

Collaboration

Fall 2017

Journal of the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother

Vol. 42, No. 2



The blossoming of the Truth-Consciousness: What Auroville, Bill Gates, and Daniel Barenboim have in common by Zackaria Moursi •
The First Nations and the soul of America, Part 2 by Karen Mitchell •
A short course in Integral Yoga 2: Karma yoga by Matthias Pommerening •
Beauty and harmony by Richard Pearson •
Current affairs • AV almanac • Source material • Poetry room • Apropos



About the art on the front and back cover

Front cover: Titled "Fulfilment," this white magnolia was photographed by August Timmermans. The ivory white variety was given the signifi- cance "perfect vigilance" by the Mother. On the back cover is another white magnolia, titled "Magnolia Intimate." These and other fine art photographs can be found at: <https://august-timmermans.pixels.com>.

The authors and poets

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Pujalal Dalvadi (deceased) was a poet and member of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

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Karen Mitchell (karenmitchell404@gmail.com) worked as a clinical social worker and is now enjoying a "retirement of contemplation, conversation, writing, and traveling." Since 2008, she has been participating in events at the Sri Aurobindo Sadhana Peetham in Lodi, CA.

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Lucille Seidlitz (luseidlitz@gmail.com) is a long-time devotee of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother who resides in California.

Sundaram (deceased) was a Gujarati poet of wide repute. He joined the Ashram at Sri Aurobindo's invitation in 1945, where he was given responsibility for all Ashram Gujarati publications.

Themis (aka Themis; deceased), was a member of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, a poet, and translator.

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From the office of Collaboration

In Current Affairs, we begin the issue with Julian Lines' tribute to Anie Nunnally, who passed away recently at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry. This is followed by Lucille Seidlitz's memorial to her brother Vincent Massa, a long-time devotee who had lived in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in the 1970s. We also have an article by Alan Baiss about the making of his new documentary film about the Integral Yoga made in collaboration with his partner Joseh Garcia. This is followed by updates from two US centers, the Institute for Wholistic Education in Wilmot, WI and the Cultural Integration Fellowship in San Francisco.

In AV Almanac, we have an article by Mandakini Lucien-Brun about the successes made by the Acres for Auroville project, now in its fourth year, and the substantial work that remains to be done in securing Auroville's land.

In our Salon section we have an article by Zackaria Moursi on three significant signs of the blossoming of the Truth-consciousness: the development of Auroville, the charitable donations of the very wealthy started by Bill Gates, and the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra led by conductor and pianist Daniel Barenboim which brings together Israeli and Arab musicians together to promote peace and understanding in the Middle-East and around the world.

In Chronicles, we present Part 2 of Karen Mitchell's essay on the First Nations and the soul of America. Here Karen reflects on key historical events in America's history which revealed the nation's soul, considers the present events in the country, and finds some reconciliation in the disparity of the two both in Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's words, and in her own personal experiences with America's soul.

In Essays, we have the second part of Matthias Pommerening's essay on the Integral Yoga, this part focusing on karma yoga. This essay was developed from the author's answers to study questions for an online course, and are a reflection on readings in Sri Aurobindo's *Letters on Yoga II*. The author has done a nice job of summarizing and synthesizing many of the central concepts of the Yoga.

In our second Essay, Richard Pearson considers the importance of beauty and harmony in the Yoga, and then focuses more specifically on the yoga of the body and its opening to the Light and Truth which is necessary for the establishment of the supramental consciousness. This latter theme is then taken up further in Source Material with pieces selected from the writings of Sri Aurobindo the Mother on the transformation of the body.

We close the issue with a selection of poems in The Poetry Room and spiritual quotations in Apropos. August Timmerman's photography graces the covers.

The artist

August Timmermans, a devotee of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, is from the Netherlands and lives in Marseille, France. His focus in photography is on "things, sites, and situations that appeal for their beauty and uniqueness." His photographs have appeared in many travel magazines. To view a selection of his fine art photography, visit his website at: <https://august-timmermans.pixels.com>. He may be contacted at: augusttimmermans@yahoo.com

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

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Subscriptions: A one-year subscription (three issues) is \$25 (\$35 for airmail outside the USA; \$50 or more for a one-year patron subscription). Pay online by credit card at www.collaboration.org/journal/subscribe.html; or make a check out to Sri Aurobindo Association and mail to: Sri Aurobindo Association, 2715 W. Kettleman Ln, Ste 203-174, Lodi, CA 95242 USA. India residents, send Rs.200 in the name of Larry Seidlitz to: Larry Seidlitz, 42 Pappammal Koil St., Anandam Apts. Ground Fl., Apt. 1A, Kuruchikuppam, Puducherry 605012.

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; Mateo Needham, vice president; John Robert Cornell, secretary; Margaret Phanes, communications officer; Mira Patel, 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.

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* for the Salon section. 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*. For the next issue, please email your essay by December 1, 2017 to the editor at: editor@collaboration.org.



Current affairs

Anie Nunnally: In memoriam

by Julian Lines

Anie Nunnally passed at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Nursing home at 11:30 pm April 25th at the age of 80. Anie was from Hattiesburg, Mississippi and kept some of her Southern accent and charm until the end.

Her inclination toward music and spirituality started early in life. Initiated in music by her mother, an accomplished piano player, Anie started to sing at an early age and by the time she was two and a half years old she was able to sing 30 songs.

As a teen, Anie had her first spiritual awakening through music:

I remember one of the first times that I was listening to a piece of classical music when I was about 14 (by this time I was in boarding school and singing in the choir and performing in school musicals). I had the experience of an awakening in the center of my chest. Something inside me soared upwards with the music and it was a sensation that I had never experienced before. It was like a bird had flown out of the center of my being. It was, of course, an awakening in my psychic being to the beauty of the music. So, music had become my way to inner openings and a sense of the higher vital had been experienced.

Her career in music blossomed when she came to New York City. She was an understudy and played one of the nuns in the first Broadway production of the "Sound of Music" and was also in the national touring company with Florence Henderson. She had numerous good friends in show business including Tom and Dick Smothers. Richard Rogers called her the "Fiat (sportscar) with the Big Horn," because even with her diminutive size, she could project her strong soprano voice.

But she also had an inner call:

After a serious auto accident in December of 1962, I had a profound experience of the Mother who had brought me back from the portals of death. I had a concussion and went into shock. My head injuries required 30 stitches. Mother assured me there would be no scars.



This inner contact led to many spiritual experiences and letters to the Mother for guidance on my path. My experience with Her opened all my chakras and everything in my centers of energy within, started to spin like wheels. From that moment, I knew that I wanted to live in the Ashram and around her Presence.

Anie came to Pondicherry in 1968 with her husband, Narad (Richard Eggenberger), and had Mother's Darshan. She spent four years in India and subsequently led a life of service to the Ashram and Auroville back in the U.S.

Anie was close to Jyotipriya (Dr. Judith Tyberg) founder of the East West Cultural Center (EWCC) in Los Angeles, as well as Sam Spanier and Eric Hughes, who founded Matagiri Sri Aurobindo Center in Mount Tremper, NY. She helped at the Sri Aurobindo International Center in Manhattan and lived with Scott (Lalit) Fullman in the apartment across the hall. Anie also served as the first Board Member of the Foundation for World Education after the passing of founder Eleanor Montgomery.

She taught music in New York City, Woodstock (where she also sang in the choir), and Los Angeles, and had very warm relationships with her many students. One of her Woodstock students, Cara Cruickshank, writes:

Anie was one of my first artistic mentors and remained one throughout my childhood and early adolescence. She was devoted, empowering and always accessible. Singing and music lessons with her in Woodstock were always fun and joyful. I am honored to have had our connection which has remained into my adulthood. Anie always stayed in contact, with deep interest in my artistic life. She was a mentor who could see both my



spirit and potential and appreciatively articulate it with great clarity. No matter which path my artistic career has taken, she has always been interested and supportive. I remember receiving a gift from Anie when I was a young girl: a small bag of blessed soil from Auroville. Recently, she connected me with one of her closest artistic friends and students where I live in Paris, who is connected with both the Auroville and Los Angeles community. This has allowed me to feel closer to Anie, even at a distance, and now will allow her presence and legacy in my life to continue in a meaningful way. Her spirituality was so evidently important to her and was often expressed in her warm generosity of spirit.

Anie moved back to Los Angeles and had a close relationship with fellow devotee, Stuart Schoen. After his passing, she returned to her native Hattiesburg. She was invited to return to California to become the resident director and President of the Sri Aurobindo Center of Los Angeles (formerly EWCC). She developed a deep friendship with Michael Spector, whose healing work was helpful to her in her later years.

In 1999 Anie had returned to the Ashram to interview disciples who had been close to Mother. After receiving a positive response to the publication of these interviews in the U.S, she returned to create a collection of twelve published as *The Golden Path*.

Two years ago, she and her friend decided to move to Pondicherry, living on Candapa Muldiar Street. Since her return, she started work on a follow-up volume of interviews when her kidney failure produced a series of strokes. She recovered from the first two setbacks and most recently visited Auroville in mid-February, 2017 for a concert of flute and poetry by Gordon and Jeanne Korstange at Savitri Bhavan.

A few days later she had a more severe stroke limiting her speech and movement on her left side. Anie still rallied enough to speak with visitors. Vikas, a good friend from the Sri Aurobindo Center of Los Angeles, found her whole demeanor inspiring and felt a profound Grace was protecting her from what should have been a very painful process. Friends from the US and France contributed to a fund for her hospital stay and dialysis supplies and sent supporting messages faithfully conveyed by Michael. Dr. Dutta kindly brought her into the Ashram Nursing Home for her final weeks.

Michael reflected, "It was a great adventure for us starting at the Sri Aurobindo Center in LA and moving after three years to Pondy. Anie knew it was time and planned happily to return to India into the Mother's arms. She was all grace, charm, beauty along with childlike stubbornness, a solid sense of responsibility and a touchingly profound devotion to all

that is good and uplifting. We were brought closely together by the wondrous spirit of music and art ... so much of it!

We sang and danced and meditated and shared these last years with joyous laughter and ever deepening communion with Sri Aurobindo and Mother."

Passing of Vincent Massa

by Lucille Seidlitz

My brother, Vincent Massa, recently passed after a long illness at the age of 70. Vincent was introduced to the Yoga by Mickey Finn in 1970 and was a lifelong devotee of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother. Vincent left for India in 1971 and lived in the Ashram for nearly seven years while working at the Press as a proofreader. He also learned to play South Indian classical violin. In early 1973 I joined him at the Ashram, where we were brought to Mother for Her private Darshan by Madhav Pandit. After returning to the States, Vincent pursued a career in nursing and worked for many years at Tufts New England Medical Center. He traveled back to Pondy numerous times and continued his devotion through his reading, meditations, classes, and writing. During his years in Southern California he also loved flying his hand-crafted airplanes. Vincent had an infectious laughter, was amazingly perceptive with a great intellect and subtle sense of humor. We miss him very much.

Conscious: Fulfilling our higher evolutionary potential—the film

by Alan Baiss

I hesitate to call myself a filmmaker. Filmmaking has never really been my passion, but rather it emerged as a vehicle for exploring a spiritual philosophy that resonates with me very deeply. Many years ago I began making a documentary film that would ask about our role and our potential as transitional beings during this critical phase in Earth's evolution. Although my inspiration for this work came from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, I wanted the film to reach beyond the Sri Aurobindo community. "Conscious," the title that came to me one evening while I was soaking in the bathtub, is now *Conscious: Fulfilling our Higher Evolutionary Potential*.

Joseh Garcia, a fellow California Institute of Integral Studies alumnus and my partner in life, joined me in making *Conscious* soon after the work had begun and together



we have persisted through all the details, challenges, and joys that this work has presented.

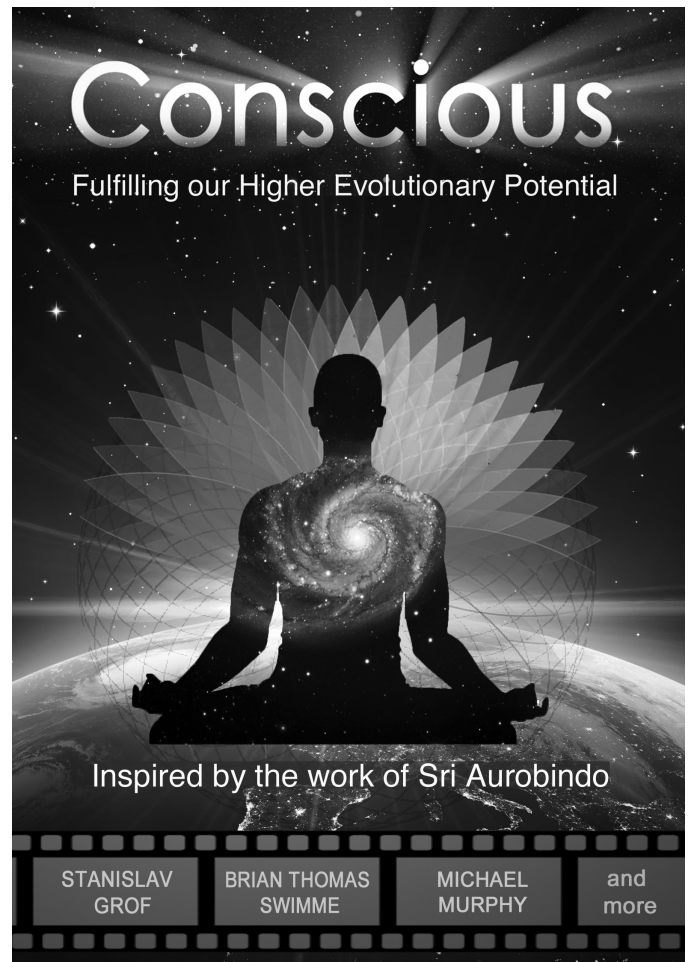
After working on the film for the better part of a decade, *Conscious* was completed in May 2017. It is my third film and certainly the most ambitious so far. At times the setbacks seemed interminable. Technical issues abounded. Work done by an editor, a color technician, and a sound technician that we thought would save us some money all had to be redone. New computers, more hard drives, and more programs needed to be purchased. Two interviews needed to be reshot. And then there were issues that the most experienced filmmaker could not have foreseen.

I was shocked when, more than a year after I had filmed six important interviews, I was told by three of the interviewees that they didn't want to appear in the film if any of the other three would be in it. I was pretty sure that the signed releases allowed us to include any of these people whether they were having a change of heart or not and, after all, I had gone to considerable expense to get these interviews and their concerns seemed to have nothing to do with the content of the film. I went deep inside. I spent about a week in and out of contemplation and the answer that consistently surfaced with the most clarity was that we should not include any of the six in the film. This was not an easy choice and I may never know whether it was really the right thing to do.

I am so very grateful that during the entire filmmaking process my passion for making *Conscious* never waned. I don't know why this was so, and at times it struck me as quite remarkable. With this, and with other exceptional occurrences, I began to open to the likelihood that the film was being influenced by something beyond consciousness and my capacity to recognize. Somehow, at least from my perspective, it seemed that *Conscious* was embodying many of the potentials that I had hoped it would invite its viewers to consider.

The effort to make *Conscious* presented me with many gifts. Imagine, if you will, being on a personal quest and sitting down with some of the most respected people in the field and asking them the most interesting questions that you can think of, and then spending countless hours delving deeper and deeper into their responses and time and again discovering nuances that you had not previously seen. This was my experience while making *Conscious*. It has been a process that completely changed my life.

Conscious is honoured to feature Stanislav Grof, Brian Thomas Swimme, Michael Murphy, and Aster Patel along with many other respected personalities both inside and outside of Puducherry and Auroville. The film also follows the story of a courageous woman who is dealing with a debilitating and life threatening illness, and how her relation-



ship with this challenge impacts her spiritual journey over the course of five years.

Beautiful imagery sensitively supports the film's message and the entire music score, which is an exceptional creation in itself, was composed and performed for the film by Joseh Garcia who, in addition to his many other talents, is a gifted musician.

