitled

Cast on the shore of life, a broken reed,
My barren days passed by on the waste sand;
But now from my long travail I am freed
And near me looms the pilgrim's mystic land.

With all the wonders carved in a lustrous Face
And incense-fire filling the emptiness
With a sweet fragrance, and the slumbering ways
Awakened to a sight of shadowless

Ocean-immensities leaning with the power
Of an immortal beauty, over earth:
Time's distant carol rings the natal hour
Of the gold Sun's descent to mortal birth.

Night's crowded miseries before him die
Slain by a vast ray and a Spirit-cry.

—Nirodbaran
(with Sri Aurobindo's corrections)

Bouleversé

In summer heat
Here I sit
On the flat earth
Under an uncoloured bowl of sky

And suddenly...

You know those toys?—
A tiny landscape:
house
tree
dog
child
in a glass ball—
You tip the ball
and suddenly it's snowing.

It's like that.

But imagine instead
an elephant
a shrine
a boy up a palm-tree
a strip of sand
a strip of sea...

It's like that:

In tropical July
someone has given the bowl a shake
and suddenly snow is falling.

White flakes everywhere,
silent feathers falling,
coolly drifting down and around,
swirling a little,
twirling like dancers at a ball.

As the flakes fall
they melt through my skin
and keep on falling
filling the hollows around the heart
soothing sharp edges
coolly smoothing
a thick white blanket of silence everywhere.

It's like that.

In summer heat
someone has shaken the sphere I sit in
and suddenly it's snowing.

—Shraddhavan



Man the thinking animal

A trifling unit in a boundless plan
Amidst the enormous insignificance
Of the unpeopled cosmos' fire-whirl dance,
Earth, as if by accident, engendered man

A creature of his own grey ignorance,
A mind half-shadow and half gleam, a breath
That wrestles, captive in a world of death,
To live some lame brief years. Yet his advance

Attempt of a divinity within,
A consciousness in the inconscient Night,
To realise its own supernal Light
Confronts the ruthless forces of the Unseen.

Aspiring to godhead from insensible clay
He travels slow-footed towards the eternal day.

—Arthur Fielder

A leaf lies motionless

A leaf lies motionless, fallen from a tree,
barely touching earth's warm-red bosom.
Its parched greenless cells yearn in flames of prayer
to rediscover a newer tomorrow.
Its dying veins still alive in woody fragrances,
invisible Breath swinging to spirit silence,
watching shadows in hushed quietude.
And straining to give voice to a song that sings
of a whirlpool of dreams longing to break free,
back to the green and gold of an ever-green tree
swaying under brooding skies of undying love.

Waves of gold from worlds afar
in streaming laughter come pouring down,
quenching with colour every pore that thirsts
and flowing warmth into its lonely skin.
And from the core of this new substance light,
a voice floats in remembering a tender song
that soothes the soul with a hope beyond.

O soul, cleave not to the clinging past,
redolent with memories of flower and spring.
Let go as the waters embrace you whole,
intact the memory of your path ahead,
offer yourself up to the flow of Time,
trusting That which survives death and decay,
ceaselessly preparing this
silent renewal.

—Gopika Dahanukar

The Quest

Forever tortures me this Quest.
I indulge in follies just to forget it
And circle around and make detours
Just to confuse it.
But shadow-like it dogs my steps.
Like natal pains it cannot be stopped.
It throws doubts on my gains
And ruthlessly shreds my fame.
In my most noble-seeming acts
It mocks me with my selfish ends.
"Only thy own self it will liberate."
Saying thus even my renunciation it deprecates.
High and low, all in me reflects the ego's face.
I too burn in the white flame of this Quest
For the selfless Self.

—Shyam Kumari

Unbounded

Tease me not thus, O transient Time,
Rob me not thus, O confining Space,
For the span of one tiny life.
Too many are Her attractions
And Her marvels are too great.
O pray, stay back the sun,
For I am not yet done
With the enchantment of Her eyes.
O encircle for a little while
The mysterious shape of night;
Behind the façade of dawn
Let not the shy moon hide.
For I have not yet raised
The beguiling veil off Her face.
Duped by my fleeting days
And the insufficiencies of fugitive nights
My unfulfilled yearnings strain
Against earth's bounded space and time.
O weave eternities in my moments,
My bounded steps with infinities impale.
No more the fluttering moth-wings,
No more this tragic change of robe.
Let me nestle at last in Her beauty's eyrie,—
A golden eaglet of the mighty gods
To dare the heavens on wings of flame.

—Shyam Kumari



Apropos

To live in a great aspiration, to take care to become inwardly calm and remain so always as far as possible, to cultivate a perfect sincerity in all the activities of one's being—these are the essential conditions for the growth of the psychic being. —The Mother

But the most intimate character of the psychic is its pressure towards the Divine through a sacred love, joy and oneness. —Sri Aurobindo

He travels with whoever looks for Him, and having taken the seeker by the hand, He arouses him to go in search of himself. —Al-Ansari

Do not worry about anything ever, for the grace of God is in every shape and form. —Sufi saying

The only true liberty is in the service of that which is beyond all limits, beyond all definitions, beyond all human appreciation: that which is All, and which therefore is no limited or individual thing; The All is no-thing, for if it were to be a single thing separated from all other things, it would not be All. —Thomas Merton

We have not come here to take prisoners but to surrender ever more deeply to freedom and joy. —Hafiz

Search, no matter what situation you are in. O thirsty one, search for water constantly. Finally, the time will come when you will reach the spring. —Rumi

What can we gain by sailing to the moon if we cannot cross the abyss that separates us from ourselves? —Thomas Merton

God is silence and is most easily reached in silence. —Baha' ad-din Naqshband

One in all, all in one. If only this is realized, no more worry about your not being perfect! —Seng T'san

O Great Spirit, whose voice I hear in the winds and whose breath gives life to all the world, hear me. I am small and weak. I need your strength and wisdom. —Chief Yellow Lark

Let me walk in beauty and let my eyes ever behold the red and purple sunset. Make my hands respect the things you have made and my ears grow sharp to hear your voice. —Chief Yellow Lark

In each mirror, each moment a new face reveals His beauty. —Fakhruddin Irâqî

The best act of worship is watchfulness of the moments. That is, that the servant not look beyond his limit, and not contemplate anything other than his Lord, and not associate with anything other than his present moment. —Abu Bakr Muhammad Al-Wasiti

You've traveled up ten thousand steps in search of the truth. So many days in the archives, copying, copying. The gravity of the Tang and the profundity of the Sung make heavy baggage. Here! I've picked you a bunch of wild flowers. Their meaning is the same but they're much easier to carry. —Hsu Yun

Place your mind before the mirror of eternity, place your soul in the brightness of His glory, place your heart in the image of the divine essence and transform yourself by contemplation utterly into the image of His divinity, that you too may feel what His friends feel as they taste the hidden sweetness that God himself has set aside from the beginning for those who love Him. —Saint Clare of Assisi

Casting aside all things in this false and troubled world that ensnare those who love them blindly, give all your love to Him who gave Himself in all for you to love: Whose beauty the sun and moon admire, and whose gifts are abundant and precious and grand without end. —Saint Clare of Assisi

This is the true lover of God, who lives with others, rises and eats and sleeps like others, gives and takes with others in the bazaar, yet never forgets God even for a moment. —Abu Saïd

My heart has become capable of every form: It is a pasture for gazelles, and a monastery for Christian monks, and the pilgrim's Ka'ba, and the tablets of the Torah, and the book of the Koran. —Ibn Arabi