We had the honour to preview *Conscious* at the 2017 AUM Conference in August and we were heartened by the enthusiastic response. *Conscious* actually consists of three projects, in addition to the film there is the book with the same title. Because only a portion of each interview could fit in the film, many important explanations were destined to be lost. The book takes the next step and preserves a wide collection of valuable interviewee responses that don't appear anywhere in the film. The third component is the CD featuring the film's very innovative and sensitive neo-classical original music.

Please view the film's new trailer and more on our website, www.integralinspirations.com. If you like, please also leave us a message.



Update on the Institute for Wholistic Education

by Santosh Krinsky

The Institute, in collaboration with Lotus Press (www.lotuspress.com) is continuing its development and publishing of study guides for Sri Aurobindo's major writings, as well as development of e-books for a variety of platforms. Links to the various online e-book sellers are available at www.lotuspress.com

We have also expanded our social media activities with a facebook presence at www.facebook.com/SriAurobindosWritings. Systematic posts of the Readings series are put up daily at this Facebook location as well as other social media platforms.

The 4th volume of *Readings in Sri Aurobindo's The Synthesis of Yoga* is now in preparation for being turned into a printed book and should be available in Fall 2017. This will be the 11th Volume in the series, which covers *Readings in The Life Divine* (3 vol.), *Readings in The Essays on the Gita* (2 vol.), *Readings in Rebirth and Karma*, *Readings in The Mother*, and *Readings in The Synthesis of Yoga* (4 vol.). Any center in the USA which has not yet requested and received their free copies for any of these (soon to be 11) volumes should contact us at santoshk@msn.com.

Daily blog posts advancing the readings in Sri Aurobindo's major works continue. The current book of Sri Aurobindo's being focused on is *The Ideal of Human Unity* with daily posts at <http://sriurobindostudies.wordpress.com>. All prior posts remain archived and accessible for those who want to study any of the earlier volumes in the series. Lotus Press now has 10 volumes of *Mother's Agenda* (Institute for Evolutionary Research) and a number of titles by Satprem on offer as well.

The Institute also sponsors regular classes on reiki, levels 1, 2 and 3, conducted by Karuna Krinsky. The most recent Reiki 1 class was held August 19-20, 2017. More classes are scheduled for the Fall of 2017. The schedule is regularly updated and can be found at www.reikiteacher.org

An August darshan meditation gathering was hosted by the Institute at our Racine, WI location on Saturday, August 12, 2017. The program included a meditation, with reading from *Savitri*, a lunch, and a video presentation by Sri M P Pandit on the subject "Perfect Health" from the DVD series that has been published by Dipti Publications.

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

Activities of the Cultural Integration Fellowship

by Sandy Kepler

Inspired by the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, the Cultural Integration Fellowship (CIF) was founded in 1951 by Dr. Haridas Chaudhuri and Mrs. Bina Chaudhuri as a center for universal religion and spiritual practice. Haridas Chaudhuri, a brilliant professor from Bengal, India, visited the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry on several occasions and had darshan with Sri Aurobindo. Sri Aurobindo personally guided Haridas in the writing of his doctoral dissertation on "Integral Idealism," taking the time to review and comment on his work. It was also at the personal nomination of Sri Aurobindo that Dr. Chaudhuri came to the United States to teach at the American Academy of Asian Studies, a newly founded graduate school in San Francisco. Dr. Chaudhuri went on to found CIF, and later the California Institute of Asian Studies, renamed in 1980 as the California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS).

CIF continues to offer programs specific to Integral Yoga. A special program to commemorate the birth anniversary of the Mother is offered annually in February. Special talks to honor the work and legacy of CIF founders, Haridas and Bina Chaudhuri, were scheduled in June of this year, including a showing of the film by Alan Baiss entitled *Integral Consciousness*, followed by a celebratory luncheon and Q & A panel moderated by Ted Nordquist, student and mentee of the late Haridas Chaudhuri. The panel included former students and colleagues of Dr. Chaudhuri who shared how his teachings had impacted their lives and work.

CIF traditionally offers programs on the teachings of Sri Aurobindo in August. Dr. Debashish Banerji, the Haridas Chaudhuri Professor of Indian Philosophy and Culture at CIIS, delivered a talk this year entitled "Sri Aurobindo and the Vedic Mystery Schools" to commemorate the birth anniversary of Sri Aurobindo. Please visit <http://culturalintegrationfellowship.org/> for additional information on CIF programs and activities.

Cultural Integration Fellowship, 2650 Fulton Street, San Francisco, CA 94118; (415) 668-1559; Rita Chaudhuri Pease, President; Email: culturalfellowship@sbcglobal.net; website: www.culturalintegrationfellowship.org.



AV almanac

The Acres for Auroville land campaign—A collaboration for Auroville

by Mandakini Lucien-Brun

When we see Auroville today, we are struck by the miracle of all that's been created! But we can also see billboards promoting outside developments coming up on land that is meant for The Mother's City of Dawn. To counter this development, Auroville International (AVI) in collaboration with Auroville launched an action in 2014 called "The Acres for Auroville land campaign" (A4A), co-led by Aryadeep of Lands for Auroville Unified (LFAU) and myself (Mandakini of AVI-France). Here now is an update on the campaign's encouraging results as we begin our fourth campaign year, and the major land issues facing Auroville as it approaches the 50th anniversary of its foundation.

The start and the need

Even if Auroville's Master-Plan land was approved by the Indian Parliament, actual ownership on the ground is still the only reality that counts! By 2013, the Pondy-area real estate boom had spread to the City area of Auroville, making it a real-estate target of choice with corresponding skyrocketing of land prices. There had not been a Auroville land fundraiser for years, and landowners who wanted to sell land, knowing that Auroville had no significant funds, went directly to brokers and speculators. In late 2013, alarmed by this development, Auroville Foundation Chairman Dr. Karan Singh issued a call and warning to the community: "If we can't get the land, we cannot build the city!"

After reading the Auroville Today article on outside developments on land meant for Auroville, I received a strong and repeated inner call to do something. I proposed to my fellow members on the AVI France Board that we launch a campaign named "Acres for Auroville" and in the course of several meetings, we defined an action whose watchwords would be "trust, reliability, and accountability." Aryadeep at LFAU, who authored many pieces on the urgency of the land need, readily agreed, along with Sigrid who was working with him on a website version of his articles. Their agreement to collaborate was quickly followed by that of

the AVI International Board. Friederike, AVI International Chair, found these inspiring words for our target: "Let's build a beautiful birthday gift for Auroville's 50th—the precious gift of urgently-needed land!"

We launched A4A on Sri Aurobindo's birthday 2014 in a Town Hall ceremony with representatives of the senior and youth generations of Auroville. In line with A4A as a consecrated action, our communications come out at the quarterly Ashram Darshans: a motivating "action" flier is accompanied by an inspirational letter on Auroville's role in manifesting Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's vision. In addition to the essential objectives of fundraising and awareness-building, another founding goal was to build unity in the Integral Yoga family via this action for the land. For me personally—as a Friend of Auroville and an old "Ashram girl"—this was a vital aspect. I remembered Jyotipriya's words when I first went to India—"it's not a question of being for Auroville or for the Ashram, but of being for the Mother."

In light of the economic context, and some ambient skepticism about the feasibility of a new campaign, we decided to structure our action in phases, setting a first goal that most people could agree on: fundraising to buy Matrimandir-area land for protecting the sanctity of its atmosphere and land to develop the International Zone, AVI's special project. We based our fundraising goal on the 2014 list of plots for which owners had expressed interest in selling and we then chose the seven most-likely. Their combined estimated value of 257 lakhs in 2014 (€354,000 or \$399,000) became our Phase 1 target, which was repeated for each of the following years. We sincerely thank Dr. Karan Singh for his ongoing encouragement!

Donors, donations, and gifts

With LFAU's dynamic secretary Jothi, our small team has worked very hard to create donor trust and enthusiasm. Thus, we greatly value the letter from the International Zone Team thanking us for "restoring trust and joy to the fundraising process." To date, A4A has received over 1,200 donations of all sizes—from 10 euros to \$50,000, and over half of our donors have made repeated donations. All contributions are thanked with the same respect regardless of amount. I monitor every aspect of the monthly Financial Service A4A accounts and then send these detailed accounting reports to the AVI Board and to Auroville's Land Board. With Auroville's Sathish, we developed a dedicated "land.auroville" website for Collaboration for Auroville Area Protection (COLAAP) at www.colaap.org, with in-



formation and campaign news, and now with precious tech support from Anatoliy. A personal page on COLAAP with a private access code is created for each donor showing their donation history and giving confidential access to the campaign's "Success Barometer." This measure of success is the Mother's symbol whose petals become more golden with each donation.

Fast forward: our first-year goal was reached in the first 12 months making the Success Barometer fully gold! We had success again after the next 12 months and to celebrate the occasion, News & Notes put our second wholly-gold Mother's Symbol on their cover page printed with special gold ink and captioned "OM JAI MA." Our third year again brought similar success. It is now the fourth Success Barometer now appears on our donor pages. We hope you will help us to fill this one as well!

Now, a word about donor recognition gifts. Each donor receives a Certificate of Recognition, designed for the campaign by Aurovilian artist Emanuele. Gifts for the first two donations are donated by benefactors to support the campaign: Gift 1 is an Auroville-earth card plus the DVD "The Teachings of Flowers—The Life & Work of The Mother of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram" (offered by Aurovilian Loretta, its producer) and for two-time donors, we send a booklet of reminiscences of Darshans with the Mother (contributed by a longtime friend of the land from India). Starting with the third donation, the campaign sends e-gifts. A few people request us not to send anything, which we respect, but most donors say they appreciate this small material contact with Auroville!

Campaign evolution and acquisition results

In the same month that we launched Acres for Auroville, Auroville's Governing Board advised re-vamping the land purchase and management structures. A new Land Board was then selected by the community which went into action in December. By that time, just four months after our Phase 1 kickoff, we had already received 110 lakhs in funds! The new Land Board put these funds to good use with their first purchase: a crucial Matrimandir Circle plot. Entirely financed by A4A donations, it consolidated part of Mahalakshmi Park, gave greater space to Deepanam School, and created a direct pathway from Surrender to the Matrimandir. A4A's action in tandem with the new Land Board team was bringing results!

On August 15, 2015, at the Land Board's request, we launched A4A Phase 2, thus widening our target as we had initially hoped we could. This enlarged objective comprised

all four zones of the City Area. A few months after, three city plots near Rêve, with their vital roadside position, were acquired via a negotiated exchange by the Land Board of outlying lands—for which the cash needed (taxes and land registration fees) were supplied by A4A donations.

A4A Phase 3, launched on 15 August 2016, was honored by the presence of Auroville Secretary Thiru Mohan Chunkath, who published a message of support for the occasion. Again at the Land Board's request, we widened the campaign's scope—and this time to include the entire Master Plan area: the Matrimandir Circle, all the City, and the Greenbelt. Donations in Phase 3 enabled the acquisition of 12 new plots: our second Matrimandir Circle plot near Arka and 11 Greenbelt plots, significantly including vital rice-growing, water-bearing land in Irumbai next to Siddhartha Farm.

As one involved Aurovilian said, these additions to Auroville's land would not have been possible without A4A! In July 2017 the total was 16 plots acquired thanks to A4A donations. We are grateful to the Land Board team for its difficult and dedicated work.

Outreach, collaboration and recognition

The combined action of the AVI centers has been the great motor for our fundraising success along with individually-initiated fundraising events by friends and growing support from Aurovilians. In Auroville, A4A has organized an AVI-A4A tea, and a gala "Landing Auroville" celebration. In coordination with us, Rakhal and the AuroImage team created three films on Auroville's land: "Landing Auroville," "Early Days Landing Auroville," and "Irumbai: A bridge between the Past & Future." These videos plus campaign presentations are available in several languages at the dedicated page <https://vimeo.com/album/3521859>

Auroville's active participation grew when in February an A4A support action was started by Nicole of the Visitors Centre in collaboration with the Auroville Marathon team. Almost 100 Visitors Centre units and Marathon Market participants gave 10%–50% of their Marathon weekend proceeds to A4A. Aurovilian Sophie created restaurant table cards about the land with collection boxes at the Visitors Centre and other Auroville hotspots, as well as a special Visitors Centre "land kiosk." For the past two years with Aravinda, we have created beautiful New Year's cards that appear on desks and offices all around Auroville, promoting donations for the land. We thank the Sri Aurobindo Ashram for its warm cooperation and Auroville photographers Giorgio, Lisbeth, Manohar, and Tine for all their contributions.



Art for Land

Another major action—and beautiful example of all-around collaboration—is “Art for Land,” launched by Jasmin, Aravinda, and myself in 2015 on a suggestion by the Ashram’s Sunayana Panda and Dilip Patel. A system of flowing generosity, artists from Auroville, the Ashram, and the AVIs donate their works for acquisition through individual land donations. Thanks to Jaya, Rema, Devasmita, Suresh, Clare, and the Unity Pavilion team, Art for Land Year 2 expanded to a month-long exhibition of the works of over 70 participating artists in all media. The exhibit included the sale of Loretta’s collection of rare photos of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, with almost daily land fundraisers and concerts throughout February. Andrea at Auroville Radio created a special page for these fundraising concerts, Loretta’s two talks about Integral Yoga, and a radio interview that Miriam held with me about A4A: <http://www.aurovilleradio.org/lfau> and <http://www.aurovilleradio.org/uniting-for-aurovilles-land>. The film version of Loretta’s talks can be seen at <https://vimeo.com/album/4537504>.

Art for Land Year 3 is planned for January 1–February 15 at the Unity Pavilion with the Auroville Art Service joining the Unity Pavilion team as A4A’s partners. Please see our beautiful on-line gallery website that will increasingly be enriched for the upcoming new exhibition <http://artforland.auroville.org>.

We warmly invite artists to donate their work for Art for Land in this special 50th year!

Future needs and challenges

All Master Plan area land is a priority, but the substantial funds needed, the amount of still-missing land (approximately 9% of the City and 50% of the Greenbelt), combined with rising prices, obliges the Land Board to prioritize and fix their focus on land for major strategic needs: overall consolidation, coherent infrastructure, road access and protection, and vital resources for sustainability.

Several Master Plan plots are already in the hands of outside real estate developers while the rest still belongs to the original Tamil families, for whom ancestral land is collective. This means that everyone involved must agree to sell at the price and conditions offered. Sometimes just one person holds out for a higher price.

In the past year, speculators have begun to wake up to the value of Greenbelt land resources. Greenbelt land prices are beginning to rise fast and non-Auroville developments are coming up quickly. Because vital opportunities and

CALLING ALL ARTISTS!

If you'd like to contribute your art to Art for Land Year 3 (painting, prints, ceramics, photographs), please contact: unitypavilion@auroville.org.in or by phone: (91) 413-262-3576.

For more info:

www.unitypavilionauroville.wordpress.com or artforland.auroville.org

risks are there now, the most recent Land Board purchases have been in the Greenbelt.

The remaining plots in the Matrimandir Circle and the City are crucial priorities for a coherent city, but will be the most difficult to obtain. Prices are high and the value of remaining ancestral lands is obvious to everyone. The Land Board is in ongoing negotiations, and success is coming—plot by plot. A4A Phase 1 donations are held in reserve for acquisition opportunities for priority land around the Matrimandir.

A4A’s concrete progress was highlighted by the outgoing International Advisory Council in their final letter to the Auroville community: “Projects in collaboration with your friends around the world, such as Acres for Auroville for acquiring the land, have yielded substantial results.”

Dear Friends, your donations and collaborative outreach are essential. Now is the time to get the land, this vital material base that makes Auroville possible. And this precious moment of possibility won’t come back again!

Here are the two links to our new Acres for Auroville “50th Birthday Land Gift” video:

<https://youtu.be/YtCx2V1Jrrc>

<https://vimeo.com/226329748>

Please share them widely with contacts and friends!

With warmest thanks for all your support and collaboration! Contact: mlucienbrun@wanadoo.fr and lfau@auroville.org.in; Also, see our land.auroville website: www.colaap.org.

The Mother’s Message

May 1970

The lands for Auroville are to be bought and can be bought.

The money is needed, will you help?

The Mother



Salon

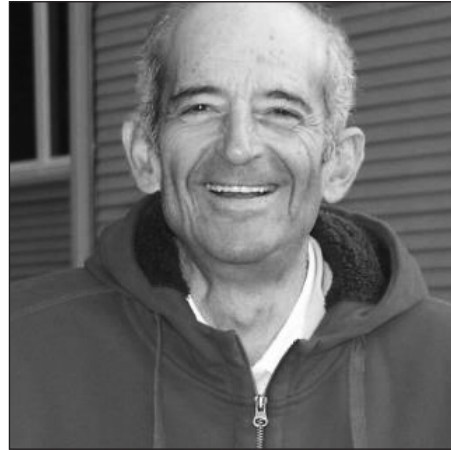
The blossoming of the Truth-Consciousness: What Auroville, Bill Gates, and Daniel Barenboim have in common

by Zackaria Moursi

After retiring, in 1910, from direct involvement in India's freedom struggle, Sri Aurobindo worked tirelessly the remaining four decades of his life for the descent of a new Truth-Consciousness, already foreseen in the Vedas and the Upanishads. He envisioned that the full descent of this consciousness would mean the evolution of humans from the predominantly mental beings they currently are to supramental beings who will "attain the perfect bliss of spiritual existence." "And if that could be achieved" he wrote, "we could even speak of a divine life on earth; our human dream of perfectibility would be accomplished and at the same time the aspiration to a heaven on earth common to several religions and spiritual seers and thinkers."¹

In a famous article broadcast on the momentous day on which India became Independent from British rule (August 15, 1947, which was significantly the 75th anniversary of his birth), Sri Aurobindo narrated how all the major "dreams" of his life had come to fruition, and stated that the manifestation of the Truth-Consciousness was his "final dream, and personal hope." He noted that this consciousness "has begun to take hold on forward looking minds both in India and in the West." Sri Aurobindo foresaw that this manifestation "would begin the solution of the many problems of existence which have perplexed and vexed humanity, since men [sic] began to think and to dream of individual perfection and a perfect society." Though he was fully aware that "the difficulties in the way are more formidable than in any other field of endeavour," he heartened us by saying that "difficulties were made to be overcome, and assured that "if the Supreme Will is there, they will be overcome."²

Sri Aurobindo has given this all-pervading Truth-Consciousness, which he considered the necessary foundation for lasting peace and happiness on earth, a modern interpretation and dedicated his life to establishing it in the global human consciousness. This article wants to celebrate and call to mind three remarkable achievements that have been realized in the decades since Sri Aurobindo wrote the lines



quoted above. These three examples distinguish themselves by the fact that they do not stop short at solving one particular conflict, but go further to shake the very foundations of this conflict, thus changing the nature of the conflict itself.

Conflicts will never be solved when the parties involved cling religiously to the premises upholding them, because either the conflict affords them short-term gains or complies with beliefs they consider sacrosanct. Instead, what is needed to solve conflicts is to consider them from the widest perspective taking into consideration both the new realities of the present and the conditions that have to be fulfilled to secure Peace and Happiness for all humanity in the future.

The three examples discussed below strikingly demonstrate how fresh and creative approaches can reduce a conflict that seems intractable and unsolvable, to an objective dilemma of limited scope that can be dealt with soberly and rationally.

For the sake of brevity, I will touch lightly upon the topics discussed by including only the bare minimum of details. My hope is that readers would not mind using an internet search engine to fill in the gaps and find more about the subject matter that interests them. Suggested links are provided in the references listed at the end of the article.

Auroville

When Mirra Alfassa,³ Sri Aurobindo's⁴ co-worker and the realizer of his visions, inaugurated the international township of Auroville in 1968 she was already ninety years old. From the material point of view, she had little that would qualify anyone to build an international city. But she had a Vision and the Knowledge that only spiritual figures of her rank can have. She aspired to build the city as a model of lived human unity, an ideal which had always been at the core of her and Sri Aurobindo's spiritual aspirations. Fifty years earlier, during World War I, Sri Aurobindo had written *The Ideal of Human Unity*, a book considered far ahead of its time then.



When Auroville started, it wasn't more than a lonely banyan tree on an arid plateau near the Coromandel Coast of South India. The soil was so cracked that almost all of the monsoon rains drenching it were lost to the nearby ocean. The humid heat in summer is unbearable for almost anyone other than the indigenous Tamil population of the area.

The Mother announced her project and simply invited to it "all men of good will."⁵ Slowly some of the Western hippies roaming India in the sixties, in their search for a meaning in their lives, chanced upon the area and heard of Auroville. They decided, out of curiosity, to visit the Mother everyone was speaking about. Reports of their short visits with her were later collected in a moving booklet titled *Turning Points*.⁶ Following is what one of the early Aurovilians had to say. He had participated, at the age of 17, in the Basques' fight against Franco, and after turbulent years of vacillation between esoteric interests and drugs, ended up in Auroville. He reported:

I was only reading Sri Aurobindo, not Mother. The photo of Mother everywhere bothered me. But I thought, 'Okay, let us see this old lady, she may be nice, she may be wise. After all she lived a long time with Sri Aurobindo.' I went without expecting anything, casually. The door opened, and . . . I had never been so astonished in my life, because I didn't see a human being there. There was a sari, there were two eyes, a smile, but it was like a window on the infinite. The first impression was infinity, infinite space. I couldn't believe it. I had the impression I had lived in a match box. And then, wave after wave of love, like a tsunami of love. I had a very low opinion of myself—not so much for having killed people (the world was much better without the Spanish fascists)—but because I was very selfish and I didn't know what love was. So I thought, 'How can you possibly love me?' I felt ashamed, 'Forgive me for having brought this piece of garbage in your room, I didn't know who You were!' She was loving me. I was feeling forever safe, safe, forever safe in your arms... and then suddenly she was not there anymore!

There was a face next to me. Later I learnt it was C [Mother's attendant]. I could hear words but I was not able to put them together. Only the next day they explained to me what had happened, which is that they had shaken me again and again to tell me it was over, and I had not noticed, so they had to lift me and carry me out of the room.

Then I knew I would never leave."⁷

These short meetings were enough to convince these seekers, mostly from Europe and America, to stay and do the hard work of building the city. They braved the environmental challenges: heat, insects, scarcity of food, tropical diseases, intermittent electricity, difficult communications, and scanty health care. Together with the Tamil natives, they dug the hard soil and planted thousands of trees, watering them by well water carried on bullock carts.

Today, half a century later, Auroville, after a slow growth due to the difficulties of the start, is now a rapidly growing township of over 2700 residents from 57 countries (according to the 2017 census). Lush green is visible everywhere. More than a hundred animal and bird species have returned to the area. The township has become a prime attraction for Indians and visitors from all over the world. In winter, when the weather is at its best, all sorts of conferences, and also cultural and art performances are offered by the residents and by renowned visitors from abroad. Auroville has received international awards for reforestation, sustainable and green building techniques, energy conservation, eradication of malaria, raising the awareness of village women, architecture, and the list goes on.

In addition to the achievements enumerated above, the crowning contribution of Auroville, according to the Mother, is its message of World Peace. The Mother explained in 1966 her main motivation for building Auroville:

I was looking at the sorry state in which all countries find themselves, the truly painful and dangerous conditions of the earth, and there was a sort of an all-embracing vision showing how nations have acted, and are increasingly acting, in a growing Falsehood, and how they have used all their creative power to create such formidable means of destruction, with, at the back of their minds, the really childish notion that the destruction would be so terrible that no one would want to use these weapons. But they don't know (they ought to know, but they don't) that things have a consciousness and a force of manifestation, and that all those means of destruction are pressing to be used; and even though men may not want to use them, a force stronger than them will be pushing them to do so. I had the clear vision that Auroville is a center of force and creation, with a seed of truth, and that if this seed could sprout and develop, the very movement of its growth would be a reaction against the catastrophic consequences of the error of armament... [In my vision] it was the LAST HOPE to react against the imminent catastrophe.⁸



Auroville is an example of how a great ideal can motivate humans to bring out the best in themselves and surpass their ordinary nature. Despite many initial clashes of interest (which need not surprise considering the extreme disparity in ethnicity, language, beliefs, and backgrounds among the Aurovilians), the Ideal held them together, and remarkable success was achieved in the end. All it took was a great idea that sparked their deepest aspirations, the generous hospitality of the host country India, and the willingness of the newcomers to accept the challenge and do the necessary work.

Auroville's 50th anniversary will be on February 28th, 2018. Happy Anniversary, Auroville!

Daniel Barenboim

As a second example for the "forward looking minds" mentioned in the quotes above, I have chosen the internationally renowned conductor and pianist Daniel Barenboim. Of all his exceptional achievements, I would like to recognize the healing dialogue he has created with many Arabs. He did that in an ingenious way in collaboration with the late eminent literary critic Edward Said. A close friendship grew between both men which far transcended their national affiliations: Barenboim is an Argentinean-Israeli; Said was an American Palestinian of Christian background.

The most enduring legacy of the cooperation between Barenboim and Said will remain the "West-Eastern Divan Orchestra"⁹ which they initiated in 1999 and is still performing today fourteen years after Said's passing away in 2003. The orchestra combines young musicians from Israel and several Arab and middle-Eastern countries: Egypt, Iran, Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine. During several months of rehearsing, performing and traveling together, the young musicians learned how to forget their opposing views and inclinations and maintain an amicable dialogue with each other. While performing together the sublime creations of the great composers, the orchestra members as one unit are quite naturally carried by the wish to perform as beautifully and perfectly as they possibly can. One can hardly imagine a better way for a group of people to transcend their personal differences than to play in the same orchestra rehearsing, improving and enjoying together.

The musicians also discovered that humans have the innate ability to feel the suffering of others and the aspiration to lessen this suffering. While performing in Germany, they had the opportunity to visit Weimar, the city of arts and culture where Bach, Goethe and other men of genius created their masterpieces and shortly afterwards to visit the

nearby Buchenwald concentration camp, where the Nazis committed the worst atrocities against Jews and others. The discrepancy in the atmosphere of the two neighboring locations was overwhelming. The Arab musicians, Semites themselves, pondered the fact that they themselves could have easily shared a similar holocaust as their Jewish cousins if Hitler had won WWII.

Several poignant testimonies by Arabic and Israeli musicians are recorded on films,¹⁰ in which they profess that, before joining the orchestra, they were constantly told that Jews and Arabs had been deadly enemies since the days of their common ancestor Abraham. After knowing each other and studying the historical facts, they discovered the fiction of their ancient enmity. They all admitted that the Palestine conflict was still there, but now they had learned to see its much reduced proportions without the irrational fear, hatred, contempt, demonization and the feelings of "either us or them." For the first time they dared to think: "Maybe the conflict had been unnecessarily hyped up after all" and to hope that "Maybe a solution can still be found which replaces strife by a mutually beneficial cooperation and puts an end to the ongoing terrible waste of human lives and resources."

Bill Gates

Traditional wisdom has always maintained that the three strongest drives and passions of humanity are money, power and sex: each of these drives has a formidable attraction of its own for the human ego, and when they feed into each other, their combined sovereignty over humans becomes complete.

Religion and spirituality have often shunned money because it enslaves the spirit and possesses its owners rather than being possessed by them. In this regard, we need only remember Christ's admonishment of the camel and the eye of the needle, or else the numberless Indian sannyasins and bhikshas who choose to get rid of all their possessions and live the life of the wandering mendicant. Historical instances of rare individuals exist who have renounced enormous powers (e.g. the emperors Chandragupta Maurya and Ashoka of India, and more recently the British King Edward VIII). As for sex, there are examples of Sultans and emperors who could have enjoyed unlimited sex with their harems but remained deeply in love with one woman (e.g. Suleiman the Magnificent of Turkey, and Shah Jahan, the Indian Moghul ruler).

The blossoming Truth-Consciousness introduces a new paradigm: humanity as a whole has started to free



itself from subjection to the Money-Power-Sex triplet and deal with it in creative ways which do not require living in extreme poverty or total seclusion. The new approach is to replace the accumulation of money by a judicious dedication of one's wealth to serving others. Freedom from sex comes by becoming aware of the subtle pervading ecstasy and bliss in all creation which derives from the interplay of the male/female principles. More concretely, this means replacing sex by an all-encompassing Divine Love which accommodates a great variety of relationships between the sexes that go beyond sexual intercourse. There is a growing awareness that every individual has his/her own attraction and beauty and thus deserves to be loved, whether or not he/she has sex appeal or fulfills conventional norms of physical beauty. And one day even the crowning awareness will dawn that even if one loves without his/her love being reciprocated, Loving is itself a great joy and its own reward.

Lately, a group of billionaires, spearheaded by Bill Gates and Warren Buffet, demonstrated in a very appealing way the new approach towards money sketched above. They have decided to keep half of their wealth for themselves and dedicate the other half to helping others and caring for the environment. Soon their example was followed by many others. According to an article published recently by CNBC, the award winning American business news channel, the number of these billionaires had risen to 168 in May 2017. They are now not confined to the USA but spread all over the world.¹¹

Here are some declarations from these willing donors:

"We all have the moral obligation as the more affluent in society to give back as best we know how." Mohammed Dewji, Tanzania

"As the lucky ones in life, we have been given much, sacrificed little, and gained a lot." Anne Grete Eidswig and Kjell Inge Rokke, Norway

"Unconditional giving of ourselves, and what we have, reflects a nobility of spirit which reaches out and binds all of us." Dean & Marianne Metropolis, USA

"We will only grasp the staggering potential of our time if we create on ramps that empower all people to participate, regardless of background, country of origin, religious practice, gender or color of skin." Robert Frederick Smith, USA

These future-oriented generous souls have demonstrated that giving away need not be a painful sacrifice, and is in fact a source of great happiness and fulfilment.¹² They have broken the curse of accumulating money at all costs just for the sake of accumulation.

I hope this article shows that signs of the spreading

of the Truth-Consciousness envisioned by Sri Aurobindo are steadily increasing. I have chosen three instances from among countless others. They all give us hope and encourage us to advance, more determined than ever, towards the luminous future awaiting us all.

Acknowledgements

Warm thanks for all the corrections, inspirations, and suggestions I have received from Earl Blauner and Linda Marks, Jim Page and Margaret Phanes, John Robert Cornell, Larry Seidlitz, Marian Thomas, and Martha and Robert Orton.

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Chronicles

The First Nations and the soul of America

Part 2: Journey from Mind to Psychic Being

by Karen Mitchell

Preface

*Sail forth—steer for the deep
waters only,
Reckless, O soul, exploring, I with
thee, and thou with me,
For we are bound where mariner
has not yet dared to go,
And we will risk the ship, ourselves
and all.*

*O my brave soul!
O farther farther sail!
O daring joy, but safe! are they not
all the seas of God?
O farther, farther, farther sail!
—Walt Whitman¹*

After the very divisive and unthinkable 2016 election, I, like many others, found myself thrust into “deep waters” without a recognizable feature to steer by. The situation was not my choice, nor could I say I felt equal to it. However, over time I have realized what a gift it has been and that I am not alone. The Nation has been embarked on a daring and seemingly reckless journey, and I am going too—with America. “I with thee, and thou with me.”

A post-election experience

Shortly after the 2016 presidential election, I was driving back from visiting a friend when suddenly I felt



completely exposed and unattached, as if my body had fallen away. I have died was my first thought. My physical body seemed very distant and I thought I had lost all connection to it. I knew somehow that I was still driving and because of this could not be dead. If I hadn’t died I wondered what had happened. Was I feeling so existentially exposed because I had lost my social matrix? Had we abandoned America, or America us? Because during the experience, I did not feel any fear or have a sense of abandonment, this did not seem accurate. I also noticed an indescribable presence of luminosity, transparency, freedom, and spaciousness. These were within a sort of “field-presence” that swelled. The “swelling” seemed responsible for pushing out my ordinary sense of the body.

I had been shaken and deeply moved by several past National events, but I had never experienced them affecting me before at this level and with such power. I knew any psychological explanation would not come close to doing this experience justice. I had the impression that something new, something profound, was at work, but I did not know what it was. I only knew that my experience was connected to what was happening within America.

I held many unanswerable questions for days and then let them go.

For the time being I decided to try and connect with the Nation’s soul by meditatively reflecting on American history and on the documents considered to be significant reflections on that history. I hoped at some point to catch another glimpse of the Nation’s soul—if that is what had appeared through the qualities of luminosity, transparency, freedom, and spaciousness.

Connecting with America’s soul

Several chapters in Sri Aurobindo’s *The Human Cycle* provided a context and focus for my meditations on American history. In Chapter II, “The Age of Individualism and Reason,” he writes:

An Individualistic age of human society comes as a result of the corruption and failure of the conventional, as a revolt against the reign of the petrified type figure. Before it can be born it is necessary that the old truths shall have been lost in the soul and practice of the race and that even the conventions which ape and replace them shall have become devoid of real sense and intelligence... The individualism of the new age is an attempt to get back from the conventionalism of belief and practice to some solid bed-rock, no matter what, of real and tangible truth.²

America’s founding fathers were very much influenced by the important figures of Europe’s Enlightenment. They too were in revolt against the “petrified,” and against whatever or whoever imposed the old and the dead on them. They attempted to build a nation on the new “bedrock” of reason. With reason were bundled science and individualism. About in-



dividualism Sri Aurobindo says this:

And it is necessarily individualistic, because all the old general standards have become bankrupt and can no longer give any inner help; it is therefore the individual who has to become a discoverer, a pioneer, and to search out by his individual reason, intuition, idealism, desire, claim upon life or whatever other light he finds in himself the true law of the world and of his own being.³

While Sri Aurobindo saw a dominating individualism as a necessary stage, he was also aware of its limits and dangers:

Manifestly, the unrestrained use of individual illumination or judgment without either any outer standard or any generally recognizable source of truth is a perilous experiment for our imperfect race. It is likely to lead rather to a continual fluctuation and disorder of opinion than to a progressive unfolding of the truth of things. No less...the stark assertion of individual rights...and desires must be a source of continual struggle and revolution and may end in an exaggerated assertion of the will in each to live his own life and to satisfy his own ideas and desires which will produce a serious malaise or a radical trouble in the social body.⁴

Many of America's Founding Fathers were aware of this risk and tried to minimize it by setting up a form of government with checks and balances, and with the basic premise that the exercise of one's individual liberty should not reduce another's. However, from the beginning, two massive and linked

issues arose. The first was a persistent belief that human beings had unequal value, despite being touched and moved by the ideal of Equality. This persistent belief justified slavery or its tolerance—the denying of individual liberty to particular human beings. This was in contradiction of course to the Declaration of Independence which states: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness.”

Equality was obviously not “self-evident.” Thomas Jefferson wrote the Declaration and he owned slaves while knowing that several of his cohorts strongly believed, or at least had feelings, that it was wrong. My husband and I visited Jefferson's Monticello home (heavenly mountain) in Virginia and learned something about the conditions he subjected hundreds of people to. It was impossible to reconcile the words of the Declaration of Independence with the reality of what went on at Monticello. It is impossible to reconcile the Declaration with much of the history of America.

Why did Jefferson use the word “Equality,” knowing how ambiguous and conflictual that word was, and realizing that not everyone had the same understanding of what was meant. Why was “Equality” uttered at America's beginnings? Was that word a veiled manifestation of America's soul, something America's soul had to speak, had to declare to the world? Was it, muted and jumbled as it was, the cry announcing America's birth and its presence in the world?

The second major issue, linked to that of persistent inequality, was the growing sense of the elusiveness of any deep and abiding union. We can feel this coming through in our first

president's exhortations in his Farewell Address:

The Unity of Government which constitutes you one people is also now dear to you. It is justly so; for it is a main Pillar in the Edifice of your real independence, the support of your tranquility at home; your peace abroad; of your safety; of your prosperity; of that very Liberty which you so highly prize. But as it is easy to foresee, that from different causes and from different quarters, much pains will be taken, many artifices employed, to weaken in your minds the conviction of this truth...it is of infinite moment, that you should properly estimate the immense value of your national Union to your collective and individual happiness; that you should cherish a cordial, habitual, and immovable attachment to it; accustoming yourselves to think and speak of it as of the Palladium of your political safety and prosperity; watching for its preservation with jealous anxiety; discountenancing whatever may suggest even a suspicion that it can in any event be abandoned, and indignantly frowning upon the first dawning of every attempt to alienate any portion of our Country from the rest, or to enfeeble the sacred ties which now link together the various parts.⁵

In other parts of Washington's Farewell address, he laments the rise of the party system and discusses its risk to democracy and union. He also sees the regional fraction lines of the country and their threat to the union. Washington proved very prescient. Less than a century later America was



engaged in a brutal civil war. That war exposed the link between Equality and Union in the American soul. This was a Nation that set itself to a very high evolutionary goal, whose soul cannot rest, nor enter or offer peaceful union, until Equality is won.

Initially the Civil War was variously described as the necessary means to protect states' rights from Northern tyranny, or as an effort by the North to preserve the status quo of the existing union. Later, what stood out for many, including most remarkably the president, was that it was a battle for Equality. On November 19th, 1863, at the Gettysburg battlefield, where over just three days (July 1-July 3, 1863),

51,000 men were wounded and over 7,000 died, Lincoln gave an extraordinary speech. It was as if the Nation's soul found

clear utterance through him. This is why Senator Charles Sumner, who was there and heard the speech, referred to it as a "monumental act" and said, "The battle itself was less important than the speech." Because it is brief and of such significance, I quote the whole of it here:

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We have

come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate—we cannot consecrate—we cannot hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to

audacious, so utterly daring. Beyond simply salvaging the Union that had been, the soul of the Nation was dedicated to widening it. Equality was the means of doing so. "All men are created equal." Lincoln's words carried the Nation's original dedication, which human frailties and the limitations of reason had resisted and impeded from the beginning. The Nation had been continually at war with its own evolutionary purpose and mission. Gettysburg was a place where that purpose and mission were re-affirmed by America's soul.

The Nation imagined for itself, dreamed for itself, a "new birth of freedom." This freedom involved lib-

The Nation imagined for itself, dreamed for itself, a "new birth of freedom." This freedom involved liberation from all that which blocked the flowering of Equality: ignorance, prejudice, convention, greed, rage, vengeance, narrowness, and fear in relation with others.

eration from all that which blocked the flowering of Equality: ignorance, prejudice, convention, greed, rage, vengeance,

the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.⁶

Reading these words, one can catch a glimpse of America's psychic being. America's soul was so brave, so

narrowness, and fear in relation with others. Freedom is a capacity for Equality. True freedom, America's psychic being saw, was the freedom to love universally. As the African-American poet Langston Hughes wrote:

Let America be the dream the dreamers dreamed—

Let it be that great strong land of love⁷

America felt a powerful stirring of its psychic being in its suffering during the Civil War, and knew from that point on that it had to be established on something greater than reason. Perhaps, not having an adequate understanding or language to express this, Lincoln fell back on the word, God. "This Nation under God



shall have a new birth of freedom.” The soul of America dreamt. It actively and powerfully imagined human persons being entirely freed to love and loving freely.

In the Fall of 2014, I was at Gettysburg with my husband. While there, I noticed a small, out of the way stone monument close to a cornfield. I walked out and sat on the ground behind it. I put my awareness within my body and was still. Almost immediately, I felt my whole body absorbed within a quality of sacredness.

The ending of the Civil War was not the ending of inequality or divisiveness. Brutality and the abuse of power did not end with the Civil War either.

In the 1960s a new Civil Rights movement emerged and gathered momentum amid continuing violence and assassinations. In 1963,

a very significant leader of the Civil Rights movement, Dr. Martin Luther King, addressed the Nation during the March on Washington. Symbolically, he did this standing in front of the Lincoln Memorial and began his speech with echoes of Lincoln’s Gettysburg address: “Five score years ago...” He also referenced the Emancipation Proclamation signed by Lincoln a hundred years prior. Then Dr. King gave his “I Have a Dream Speech”:

...I say to you, today, my friends, though, even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream. I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up, live out the true meaning of

its creed: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal...”⁸

Listening again to a tape of Dr. King’s speech, I was particularly struck by his strong sense and inner perception of how the dream activity of his soul was rooted in the dream activity of America’s soul. This gave Dr. King tremendous strength and power, and also infused him with vision and hope. The whole of his speech integrated Equality and Unity, and reflected the wide and loving embrace that seems an essential gesture and quality of America’s psychic being. We have a Martin Luther King holiday (holy-

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day) because there is the recognition that through him, as through Lincoln, we heard and felt America’s soul. It is extraordinary really, that through a man who could have been a slave a century earlier, we heard, felt and perhaps even saw the great soul of our Nation. Dr. King, like President Lincoln, entered into the wider, corporate consciousness of America. They bore more pain, but also obviously more hope than the ordinary citizen.

That wide embrace of America found a wonderful symbol in the election of Barak Obama as President—as the leader of our Nation and some would say the free world. He was a man who was a confluence of different races and cultures. That night in 2008 when he was first elected, there was a feeling as if the “angels” of America

were wildly rejoicing. Then came the elections of 2016, when we were reminded that Equality and Union are very high mountains requiring reservoirs of awareness, humility, faith, honesty, courage, and intention to summit. It is not for the faint of heart. There is much to be endured and suffered along the way. But the suffering is not by any means fruitless. Within that suffering can come revelation and contact with the Nation’s soul. Sri Aurobindo remarked on this in *The Human Cycle* and used India’s and Ireland’s suffering under British imperialism as examples.

Subjectivism and the First Nations

[T]he Age of Reason is visibly drawing to an end... Sri Aurobindo⁹

Sri Aurobindo saw signs

of the passing of the Age of Reason. What was to take its place in the life not only of individuals but also of Nations? Sri Aurobindo called the new age “Subjective.” Here is how he describes and envisions it:

The closer touch attempted with the psychical entity behind the vital and physical mentality and an increasing reliance on its possibilities must lead to the ultimate discovery that man is inwardly a soul and a conscious power of the Divine and that the evocation of this real man within is the right object of education and indeed of all human life... That was the knowledge which the ancients sought to express through religious and social symbolism, and



subjectivism is a road of return to the lost knowledge. First deepening man's inner experience, restoring perhaps on an unprecedented scale insight and self-knowledge to the race, it must end by revolutionising his social and collective self-expression.¹⁰

America's "lost knowledge," belongs to its indigenous people. At least a few of the First Nations reached the point of discovering soul and the importance of evoking the real human being within. They learned to evoke this real human being through ceremony, stories, art, dance, and song, as well as through listening, fasting, and stillness. When this real human being stepped forward, it was not a separate entity but an unique interweaving of many beings—an individual-communal being. Within some of the First Nations, this became the communal focus and the educational emphasis. Luther Standing Bear had this to say regarding the education of Lakta children:

Training began with children who were taught to sit still and enjoy it. They were taught to use their organs of smell, to look when there was apparently nothing to see, and to listen intently when all seemingly was quiet. A child that cannot sit still is a half developed child.¹¹

Larry Bird, a Keres man, explained:

You don't ask questions when you grow up. You watch and listen

and wait, and the answer will come to you. It's yours then, not like learning in school.¹²

This "lost knowledge" may hold a key to true Equality and Union. At their most developed, the First Nations seemed to have communally supported and perhaps even evoked the real, still largely hidden human being. They called the real human being to come forth, to be present to the community of human and non-human beings: to water, and Earth, sky, coyote, mountain, etc. This calling forth is still here. It comprises what Wolfgang J. Aurose (Schmidt-Reinecke) describes as the deep "soul strata" of America.

Perceiving the subjective power of one's Nation is not essentially an intellectual act or act of reason. Only the psychic being can perceive the psychic being. Only by learning to live in soul can we perceive the soul of our Nation. This is the new bedrock on which Equality and Union can manifest in this world.

I would like to end this section with another quote from Sri Aurobindo:

When we realise the land is only the shell of the body, though a very living shell indeed and potent in its influences on the nation, when we begin to feel that its more real body is the men and women who compose the nation-unit, a body ever changing, yet always the same like that of the individual man, we are on the way to a truly subjective communal consciousness. For then we have some chance of realising that even the physical being of the society is a subjective power, not a mere objective existence.

Much more is it in its inner self a great corporate soul with all the possibilities and dangers of the soul-life.¹³

Perceiving the subjective power of one's Nation is not essentially an intellectual act or act of reason. Only the psychic being can perceive the psychic being. Only by learning to live in soul can we perceive the soul of our Nation. This is the new bedrock on which Equality and Union can manifest in this world.

A new frontier

It's a denial of all the spiritual assertions of the past: 'If you want to live fully conscious of the divine life, leave your body—the body cannot follow.' Well, Sri Aurobindo came and said, 'Not only can the body follow, but it can be the base that will manifest the Divine.'
—The Mother¹⁴

I spent a week in solitude in early May on the northern California coast. I took with me *The Mother's Yoga*. During this precious time, I found myself remembering the experience I had shortly after the election, and not just remembering it, but reliving it. I noticed something that I had not noticed earlier, and that was how little I knew about my connection to the body and about the body's true nature. My mind had so quickly produced questions that I had not allowed myself time to inhabit the magnitude and immensity of my not knowing. Now I did allow myself the time.



I saw how when I approach the body mentally there is a sort of an “event horizon.” Everything goes absolutely dark—as things are said to do when approaching a “black hole.” The mind knows nothing of the body. It becomes unconscious where and when it enters the body—not even realizing the magnitude of what it doesn’t know. The Mother said again and again to Satprem in those last years when she was in the midst of the yoga of the cells: We don’t know. What seems so given, so basic, so plain, is quite the opposite.

When I began savoring the immensity of my unknowing about the body, I felt a releasing, an unblocking, an opening to yet unimagined evolutionary possibilities. Being fully present to the unknowing and this opening were intrinsically linked. I had the strong impression that all this was connected to the destiny of America. Why? Was this unknowing regarding the body America’s future new frontier? I knew it would be in keeping with America’s brave, daring, and adventurous soul to sail this far. “O farther, farther, farther sail...”

But how far from this America seems now! America has been so driven—too busy producing, extracting, dissecting, analyzing, controlling, battling, and fixing to let itself experience the magnitude of what it doesn’t know. So many of its energies have been increasingly focused by the collective mind on non-essentials, distractions, minutiae, and egoic gain. How much we need that lost, more contemplative-embodied knowledge of the First Nations. Vision is lacking—that depth and wideness of vision which perhaps only comes through first being fully present to the unknown. Conversation is drying up as everyone knows everything they need to know already. Thinking has lost its vitality. There are

“alternative facts.” Lying is tolerated as a form of entertainment. It has reached a point now where the majority of people feel the very foundation of the Nation shifting, and yes, crumbling. “Reason” is a word that elicits little enthusiasm. We are also confronting the powerlessness of reason to overcome unreasonableness and its effects.

I wondered if there was something that could help me understand why America was going through all of this and what “this” was. I continued to hold and inhabit my experience. At some point I realized that when my body disappeared to view as I was driving home, it was because the mind had been temporarily kicked out of the body and had lost its authority over it. That feeling of exposure could have been the mind’s experience of being without body, or the body’s being without mind. In either case, it was enough to make me wonder if I had died. Later, I read this passage in *The Mother’s Yoga* which I had taken with me on my coastal retreat, astounded by its relevance:

...You see, for us who have gone up to the highest degree of mental potentiality, it’s through that highest degree that we went beyond...—it’s when the mind realized its highest degree that it abdicated—and that is very good for the integral realization, but generally the body is too accustomed to obeying the mind, not supple enough to be transformed. That’s the reason why my mind was sent away....

...Everything is too active.

And for the Force to be able to go through rapidly so as to reach the body, a GREAT passivity is needed. I can see that: every time there is a pressure so as to act on some part of the body or other,

it always begins with an absolute passivity, which is...the ‘perfection of inertia,’ you understand? What inertia imperfectly represents—it’s the perfection of that... Something with no activity of its own—which is VERY difficult precisely for those who have a great mental development, very difficult. Because its whole life long, the body has worked to be in that state of receptivity to the mind, and that state, which is what brought about its obedience, docility and so on, is what needs to be abolished.

How can I explain?...The development through the mind is a constant and general awakening of the whole being—even the most material being—an awakening as a result of which there is also something that’s the opposite of sleep. But to receive the supreme Force, what’s needed is, on the contrary, the equivalent of stillness—the stillness of sleep, but an ABSOLUTELY CONSCIOUS sleep, absolutely conscious. The body feels the difference.¹⁵

I thought it more probable now that the “swelling” I experienced while driving was due to America’s psychic being joining mine. Rather than being abandoned by America as I first thought, America’s psychic being had drawn even nearer.

When I asked myself where did the body go when it seemed to fall away, I realized that only the physical form as perceived by the mind appeared to fall away. The body perceived through the soul remained and that body was everywhere like an ocean without shores. My mind could not grasp this, but I knew it was true. It is the mind, or a mentalized consciousness, that sees



the body as a limited, individualized physical form, but that is not the only experience of body possible to us. It is the mind that relates to the body as instrument, but we are not confined to living in that kind of relation. Later, when I inwardly asked, “What is the relation of the soul to the body?” what immediately came to me was this: “The soul is the womb, the bearer of the true body.”

The presence of America's psychic being

Several weeks after my retreat at the coast, I participated in another Soul of the Nation workshop with Soleil Aurose (Lithman) and Wolfgang J. Aurose (Schmidt-Reinecke). I came because Soleil and Wolfgang have discovered contemporary methods that can bring people face to face with their souls and with the souls of their Nations. At the opening of the workshop, I experienced a “swelling” similar to my experience while driving shortly after the election, but it was less intense and fairly quickly was felt as a presence that filled the room. It seemed as if the psychic being of America was providing a sense of continuity between my individual experience shortly after the election and the collective aspiration and endeavor of the workshop. “I was there while you were driving and I am here,” America seemed to be saying.

This is a painful time, a very difficult and seemingly dangerous time in our Nation and the world. I believe a global shift is going on from a mind-governed world, and mind-governed

bodies, to something else—possibly to a world and bodies living within the greater influence and power of the psychic being. However, we are not yet in that new world and so it feels as if we are in free-fall, as if no one and nothing is leading us. The change feels swift, powerful, and dramatic in this country. In these turbulent times, America feels like a tree buffeted by storm, stripped of leaves and even large branches.

Sri Aurobindo said that Nations are corporate souls “with all the possibilities and dangers of soul life.” We are definitely immersed in both now.

This is a painful time, a very difficult and seemingly dangerous time in our Nation and the world. I believe a global shift is going on from a mind-governed world, and mind-governed bodies, to something else—possibly to a world and bodies living within the greater influence and power of the psychic being.

And while both the possibilities and the dangers may frighten us, my experiences have taught me that we are less alone than ever. The change of consciousness that may seem—and may be—impossible for us to navigate individually, may not be impossible with the help of other psychic beings including the soul of our own Nation. I definitely feel the psychic being of America is very powerful, very present, and is helping us.

While the need for courage and individual endeavor remains, what is coming appears more as an ever widening, communal movement, a joining of souls, a growing collective of stillness opening to the Supreme Force.

I with Thee, and Thou with Me...

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Essays

A short course in Integral Yoga 2: Karma yoga

by Matthias Pommerening

The following essay is based on the author's answers to study questions in an online course on Integral Yoga offered by the Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advance Research. The answers pertained to readings in Sri Aurobindo's Letters on Yoga II, in the Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo (CWSA), Vol. 29, pp. 121-294. Whereas Part 1 (see Spring 2017 issue of Collaboration) focused on basic principles and processes of the Yoga, Part 2 focuses specifically on karma yoga.

Motivation for work in sadhana

The true motivation for work in sadhana is not the work itself, its perceived outward necessity or benefit to oneself or others. The true motivation for work as sadhana should be the Divine's Will, love and service for the Divine, not one's desires. Work in sadhana, in order for it to have its intended purifying effect on the consciousness, should be done without egoistic motivations like need of positive social feedback or advancement of one's status, financial reward, not to become a celebrity of some kind, without rigid intellectual concepts or emotional attachments and without regard for physical inconveniences. The outer effect of the work is irrelevant in this context, as its benefit in yoga is purely dependent on the egoless state of consciousness as a base of the action. The work should



be done for the Divine alone, or because it is "right," not for its reward. There should be no conditions made in regard to one's work, but everything should be done as a loving offering. Even the desire for internal progress and perfection through work should give way to doing work for the Divine alone. One should apply an undivided concentrated will to this process and make it the central focus of one's work. An underlying motive of karma yoga can be love for the Divine.

Essential features of the karma yoga

The essential features of the karma Yoga are to do one's work disinterestedly, as an instrument and with the memory of the Divine, doing it for the Divine. The work should be done in a yogic consciousness, with the Yoga-Shakti doing it through the sadhak as an instrument. In karma yoga, one consecrates works to the Divine, in the context of the Integral yoga to

the Divine Mother, and ideally feels her doing the work. This consecration of the work should be done "without any inner division," the whole being should offer up the work without any egoistic intentions left anywhere in it. Especially the vital nature often resists this offering. Everything that resists within oneself has to be discovered and rejected or otherwise be brought "into line with the psychic movement" behind. All egoistic desires attached to or lower reactions coming up in work have to be rejected. Then an "undivided consecration of the active vital nature" is possible in work.

Sri Aurobindo describes the inner experience of karma yoga as being conscious of the Divine Mother's force doing the work, oneself being surrendered to it. According to Sri Aurobindo, in such a state of consciousness the sense of ego disappears and is replaced by a joyous surrender. Even if the state of joyous surrender of one's action is not complete, there is a constant trust in the Divine regarding the work to be done. In order to attain this state, one needs faith, will, and patience, as well as a constant intense aspiration, a more and more complete surrender, and to reject all adverse energies and formations in oneself and from others.

Centering one's consciousness in the Purusha, the witness-consciousness can be a step towards bringing this attitude into all one's actions, as they are then seen as movements of Prakriti, not one's own movements. Into this inner consciousness higher forces can descend and eventually express themselves in the outer work as well.

Sri Aurobindo differentiates between work in ordinary life, as part of the classical Gita's Yoga and as part of the Integral Yoga. While the first one is guided by personal aim, desire, mental and moral control, and in some cases, ideals, the karma yoga as



revealed to Arjuna by Krishna aims at the overcoming of the ego and its desires, realizing a state of consciousness that includes love for the Divine as well as oneness with all beings and God, and egoless action. The Integral Yoga aims at the descent of the supramental Truth-Consciousness into the most material world in order to transform it. Karma yoga is one discipline utilized in this process to prepare the instrument for the working of this higher force and finally its expression.

Guideposts in choosing one's work

In regard to how one should choose one's work, Sri Aurobindo again points out that the state of consciousness underlying the outer action is the essential and defining perspective.

Regarding the outer expression one should evaluate if it is in line with one's nature (*svabhava*), the will of one's individualized divinity inside or if there are other indicators for the work to be one's dharma. As long as the work is the "school of experience" to become conscious of one's ego, to offer it up for transformation, and learn to do the work from within, any work can be useful for this process. Once the Divine consciousness becomes the foundation for outward manifestation in work, the Divine consciousness can dictate any work to be taken up or left according to its higher intuition and intention. "Any work can be done as a field for the practice of the spirit of the Gita."

Cessation of attachments in work

One would no longer do the work for all the egoistic reasons mentioned above, but from a psychic or spiritual consciousness within, that allows for the work to be done with the same if not greater force. Then the skills and abilities one developed would become aspects of an instrument of the Divine force. One would be able to consecrate the work to the Divine and feel and witness in a calm joy the force of the Divine Mother working through the instrument according to her higher will. Outer difficulties would not dis-

the constant experience of the Divine in all things and beings becomes possible. In order to open to the dynamic power of the Divine Shakti, one first has to aspire for it, prepare one's consciousness and be able to discern her influence full of calm, peace, power, light, and bliss from the lower forces. All work is then a sacrifice to the Divine, which ultimately leads to the siddhi attainable by karma yoga: Experiencing the work from a witness-perspective as being done by the Divine guide through the instrument. If attachment would cease, the need to justify vital resistance to the work one has chosen or has been given would

cease as well. One would do it not as one's own work but as the Divine Mother's.

The utility of work in sadhana

The utility of work in the

sadhana is to synchronize inner and outer development and in the end allow for the inner realizations to change the outer nature. If one was to meditate only, the subjective inner experience might never be tested and therefore given the chance to be brought out into the outer nature. Before ordinary work becomes karma yoga, one can use it as preparation, as a "field of inner training" to learn "equality, desirelessness [and] dedication." Work, its demands on the nature and the social interactions they require, hold up a mirror to the sadhak, which shows in how far the inner progress translates into outer life. If, for example, stress or misunderstandings at work provoke anger and depression, obviously previously

Work, its demands on the nature and the social interactions they require, hold up a mirror to the sadhak, which shows in how far the inner progress translates into outer life. If, for example, stress or misunderstandings at work provoke anger and depression, obviously previously hidden ego-parts show themselves and can now be addressed.

traught the worker, as he has an unshakable faith in the Divine force doing the work, that it will take care of any issue in its omniscient and omnipotent consciousness.

Cessation of attachments in work would consist in a state of equality towards the process and result of one's work, the people involved in it through social interactions and their reactions to the work and its products. This can be achieved through a constant conscious connection to and remembrance of the Divine or feeling of the presence in a mind undisturbed by other thoughts. One's heart should be opened to the Divine and the work done as an offering. When the ego is "dropped" in this process,



hidden ego-parts show themselves and can now be addressed. Outer failures in work can bring ambition and success-seeking to light, which then can be offered to the Divine Mother. In preparation for yoga, work can also be a field of training for the will to be strengthened, refining one's mental capacities and vital discipline.

Importance of equality in karma yoga

Equanimity is defined by Sri Aurobindo as a calm, unchanging inner state and emotional and mental movements independent of outer happenings such as working conditions that are perceived as difficult or failures in one's outer efforts. This inner state allows to continue one's work no matter what the challenges are. A yogic equanimity allows for the application and direction of the yoga-force, which can silently affect the outer change in people and circumstances, normally sought through emotional outbursts or mental schemes in ordinary life. For this yogic-force to be allowed to work to its fullest potential on a basis of samata, it must be undisturbed by egoistic movements. An inner state of samata and a conscious and knowledgeable use of the yoga-force allow for an ideal protection from adverse attacks in one's work.

Working impersonally

Doing work impersonally means to do it from an uninvolved, objective point of view without egoistic preferences or mental or vital distortions of what "the will of the Master of things" wants one to do. Mental or vital distortions include, for example: all forms of egoism like ambition, pride, vanity, arrogance, self-will, self-assertion, desire for power or powers and pride of

the instrument through which the Divine force works. Instead one should do the work from the psychic, offering the outer nature as a humble instrument for the work.

Apparently a paradox from the point of view of the ordinary mind, this detached attitude makes the work much easier to do. In this attitude the work is done according to the highest understanding of and capacity for the best way it could be done for the Divine Mother, without regard for possible inconveniences for one's ego. While the vital can be a powerful instrument for this kind of work, its egoism needs to be replaced by a spiritual motivation through bhakti and devotion.

Therefore, asceticism and solitary meditation are not the way and intellectual understanding of the Yoga can only be a preparation, which must be followed by an inner offering of the mind and vital to the Divine Mother, feeling her presence, finally uniting with her and turning the outer nature into her forces' instrument. Work as service to the Divine Mother means to do it more and more under her guidance and influence.

"Small work" and "big work" in Integral Yoga

Work as part of the Integral Yoga's sadhana depends for its spiritual effect not so much on outer parameters but the spirit and consciousness in which it is done. Although the outer work should be done as well as possible, the essential aspect is its consecration to the Divine Mother, the awareness that it is her acting through the instrument. Ideally, this work as offering is done without any egoistic desire, an undisturbed consciousness independent of personal agendas or apparent outer circumstances.

For example, the mental ego might disregard physical work, but physical work done in the spirit of karma yoga could be much more beneficial to the progress of the sadhana if mental work would only be motivated by vanity and ambition. Ideas of the superiority of one's own or somebody else's work can be suggestions of the hostile forces to disturb one's progress. If such a revolt against the given work occurs, the negative influence should be rejected and the Divine Mother be invoked to free one from it. The Divine does not pit intellectual against physical work, for it doesn't matter whether someone makes shoes or writes poems, what matters is the consciousness behind the action.

Through inner progress towards spiritual knowledge and power, work considered "small" by the ordinary mind, reveals its greater significance in the light of a higher consciousness. This higher consciousness brings a complete equanimity and detachment to the work. Even if the work seems repetitive and dull to the outer nature, the higher consciousness acts on its intuition, truth-knowledge or Divine guidance, continuing or changing its work disregarding the ego's preferences.

This does not mean that one should torture oneself with work unsuited for the instrument and nature, but one should also not only do what the vital enjoys to do, because this makes it more difficult to progress. Ideally, one should let go of all dislikes and aspire for the psychic to joyously turn the whole nature to any work given by the Mother.

Sri Aurobindo gives the examples of a lawyer having made inner progress through his work by opening to the Mother's force and the danger of religious work being done only for external and vital purposes. Similar-



ly, business can be done in the right spirit to make it a vehicle for the Divine force to work, like some disciples did in running a mill and trading with East Africa. At the same time, there should be no attachment to the wealth that comes with it, no greed.

Although the ascetic ideal does not need to be practiced in its extreme, it should always be possible for a spiritual being to live without any outer means, if necessary. Still, being inwardly free from outer circumstances and actions while performing them in the world is a more desirable path than a world-denying asceticism. Even outer actions in politics, revolutions, and war do not need to exclude inner progress towards the Divine if done in that spirit, as Sri Aurobindo's life and Krishna's teachings to Arjuna demonstrate.

Joy and interest in work

Sri Aurobindo writes about a kind of yogic absorption in work, in which the interest and joy of the work does not depend on the outer object anymore, but the consciousness and energy underlying and flowing into the outer action from above. These qualities and their fullest application to whatever outer means bring interest and joy into the work. The pure enthusiasm this brings should be distinguished from the enthusiasm of the lower nature and ego, which only show interest if they see the possibility of satisfaction in the outer action. The lower nature needs to be purified and turned towards the Divine for it to become a useful instrument. Until then mind and vital seek novel stimuli and the physical repetition in work.

Usually, in the beginning of a new intellectual activity, the mind can be the conduit of an inspiration, which uplifts the work, but after a while the

mind loses contact with that inspiration, falls back to the ordinary mind's judgment. Similarly, in taking up a new physical work like cooking, one might feel an uplift of the consciousness, higher awareness and assurance in the activity, but soon the physical mind takes over again. Sri Aurobindo supposes, that by means of sadhana one can develop the ability to get back in contact with the inspiration just by intending it.

The vital's consent in any work is needed and vital delight allows for a greater opening to the Divine influence. Sri Aurobindo observes that these qualities are lacking in most people's attitude towards work and that their vital finds delight in activities outside their field of work, because there it can follow its likes and dislikes without restraint. The ideal joy in work would be free from excitement, agitation, would not cloud the mind's clarity, but instead originate from the psychic and bring a peaceful gladness into mind and vital, open oneself to the Mother's force, and protect from negative energies that could tire and depress.

Development of the inner consciousness in work

In the beginning, one is probably identified with the outer consciousness and ego and does not have contact with the inner being, let alone able to perform work from the basis of this inner consciousness. To approach karma yoga from this state of outer ignorance, one can simply remember the Divine Mother before performing an action and offer one's work to her. This consecration of one's work should become the outer nature's habit.

But to truly do work from within, one should get in contact with the Divine inner witness being and make it

the silent center and sovereign of one's being, so that it can put to use the outer nature, all movements of the (expressive) mind, vital, and physical. This inner consciousness is often felt first in silent meditation and only gradually becomes accessible while performing outer actions as well. But it is possible to develop this inner consciousness and remain centered in the inner quiet, unify with the Divine Mother within and allow her to perform the outer work.

This can be experienced as a kind of double consciousness in which the inner concentration and oneness with the Mother is always held, while outwardly one can still concentrate on the task, without losing the connection. This inner consciousness has a quality of peace and silence, an intense aspiration can develop there as well. At some point this inner state can be kept in all outer actions and circumstances such as social interactions or sleep. If one notices losing contact with the inner being during work, one can aspire and concentrate within to reestablish the connection with the inner or psychic being. Perceived (inner or outer) pressure in work can be a force trying to push one's consciousness from the surface consciousness back within, towards the psychic being.

Sri Aurobindo also writes about a phase in this development that includes a consciousness that seems to mediate between the inner and the outer, which can direct the outer consciousness appropriate to outer circumstances but does not lose the connection with the inner. This seems to be a phase of transition before one has identified oneself completely with the inner consciousness, making the outer nature its instruments. In the process, the instruments are already uplifted, for example, higher thoughts enter the individual mental consciousness.



This process gives one more and more inner freedom, culminating in the identification with the inner-most being of divine substance, but also increases the power of outer manifestation through a greater opening to intuition and inspiration leading the action.

Sri Aurobindo distinguishes three phases of this process. In the first phase one loses the contact with the inner being through the externalization of the consciousness and has to make an effort to get back into it. In the second phase one also shifts into the outer consciousness during work, but the inner or higher consciousness remains behind and is felt again without effort as soon as the outer engagement has stopped. In the third phase outer work doesn't change anything, because the spiritual realization is established and remains under all circumstances. Then one feels the work going on within that greater consciousness with the divine force doing it.

Further, two kinds of absorption have to be distinguished—absorption in the external consciousness, its action and the work itself that lets one forget about the Mother, the inner life, and so on, and absorption in the inner and higher being in a trance that does not allow for outer action. While both can be desirable intermediate phases in the development of one's inner consciousness and outer capacity for work, one should develop a plastic consciousness in which one can either move freely between these states or keep them simultaneously conscious in the inner and outer parts of the being. Then the Divine Force will harmonize the whole being. Before that happens, different parts of the being might resist this process or the work, for example, the vital physical or the material subconscious.

True karma yoga becomes possible only after a fundamental reversal

of consciousness, having shifted one's consciousness from the surface nature to the inner being, ideally having identified one's consciousness with a Purusha or at least having become conscious and stable enough within to feel Divine forces and qualities emerge, act in, and descend into oneself to do the work. This has then become a new natural state within, which requires no effort to sustain it in any outer activities or circumstances. Then work would no longer be a field of preparation for karma yoga, an opportunity to discover one's ego-knots and offer them to the Divine, but become the real thing.

Development of the inner guidance in work

The inner guidance on the level of the mind regarding the right way to succeed in an outer action depends on the witness consciousness and the degree of silence in the mind to receive the higher inspiration or intuition. By aspiration for knowledge of the right thing to do, one can become aware of one's own nature's movements and their qualities in relation to the aim, of a distinct inner warning and awareness of adverse inner movements, and clear inner signals that stop one's actions before doing something of disservice to the inner and outer aims. The inner contact can come through bhakti as well, especially to the Guru, as it increases his influence, but generally an inner stillness is needed to be able to perceive the inner guidance emerging in various forms, not just words. Because of this, the right answer is often difficult for the sadhak to distinguish from all the chatter of all the other parts of the being and the energies and suggestions entering them.

Sri Aurobindo lists some hindrances to perceiving this inner guid-

ance, namely referring to outer information for certainty, putting the ego's voice in the place of the true inner guidance, insufficient stillness in the mind, and outer influences. In one letter Sri Aurobindo advises a sadhak to not seek for the guidance itself but the inner consciousness to grow to enable the true guidance. Sri Aurobindo also points out the usefulness of trust in the Divine and the Guru in this matter, rejecting and offering inner movements of worry, restlessness, confusion, and so on, seeing mistakes as stepping stones towards greater perfection, and just concentrate on the quiet opening to the Divine. Generally, the force of the Mother is the one thing to open to in order for it to take care of inner processes, negativity, uncertainty, and so on, as well as matters of outer work and action. Sri Aurobindo advises us to aspire permanently for the Divine to take up all matters in our life.

The previously described guidance that is based on a developing inner consciousness beginning to receive, distinguish, and enact it with varying degrees of success can be succeeded by true, clear, precise, and imperative knowledge of the Divine's will. For this, a consciousness categorically different from the egoistic outer and even not yet inner-most inner parts needs to be allowed to lead the being, become its constant sovereign. The knowledge of the Divine's will can become obvious and easier to follow when one either identifies with the psychic being or silences one's mind to receive undistorted inspirations and intuitions from the Divine above.

Cultivating a Purusha-consciousness in mind, vital, or body is only a first step, as they are passive stations of witness-consciousness, which need to deepen into the dynamic soul-force of the psychic or open to the Divine and the Mother's force working from



above, changing the outer nature. These are the first steps on the way to a finally constant self-fulfillment of a divine truth-consciousness in the manifestation, the supermind acting and completely transforming the instrument. Until then, aspiration and personal effort are necessary.

The Jivanmukta's consciousness in work

A Jivanmukta is one who has attained oneness with the Divine and is therefore free from karma in work, able to perform actions without being bound by them. There is no more need to do anything, but instead choices of a Divine consciousness inspired by the soul's will to experience or manifest, or a silent mind receiving inspiration and intuition from above, or an instrument being used for some work by the Divine Force. There are no more desires or aversions, no ego compelled by outer circumstances to action in relation to any manifested being, energy, or event surrounding this point of light in the ignorance. Therefore, action becomes a free expression of the Divine consciousness and force, limiting itself for its intended purposes.

The effect of the realization of the soul and the Divine Mother descending into the being, opening the centers, releasing the kundalini-force, on life and work might be glimpsed in the following lines from *Savitri* (CWSA, Vols. 33-34, p. 529):

A channel of the mighty Mother's choice,

The immortal's will took into its calm control
Our blind or erring government of life;
A loose republic once of wants and needs,
Then bowed to the uncertain sovereign mind,
Life now obeyed to a diviner rule
And every act became an act of God.
In the kingdom of the lotus of the heart
Love chanting its pure hymeneal hymn
Made life and body mirrors of sacred joy
And all the emotions gave themselves

Cultivating a Purusha-consciousness in mind, vital or body is only a first step, as they are passive stations of witness-consciousness, which need to deepen into the dynamic soul-force of the psychic or open to the Divine and the Mother's force working from above, changing the outer nature.

to God.
In the navel lotus' broad imperial range
Its proud ambitions and its master lusts
Were tamed into instruments of a great calm sway
To do a work of God on earthly soil.
In the narrow nether centre's petty parts
Its childish game of daily dwarf desires
Was changed into a sweet and boisterous play,
A romp of little gods with life in Time.
In the deep place where once the Serpent slept,
There came a grip on Matter's giant powers
For large utilities in life's little space;

A firm ground was made for Heaven's descending might.

Conditions for receiving the Divine Force in work

Sri Aurobindo lists three psychological features as necessary for the Divine Force to work through oneself on external circumstances. These are quietude and equality, absolute faith, and receptivity. First, quietude and equality (absence of thoughts and a settled witness-consciousness) allow oneself to remain unmoved by outer energies, to observe them from an inner stillness. If there was mental activity in

the mind, possibly in the form of an expectation regarding the working of the force and its result, that could interfere with the experience of the force and it manifest-

ing its full effect. A silent mind would be the ideal condition for the force to descend and act from above. This descending Divine Force does not disturb the silence and peace, but unfolds its power in it. Second, absolute faith in the Divine to do its work through the instrument according to its higher wisdom and aim without regard for the result of the action, but with the best use of one's abilities. Third, receptivity means to be exclusively in touch with the presence of the Divine Mother and her Force, letting it influence and mould all one's inner and outer movements.

The Divine Force can also be called upon in prayer to the Divine Mother, which, when effective, leads first to a rest and calm being felt and then a stream of energy taking up the



work through oneself. The vital can learn to offer this prayer spontaneously, for example, as soon as its energies are depleted, in order for the Divine Force to take over the work. The rest and calm as a basis, combined with an intense concentration on receiving a higher force or inspiration are essential. It is rather this opening than a strenuous effort, inviting the Divine Force to work in and through oneself, that makes work an effortless outflow of it. One should just take care to do the work as perfectly as possible, removing the ego from it, becoming a better instrument. The Divine Force drives the instrument to manifest itself. This influence should be allowed and followed but also precaution taken against exhaustion through proper rest. One should always dedicate one's work to the Divine as the Divine Force can use this act of consecration as an opening to work in and through oneself. Before the Divine Force can enter the being from above, work is supported by the mind, vital, and physical consciousness and ideally the inner and inner-most consciousness behind. From there actions can be perceived from a witness-consciousness.

Any work should be seen as given by the Mother and done joyously, open to her Divine Force.

Becoming an instrument of the Divine Force in work

The Divine Force can either use the instrument as a temporary medium or transform it into a constant instrument. In the first case, the Divine Force may work through a certain individual for a specific aim and withdraw from it after achieving its goal, taking its greater power of work, expression, and manifestation with it. Someone under the influence of the Divine Force in such a way might ex-

hibit uncommon skills and peak performances, but resort back to previous inferior capabilities once the Divine Force withdraws again. In the transformation of the individual into a "living perfected instrument," the Divine Force works within it to allow for an intuitive knowledge of the right thing to do at each moment in work. This includes the development of discernment as well as the ability to call for the Divine Force at any time at will to be applied in outer circumstances in the right way. In this case, the instruments faculties are raised into a higher degree of themselves, constantly in touch with the Divine Force which perfects them and the outer work ever more. The perfection of the outer expression still depends on the field of work, as certain works (e.g. painting, sculpture, architecture) need specific outer training and knowledge of the instrument to be perfectly executed, which the Divine Force could use if present in it, but which cannot be substituted by its presence and influence alone.

It is important in the context of sadhana to recognize and remember the Divine's ownership of the work. If the conditions described above are fulfilled, the joy of creation in work is not egoistic in the sense of self-worth and status derived from an action performed well, but the experience of Ananda, Power, and Delight of the Divine Force flooding the instrument from above, raising and illumining its consciousness, manifesting beauty and perfection.

When the work is done out of the vital ego, one loses oneself in the work and with that the contact to the psychic being. The Divine Force works quietly and spontaneously and possibly with a high intensity, but still very much different from the egoistic effort which can be aggressive because of resistance and struggle in one's work. Exhaustion

and fatigue can be the result of vital desires and preferences in relation to the work, almost always present in ordinary work and therefore common. Work initiated out of and sustained with desire can lead to excess of effort, strain, exhaustion, and despondence, disbelief, and revolt if the result does not fulfill expectation. If desire mixes in the work of somebody doing sadhana and being advanced in it, occult energies might be pulled into him that are undesirable and possibly harmful in the spiritual endeavor. Sadhaks need to learn to distinguish them from the Divine Force and handle them appropriately.

Regaining the true consciousness for karma yoga

When one loses the true consciousness in one's karma yoga, the remedy is to remain as quiet as possible, to call down the Divine Force and the peace into the mind and heart, call to the Divine Mother, offer and open oneself on all levels of the being, aspire and reject thought-formations which want to sustain the disturbance, to surrender. Also, one needs to learn to keep the openness to the Divine Force not only during the work once one gets it there, but also in necessary interruptions of relaxation. One should be able to keep the right consciousness in work as well as in times of repose. Generally, breaks in the true consciousness and ability to work could be avoided by abstaining from overstrain, which depletes one's energies. If one does this anyway, in response one should rest, remain quiet or aspire for the calm and peace to return, calling for, and opening to, the Divine Mother's Force to take care of the matter. The calm and peace should also be brought into the physical nervous system and cells.



Beauty and harmony

by Richard Pearson

“Let beauty be your constant ideal:

- the beauty of the soul*
- the beauty of the sentiments*
- the beauty of thoughts*
- the beauty of the actions*
- the beauty in the work.*

So that nothing comes out of your hands that is not an expression of pure and harmonious beauty.

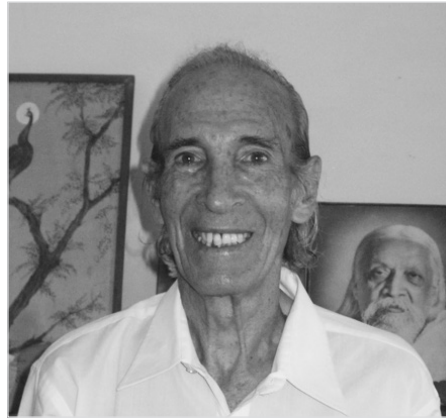
And the Divine Help shall always be with you.”¹

Just as we learn to separate our thought from our consciousness, I believe we may stand back from all our “self-regarding egoism, hypocrisy and vain self-flattering,”² to look into our heart and higher mind and express the beauty of the soul.

In this inspiring message the body is not mentioned. Yet it is submitted to the vital, through feelings, emotions and outside influences. Besides this, the equally despotic mind comes along with its own preconceived ideas, opinions, and often limited knowledge, resulting in partiality, preference or even downright obstinacy; all this effects the body. Sri Aurobindo describes “these disabilities of mental activity” which literally attack us, in these words: “grief, fear, anger, passion, hunger, greed, desire.”³

Detach the consciousness from these influences through beauty of the sentiments, beauty of the thoughts, beauty in actions, as well as beauty in the work. This will help the body to express its own individual beauty.

Yes, we have to work from within to express anything outwardly. Let us recall what Sri Aurobindo writes when comparing the Western theory of creation starting from Matter with



the Indian one: “... God created the world by developing the many out of the One. From ‘kāraṇa’ to ‘sūkshma’ to ‘sthūla,’ and back again, that is the formula.”⁴ I feel we should begin from the ideal, to the inner being, and finally to the body. Or from our soul to a purified, well-developed mind, and strong, refined, ever more consecrated vital, to help the body to grow in beauty. A detailed and persistent inner work is needed to produce such a change and gradually give an outward result.

This is all the more easy when we give ourselves to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, with an unreserved and total surrender. They are leading us by the straight and joyous path towards beauty and truth. The poet John Keats says: “Beauty is truth, truth, beauty—that is all ye know on earth and all ye need to know.”⁵

This truth is now for us the Truth-Consciousness, the Supramental Consciousness. She emphatically announces: “The world is preparing for a big change. Let us help, through physical education, by making the body stronger, more receptive and more plastic...on the way to physical transformation.”⁶ And this too: “We are at one of the Hours of God... it is a wonderful opportunity for those who want to leap forward, the possibility of progress is exceptional. Let your body be prepared through physical education for the great change.”⁷

Let us be conscious of our body, even talk to it as to an intimate friend, ready to listen when it wants to tell us something. Or hear, when told: “I do not like this stiffness of mine. Can’t you become more supple”? Or, again: “What is this ugly shape? Do something to change and be more beautiful.” The Mother assures us that the body does listen and changes do occur. For this, however, we have to study our whole being and root out “self-regarding egoism, hypocrisy and vain self-flattery,” with a prayer and an aspiration to put light into the dark, unwilling, or even secretly revolting parts that still resist the arrival of the true Consciousness, and so gradually bring harmony and beauty into the body itself.

“Build in yourself the total harmony, so that when the time comes Perfect Beauty can express itself through your body,” said the Mother in another message.⁸

As she says “... a new consciousness is at work upon Earth to prepare man for a new creation, the Superman. For this creation to be possible, the substance that constitutes man’s body must undergo a big change: it must become more receptive to the consciousness and more plastic under its working. These are just the qualities that one can acquire through physical education.”⁹

* * *

Here are a few small exercises to know mentally your body.

As far as breathing goes, ask yourself: “Does the air come in through both nostrils during inhalation? By which nostril does the air come in, and through which does the air normally go out? Can I consciously change this cycle?” Notice that the incoming air feels cool and the outgoing warm.



In Pranayama you are told to direct your breath during inhalation into the part you need the prāna to work on and during exhalation throw out the undesirable stuff. Can you experience this? One practice I find useful is to breathe out for double or even triple the time of breathing in.

In voice training you are taught to breathe from the diaphragm or abdomen; that is, breathe in with the tummy pushed forward and breathe out with the tummy drawn in. This gives power and sustained effort. Besides, you can also breathe expanding the lower floating ribs. Furthermore, if you try, you will be able to breathe in from the front, the sides, and the back of the thoracic cage, expanding the lungs in several levels and sides.

An interesting exercise is also to feel any part of the body without touching it. When you concentrate your attention you will get, at any chosen spot or part, a feeling of warmth or heaviness, even of a presence. A rather difficult task is to feel separately the third and fourth toe on any foot.

* * *

When the Mother speaks of pushing the consciousness into the fingers to play better, does it mean to bring consciousness into the organs, into the very cells? We should remember that consciousness is an awareness, far beyond any formulation by the mind. Then I believe we really know, as the Mother says, with the body.

And as she mentioned even earlier: "... the physical consciousness and nature are closed up and rigid... shut up in their habits, they accept only one regular routine. But for the physical being and consciousness to receive the divine impulsion, it must be extremely plastic... It is a question of collaboration with the body. It is no longer a question of coalition. The physical being and physical Consciousness must be very plastic to be able to lend themselves to all the necessary changes, so as to be of one kind one day and another the next, and so on."¹⁰

Throughout her whole life, the

"On the material level, japa is very good for that [to establish our cells' contact with the Truth]. When your head is tired and you are a little weary of forever contradicting that pessimism, you just have to repeat your japa, and automatically you make contact. To make contact. That's something the cells value a lot. A lot. It's a very good way, because it's a way that isn't mental, it's a mechanical way, it's a question of vibration." The Mother

Mother's work with the consciousness was always accompanied by a continuous, ever-perfecting and absolute self-surrender. We feel her sincere, one-pointed and absolute consecration and self-giving to the Lord expressed as "Let Thy will be done and not mine;" and later to "What Thou willest, what Thou willest;" and finally to "I am Thine for eternity."

In *Notes on the Way*, we find this mantra of hers, repeated during all her activities: "*Om namo Bhagavate*, Lord, make me divine." And this vibration reached the very cells of her body, till they too could express this, as she writes in the "Prayer of the cells of the Body."

"Now that, by the effect of the Grace, we are slowly emerging out of the Inconscience and waking to a con-

scious life, an ardent prayer rises in us for more light, more consciousness. 'O Supreme Lord of the universe, we implore Thee, give us the strength and the beauty, the harmonious perfection needed to be Thy divine instruments upon earth.'"¹¹

To the question: "My body is weak and full of unconsciousness and tamas. How can this body become Your good instrument?" She gives this inspiring reply: "At the centre of each cell lies the Divine Consciousness. By aspiration and repeated self-giving the cells must be made transparent."¹²

And even when answering to another rather

long question regarding the best outer attitude, she answers: "Unless one practices Yoga the physical being (outer

being), remains ignorant... That is why the Yoga of the body cells is indispensable."¹³

And to help us to work on this, here is a most simple practice that the Mother suggests we try out: "On the material level, japa is very good for that [to establish our cells' contact with the Truth]. When your head is tired and you are a little weary of forever contradicting that pessimism, you just have to repeat your japa, and automatically you make contact. To make contact. That's something the cells value a lot. A lot. It's a very good way, because it's a way that isn't mental, it's a mechanical way, it's a question of vibration."¹⁴

Finally, Sri Aurobindo sums up the attitude we must develop: "Three things you must have, consciousness, plasticity and unreserved surrender.



For you must be conscious in your mind and heart and life and the very cells of your body, aware of the Mother and her Powers and their working..."¹⁵

So, let us always remember that: "It is through Beauty that the Divine expresses himself."¹⁶

* * *

In the sections above we concentrated on Beauty as the key to our growing physical awareness; we focused too on the importance of the new consciousness, the Supramental Truth-Consciousness, as the lever of this conscious growth. This is active in us and on earth, now established by the tremendous inner work done by Sri Aurobindo and manifested concretely by the Mother on the 29th February, 1956. Finally, we gave a brief introduction to the Mother's own work on her body through a continuous detailed surrender to the Supreme, leading to her own mantra: "*Om namo Bhagavate*" (Lord, make me Divine), to invoke the Presence in the very cells of her being. In the present study we take off with the steps needed to contact our cells through a "yoga of the cells."

First of all, let us concentrate on the Divine in silence before starting any individual or collective work on the body, as well as thank Him afterwards. In the Mother's words: "Before, make an offering to the Divine of what you are going to do so that it may be done in a spirit of consecration. Afterwards, ask the Divine to increase the will for progress, so that you may become instruments capable of serving Him. Before starting you may also offer yourselves in silence. And at the

end, give thanks to the Divine in silence. I mean a movement of the heart without any words in the head."¹⁷

I seem to have read that when we take one single step towards the Divine, He takes ten towards us, maybe even a hundred! This is so true. Just read what the Mother does for us as we open ourselves to Her during these moments of silent concentration: "I try first to make the atmosphere as calm, quiet, unified as possible, as though I was spreading the consciousness out wide, like this. And then from far above I bring down the Force as much as I can and put it upon you as strongly as I can. So this depends entirely on whether one is

Already the Mother's help can be felt in our body, for when we offer our efforts to her while practising or mastering a physical skill, how much easier, spontaneously and effortlessly it is done, as though by magic or by a secret helping hand.

quite tranquil and well concentrated. Then the Force puts a pressure. And it's above all for unifying, penetrating the whole and endeavouring to make of it something cohesive which can express collectively the Force from above."¹⁸ So with a one-pointed intent let us practise regularly, and growing in consciousness, prepare ourselves in life too, interacting with others to come face to face with various situations thus building a unified, cohesive and harmonious individual and collective whole.

It is true that our physical motto is: 'Stronger, higher, always better,' yet let us remember too that: "The first condition for acquiring power is to be obedient. The body must learn to obey before it can manifest power, and physical education is the most thorough discipline for the body. So be eager and sincere in your efforts for physical education and you will

acquire a powerful body."¹⁹ For now the Supramental is actively working: "...a new consciousness is at work upon earth to prepare men for a new creation, the superman. For this creation to be possible the substance that constitutes man's body must undergo a big change. It must become more receptive to the consciousness and more plastic under its working."²⁰

What is this substance formed of? It seems that we have to become conscious of our very cells; truly something that belongs to the basic body consciousness. For, when asked whether the conditions are now more favorable for the Yoga of the body, she answers: "Since the time that this new consciousness is working on earth, it is certainly powerfully helping the Yoga of the body. But even now it is not an easy thing,

and it demands that the body be neither tender nor timid, and of course that it is without any desire."²¹ And for this the very first step is to make our mind still, tranquil and silent. Here is how the Mother shows us a way: "I don't know whether you have tried to get mental silence. You can spend your whole life on it and achieve almost nothing, whereas this is extremely interesting. At first nothing happens. You must stay like that, not actively, [but] in an aspiration towards the Divine. There must be no movement in the mind. It is not even surrender, it is a movement of perfect...something between self-giving and self-abdication. And when the mind makes an offering of its way of being, one day the answer comes spontaneously. It falls like a light...The calmer you are, the more confidence you have; the more attentive you are, the more clearly it



comes. A time comes when one has only to do that (gesture of opening)... Up there, one knows...When you come to believe that the mind is powerless, that it knows nothing, you fall silent...you give up your personal intervention and say: "Take my place."²² Yes, quietude and tranquillity established through the mind's abdication lead to mental silence.

Already the Mother's help can be felt in our body, for when we offer our efforts to her while practising or mastering a physical skill, how much easier, spontaneously, and effortlessly it is done, as though by magic or by a secret helping hand. Aren't we surprised, and exclaim in amazement: "Did I do this!" Certainly she clearly tells us: "Yes, I am always with you, but you must never forget to call me; for it is by calling me that the presence becomes effective."

Aspiration must awaken in us and we shall gradually come to realise what the Mother assures us: "The body carries the light in each of its cells, and one day it will no longer hide it."²³ And even more expressively: "At the centre of each cell lies the Divine Consciousness. By aspiration and repeated self-giving the cells must become transparent."²⁴ "Aspiration with no demands..." writes the disciple, and she adds: "Little by little the cells of the physical body have a constant élan that can be translated thus: 'Whatever You want, Lord, whatever You want.' The body says in all sincerity, without trying to know what will happen, without desire or preference: 'I will to know what You want me to know. I want to be what You want me to be. I want to do what You want me to do... in peace, light and joy.'"²⁵

There is also a way of dealing with the bad habit of thinking of an injury or a bodily defect. For the Mother says that we must forget that such and such

a part of our body is defective or injured. Even when the disciple tells her that: "I never think that this finger is not alright," she replies: "It is mentally that you have forgotten that will not do; you must forget physically. You should never think that you had hurt your finger, but do things normally without the slightest hesitation. As long as one does not forget, one cannot be cured. It has an immediate effect, as if something new has grown. When one can forget completely, then be sure that it will heal. From the very cells and all that constitutes your body, you must make them forget in such a way that they do not react as they did before. Forget completely, and you will be cured."²⁶

The Mother shows us also the truly effective way of coming in contact with the cells. She writes: "I know by experience that one can stop a toothache in some minutes if the spot that is suffering invokes the Divine Presence in a total surrender. But if you have not yet learnt to do this in the body, not mentally, it is better to go to the dentist who will treat you."²⁷

Truly, the first step now is that the body will do the yoga, as she writes by "Perfect adherence to the Higher Will."²⁸ For "In fact the Divine is constantly with us, but it is only when the body-cells open to His influence and perceive His Presence that we begin to be truly conscious of Him and His increasing action."²⁹

The disciple asks: "Once the aspiration in the body is awakened, will the body show the same persistence that one sees in its physical movements? To this the Mother answers: "For that the body is marvelous. As soon as the cells aspire consciously for union with the Divine, the aspiration becomes constant, and if the aspiration is expressed by a mantra it is spontaneously and constantly that the

cells repeat the mantra as an invocation." She continues later: "It is good if the mantra surges forth spontaneously with the simplicity of a child's call, two or three words at a time, with rhythmic repetition. If it does not come spontaneously, the body can repeat the mantra that your mind has chosen."³⁰ On another occasion, as we already mentioned, she explains it this way: "On the material level, japa is very good for that [establishing our cells' contact with the Truth]. When your head is tired and you are a little weary, you just have to repeat your japa, and automatically you make contact. That's something the cells value a lot, a lot. It's a very good way, because it's a way that isn't mental, it's a mechanical way, it's a question of vibration."³¹

* * *

A talk by a certain doctor was given to me. When I listened to it, there dawned another aspect, based on his observations of the powerfully magnified cells; for he said that the trillion cells in our body are all dancing in joy. And they love each other as well as the cells of all other bodies. He said that whenever we wish and imagine some harm towards a fellow being in thought or feeling our cells get confused and exclaim: "But these are our own cells too."³² This, he believes is the root-cause of all illness and disease. According to him the remedy is unconditional love, living to serve others and not for oneself, and the removal of the doshas, bad traits and samskaras, habits, such as hatred, anger, greed, lust, gossiping, jealousy, criticising, and lying. Sri Aurobindo puts all this in simple yet forceful inimitable words: "...the way is narrow, the doors are hard to force, and fear, mistrust and skepticism are there, sentinels [the Mother calls 'tentacles'] of



Nature to forbid the turning away of our feet from less ordinary pastures.”³³

The Mother too makes similar remarks: “Some interesting discoveries are being made, that the cell is immortal, and that aging results merely from a combination of circumstances. This research is tending towards the conclusion that aging is only a bad habit, which seems to be true. And this is exactly what I am realising. I don’t think it is anything unique or exceptional. The closer one draws to the cell itself, the more the cell says: ‘But I am immortal!’ Only it must become conscious. But this takes place almost automatically; the brain cells are very conscious, the cells of the hands and arms of musicians are very conscious; with athletes and gymnasts, the cells of the en-

tire body are wonderfully conscious. So, being conscious, those cells become conscious of their principle of immortality, and say: ‘Why would I want to grow old? Why?’ They don’t want to grow old. It’s very interesting.”³⁴

In fact, cell regeneration has been revealed to two Russian scientists who were lead to discover its possibility independently. A third joined as a student of one of them. Later, Dr. Hazel Wardha, an Indian doctor living in Australia, introduced this knowledge and practice to the English-speaking world. She tells us that “the most exciting aspect of this methodology is that everyone can achieve positive results. Not only internal organs but teeth, hair, and other cells anywhere in the body too can be regenerated. Cells have consciousness, which can be influenced positively or negatively by human thought.”³⁵

To no longer see and feel the body in the usual way, to know it as a means for the cells to become conscious of the Divine. And to know how important the cells are, remember these portions of the Mother prayers:

“A prayer for those who wish to serve the Divine....

“We stand here before Thee that Thy will may be fulfilled in us, in every element, in every activity of our being, from our supreme heights, to the smallest cells of the body.”³⁶

In Radha’s Prayer, she expresses an equally similar and profound experience: “...Thine are all my thoughts, all my emotions, all the sentiments of my

“Some interesting discoveries are being made, that the cell is immortal, and that aging results merely from a combination of circumstances. This research is tending towards the conclusion that aging is only a bad habit, which seems to be true. And this is exactly what I am realising.” The Mother

heart, all my sensations, all the movements of my life, each cell of my body, each drop of my blood, I am absolutely and altogether Thine....”³⁷

May all this guide us to contact the cells and offer them completely to the Divine.

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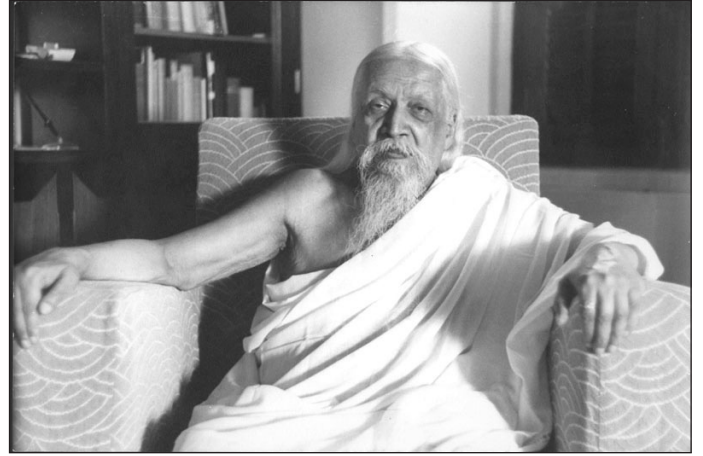
Source material

The perfection of the body

by Sri Aurobindo

The perfection of the body, as great a perfection as we can bring about by the means at our disposal, must be the ultimate aim of physical culture. Perfection is the true aim of all culture, the spiritual and psychic, the mental, the vital and it must be the aim of our physical culture also. If our seeking is for a total perfection of the being, the physical part of it cannot be left aside; for the body is the material basis, the body is the instrument which we have to use. Śarīram khalu dharmasāadhanam, says the old Sanskrit adage,—the body is the means of fulfilment of dharma, and dharma means every ideal which we can propose to ourselves and the law of its working out and its action. A total perfection is the ultimate aim which we set before us, for our ideal is the Divine Life which we wish to create here, the life of the Spirit fulfilled on earth, life accomplishing its own spiritual transformation even here on earth in the conditions of the material universe. That cannot be unless the body too undergoes a transformation, unless its action and functioning attain to a supreme capacity and the perfection which is possible to it or which can be made possible.

I have already indicated in a previous message a relative perfection of the physical consciousness in the body and of the mind, the life, the character which it houses as, no less than an awakening and development of the body's own native capacities, a desirable outcome of the exercises and practices of the physical culture to which we have commenced to give in this Ashram a special attention and scope. A development of the physical consciousness must always be a considerable part of our aim, but for that the right development of the body itself is an essential element; health, strength, fitness are the first needs, but the physical frame itself must be the best possible. A divine life in a material world implies necessarily a union of the two ends of existence, the spiritual summit and the material base. The soul with the basis of its life established in Matter ascends to the heights of the Spirit but does not cast away its base, it joins the heights and the depths together. The Spirit descends into Matter and the material world with all its lights and glories and powers and with them fills and transforms life in the material world so that it becomes more and more divine. The transformation is not a change into something



purely subtle and spiritual to which Matter is in its nature repugnant and by which it is felt as an obstacle or as a shackle binding the Spirit; it takes up Matter as a form of the Spirit though now a form which conceals and turns it into a revealing instrument, it does not cast away the energies of Matter, its capacities, its methods; it brings out their hidden possibilities, uplifts, sublimates, discloses their innate divinity. The divine life will reject nothing that is capable of divinisation; all is to be seized, exalted, made utterly perfect. The mind now still ignorant, though struggling towards knowledge, has to rise towards and into the supramental light and truth and bring it down so that it shall suffuse our thinking and perception and insight and all our means of knowing till they become radiant with the highest truth in their inmost and outermost movements. Our life, still full of obscurity and confusion and occupied with so many dull and lower aims, must feel all its urges and instincts exalted and irradiated and become a glorious counterpart of the supramental super-life above. The physical consciousness and physical being, the body itself must reach a perfection in all that it is and does which now we can hardly conceive. It may even in the end be suffused with a light and beauty and bliss from the Beyond and the life divine assume a body divine.

But first the evolution of the nature must have reached a point at which it can meet the Spirit direct, feel the aspiration towards the spiritual change and open itself to the workings of the Power which shall transform it. A supreme perfection, a total perfection is possible only by a transformation of our lower or human nature, a transformation of the mind into a thing of light, our life into a thing of power, an instrument of right action, right use for all its forces, of a happy elevation of its being lifting it beyond its present comparatively narrow potentiality for a self-fulfilling force of action and joy of life. There must be equally a trans-



forming change of the body by a conversion of its action, its functioning, its capacities as an instrument beyond the limitations by which it is clogged and hampered even in its greatest present human attainment. In the totality of the change we have to achieve, human means and forces too have to be taken up, not dropped but used and magnified to their utmost possibility as part of the new life...

In the use of such activities as sports and physical exercises for the education of the individual in childhood and first youth, which should mean the bringing out of his actual and latent possibilities to their fullest development, the means and methods we must use are limited by the nature of the body and its aim must be such relative human perfection of the body's powers and capacities and the powers of mind, will, character, action of which it is at once the residence and the instrument so far as these methods can help to develop them. I have written sufficiently about the mental and moral parts of perfection to which these pursuits can contribute and this I need not repeat here. For the body itself the perfections that can be developed by these means are those of its natural qualities and capacities and, secondly, the training of its general fitness as an instrument for all the activities which may be demanded from it by the mind and the will, by the life-energy or by the dynamic perceptions, impulses and instincts of our subtle physical being which is an unrecognised but very important element and agent in our nature. Health and strength are the first conditions for the natural perfection of the body, not only muscular strength and the solid strength of the limbs and physical stamina, but the finer, alert and plastic and adaptable force which our nervous and subtle physical parts can put into the activities of the frame. There is also the still more dynamic force which a call upon the life-energies can bring into the body and stir it to greater activities, even feats of the most extraordinary character of which in its normal state it would not be capable. There is also the strength which the mind and will by their demands and stimulus and by their secret powers which we use or by which we are used without knowing clearly the source of their action can impart to the body or impose upon it as masters and inspirers. (*Essays in Philosophy and Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 13, pp. 521-528)

The supramental creation... Only a calm, pure and surrendered physical consciousness, full of the psychic aspiration, can be its field; this alone can make an effective opening of the material being to the Light and Power and the supramental change a thing actual and practicable. (*Letters on Yoga IV*, CWSA, Vol. 31, p. 162)

The transitional body

by the Mother

The transition between the two appears really possible only through the entry – the conscious and willed entry—of a supramentalized consciousness into a body that we could call an “improved physical body,” in other words, the human physical body as it is now, but improved: the improvement produced, for instance, by a TRUE physical training, not in its present exaggerated form but in its true sense. It's something I have seen fairly clearly: in an evolution (physical training is developing very fast nowadays, it's not even half a century since it started), in evolution, that physical training will bring an improvement, that is, a suppleness, a balance, an endurance, and a harmony; these are the four qualities – suppleness (plasticity), balance between the various parts of the being, endurance, and harmony of the body – that will make it a more supple instrument for the supramentalized consciousness.

So the transition: a conscious and willed utilization by a supramentalized consciousness of a body prepared in that way. This body must be brought to the peak of its development and of the utilization of the cells in order to be ... yes, consciously impregnated with the supreme forces (which is being done here [in Mother] at the moment), and this to the utmost of its capacities. And if the consciousness that inhabits that body, that animates that body, has the required qualities in sufficient amount, it should normally be able to utilize that body to the utmost of its capacity of transformation, with the result that the waste caused by the death of decomposing cells should be reduced to a minimum – to what extent?... That's precisely what still belongs to the unknown.

That would correspond to what Sri Aurobindo called the prolongation of life at will, for an indefinite length of time. (*Mother's Agenda*, Vol. 6, April 17, 1965)

....

What I meant by an “improved physical body” is that sort of mastery over the body that's being gained nowadays through physical training. I have seen lately magazines showing how it had started: the results in the beginning and today's results; and from the standpoint of the harmony of forms (I am not talking about excesses – there are excesses everywhere—I am talking about what can be done in the best possible conditions), from the standpoint of the harmony of forms, of strength and a certain sense of beauty, of the development of certain capacities of endurance and



skill, of precision in the execution combined with strength, it's quite remarkable if you think of how recent physical training is. And it's spreading very quickly nowadays, which means that the proportion of the human population that is interested in it and practices it is snowballing. So when I saw all those photos (for me, it's especially through pictures that I see), it occurred to me that through those qualities, the cells, the cellular aggregates acquire a plasticity, a receptivity, a force that make the substance more supple for the permeation of the supramental forces.

Let's take the sense of form, for example (I am giving one example among many others). Evolution is openly moving towards diminishing the difference between the female and the male forms: the ideal that's being created makes female forms more masculine and gives male forms a certain grace and suppleness, with the result that they increasingly resemble what I had seen all the way up, beyond the worlds of the creation, on the "threshold," if I can call it that, of the world of form. At the beginning of the century, I had seen, before even knowing of Sri Aurobindo's existence and without having ever heard the word "supramental" or the idea of it or anything, I had seen there, all the way up, on the threshold of the Formless, at the extreme limit, an ideal form that resembled the human form, which was an idealized human form: neither man nor woman. A luminous form, a form of golden light. When I read what Sri Aurobindo wrote, I said, "But what I saw was the supramental form!" Without having the faintest idea that it might exist. Well, the ideal of form we are now moving towards resembles what I saw. That's why I said: since there is an evolutionary concentration on this point, on the physical, bodily form, it must mean that Nature is preparing something for that Descent and that embodiment—it seems logical to me. That's what I meant by an improved physical form (*Mother's Agenda*, Vol. 6, April 21, 1965)

...

You remember what I had said? That it would be an improved physical body that would make the transition between the human body and the supramental body?... Last night Sri Aurobindo told me in his own way that it was correct, that it was true. It was very interesting.

Very interesting.

Last night, for a long time, we went to all sorts of places unknown to me: towns, countrysides, forests, etc. It lasted a very long time. And once, we were there, near a forest (near a road that crossed the forest) and we were busy and "talking" when all of a sudden, he leaped to his feet.... You know, he never wears any clothes, so to speak; when I saw



him the first time in his house (his supramental house), in the subtle physical, he was without clothes; but it's a kind of vibrant matter: it's very material, very concrete, and it has a sort of color that isn't a color, which is a bit golden and radiant—it doesn't send out rays, but it vibrates with a radiant light. And at least nine times out of ten he is that way; generally, when we are together for some work, he is that way. Last night he was that way. So then I was busy (we had arranged something and I was busy) when, suddenly, I see him leap to his feet and run a hundred-meter sprint. At first I was shocked, I said to myself, "What's this?!" And with great ease, you know: he darted off, then stopped a few minutes, and then ran back. Then he stopped again, and went off a third time on a sprint: like the 100-meter race they run. But the third time, he had grown tall, with a slim body. Grown tall as if to demonstrate to me: this is the way the body will be transformed. He had grown very tall, very strong.

It was very interesting and absolutely unexpected.

The second time, he was stronger than the first; and the third time, he was magnificent: a tall, superb being with that vibrant, radiant substance. And what a sprint! What leaps! It was fantastic. The last time, it was fantastic, as if he skimmed over the ground.

We "speak" very, very rarely. Sometimes he tells me something, but it's with a special import and a special aim—we understand each other without words. There he didn't say anything, but I understood.

It was part of a very long activity, but that thing struck me very much because it was like the answer [to what I said some time ago]. He said, "Yes, it's true, you are right, it is like that." And that change in his body over the three times: the first time he was as I knew him, but younger and more agile; the second time, he was already stronger; and the third time, he was magnificent. (*Mother's Agenda*, Vol. 6, June 18, 1965)



The poetry room

The eternal day

A marvellous sun looked down from ecstasy's skies
On worlds of deathless bliss, perfection's home,
Magical unfoldings of the Eternal's smile
Capturing his secret heart-beats of delight.
God's everlasting day surrounded her,
Domains appeared of sempiternal light
Invading all Nature with the Absolute's joy.
Her body quivered with eternity's touch,
Her soul stood close to the founts of the infinite.
Infinity's finite fronts she lived in, new
For ever to an everliving sight.
Eternity multiplied its vast self-look
Translating its endless mightiness and joy
Into delight souls playing with Time could share
In grandeurs ever new-born from the unknown depths,
In powers that leaped immortal from unknown heights,
In passionate heart-beats of an undying love,
In scenes of a sweetness that can never fade.
Immortal to the rapturous heart and eyes,
In serene arches of translucent calm
From Wonder's dream-vasts cloudless skies slid down
An abyss of sapphire; sunlight visited eyes
Which suffered without pain the absolute ray
And saw immortal clarities of form.
Twilight and mist were exiles from that air,
Night was impossible to such radiant heavens.
Firm in the bosom of immensity
Spiritual breadths were seen, sublimely born
From a still beauty of creative joy;
Embodied thoughts to sweet dimensions held
To please some carelessness of divine peace,
Answered the deep demand of an infinite sense
And its need of forms to house its bodiless thrill.
A march of universal powers in Time,
The harmonic order of self's vastitudes
In cyclic symmetries and metric planes
Harboured a cosmic rapture's revelry,
An endless figuring of the spirit in things
Planned by the artist who has dreamed the worlds;
Of all the beauty and the marvel here,
Of all Time's intricate variety
Eternity was the substance and the source;
Not from a plastic mist of Matter made,
They offered the suggestion of their depths

And opened the great series of their powers.
Arisen beneath a triple mystic heaven
The seven immortal earths were seen, sublime:
Homes of the blest released from death and sleep
Where grief can never come nor any pang
Arriving from self-lost and seeking worlds
Alter Heaven-nature's changeless quietude
And mighty posture of eternal calm,
Its pose of ecstasy immutable.
Plains lay that seemed the expanse of God's wide sleep,
Thought's wings climbed up towards heaven's vast repose
Lost in blue depths of immortality.
A changed earth-nature felt the breath of peace.
Air seemed an ocean of felicity
Or the couch of the unknown spiritual rest,
A vast quiescence swallowing up all sound
Into a voicelessness of utter bliss;
Even Matter brought a close spiritual touch,
All thrilled with the immanence of one divine.

—Sri Aurobindo
From *Savitri*, pp. 671-672

From Towards democracy

III

Freedom! the deep breath! the word heard centuries and
centuries beforehand; the soul singing low and passionate
to itself: Joy! Joy!

Not as in a dream. The earth remains and daily life re-
mains, and the scrubbing of doorsteps, and the house and
the care of the house remains; but Joy fills it, fills the house
full and swells to the sky and reaches the stars: all Joy!

O freed soul! soul that has completed its relation to the
body! O soaring, happy beyond words, into other realms
passing, salutations to you, freed, redeemed soul!

What is certain, and not this? What is solid? —the rocks?
the mountains? destiny?

The gates are thrown wide open all through the universe.
I go to and fro—through the heights and depths I go and I
return: All is well.

I conceive the purport of all suffering. The bleary-eyed boy,
famished in brain, famished in body, shivering there in his



rag by the angle of the house, is become divine before me;
I hold him long and silently by the hand and pray to him.

I conceive a millennium on earth—a millennium not of riches, nor of mechanical facilities, nor of intellectual facilities, nor absolutely of immunity from disease, nor absolutely of immunity from pain; but a time when men and women all over the earth shall ascend and enter into relation with their bodies—shall attain freedom and joy;

And the men and women of that time looking back with something like envy to the life of today, that they too might have borne a part in its travail and throes of birth.

All is well: today and a million years hence, equally. To you the whole universe is given for a garden of delight, and to the soul that loves, in the great coherent Whole, the hardest and most despised lot is even with the best; and there is nothing more certain or more solid than this.

IV

Freedom! the deep breath!

The old Earth breathes deep and rhythmically, night and day, summer and winter; the cuckoo calls across the woodland, and the willow-wren warbles among the great chestnut buds; the labourer eases himself under a hedge, and the frog flops into the pond as the cows approach;

In the theatre Juliet from her balcony still bends in the moonlight, and Romeo leans up from the bushes below; in the pale dawn, still, faint with love he tears himself away; the great outlines of the fields and hills where you were born and grew up remain apparently unchanged.

If I am not level with the lowest I am nothing; and if I did not know for a certainty that the craziest sot in the village is my equal, and were not proud to have him walk with me as my friend, I would not write another word—for in this is my strength. My thoughts are nothing, but I myself will reach my arms through time, constraining you.

These are the days which nourished and fed me so kindly and well; this is the place where I was born, the walls and roofs which are familiar to me, the windows out of which I have looked.

—Edward Carpenter

O Thou

The heart is thy abode.

In every single beat
Pulsates the throb of thy rhythmic dance.

Thy fingers glide on the strings of the heart,
Driving away the dark herd. Thou art the guard
Ever alert.

Because of thee, O spotless sunny splendour,
Our minds like flowers bloom.
On our open wounds from life,
O benevolent nectar,
Thou art the healing shower.

In life, at every moment of birth
Thou art the nourishing energy,
At every stage thou re-ignitest
The flames of life.

Thou droppest the veil on our human eyes
To bless us with a vision new,
Thou art our escort in this our life
And the infinite beyond too.

A flood of divine delight, thou art
God's own Shakti supreme,
Holder of both the Law and Truth
Thou art our ultimate release.

Thou art the magnet to our feet,
The pole-star to our sight.
In thy heart's holy abode,
May we always find a niche,
O stream of God's own elixir.

—Sundaram
trans. by Dhanavanti

She is here

The one I longed for, with the burning thirst
Of Sahara sands, is here now:
All heaven's waters gathered in her being, she stoops.
The cool freshness of myriad moons, she exudes.
The brilliance of ever blazing suns, she drives
To swallow all the dark.



She flows like the world-winds
Among the woods, nourishing every bush and tree,
Moving the sap of life from vein to tinier vein.
She is the shining summit of all God's graces.

Now, we will tell the little ones of all the world,
The elders, the suffering and woe-begone,
Those who hope and those who have ceased to hope,
The minds bogged down in reason's evil charms,
The ascetic heart striving in his upward soar:

Come here, come ye all, bring each your bowl
Of inner self, for SHE all nectar is,
And has for your sake, assumed a human form.

—Sundaram
trans. by Dhanavanti

Thou wast beside me

Thou wast beside me all the while
Though I was not with Thee,
And Thy unfailing gracious smile
Had no reply from me.

I turned my back upon Thy love,
The source of all delight,
So gloom on gloom possessed me and drove,
And wretched was my plight.

I glided down a gradient straight
Into a pit of woes;
My sorrow crushed me with its weight,
All round me were my foes.

Grim faces fierce, hands ever ready
To strike me unawares,
My steps uneasy and unsteady
Caught in their cunning snares.

I knew that Thou was never far,
And could have called Thee nigh,
But foolish pride became a bar
And stopped my rising cry.

Thus in my agony I lay
And found no ray of hope,
I left my soul to drift away
Along destruction's slope.

But soon Thy tender mother heart,
With pity thrilled for me,
Thy succour brought like a speedy dart
Unseen, unerringly.

Then were the enemies dispersed,
Thy crimson fire burned
And darkness changed to light, reversed;
The rose of morn returned.

My sorrow-spot became a moon,
My pain was turned to rapture,
Hope living rose from its deep swoon
The love-light to recapture.

I found myself uplifted high
Placed upon mountains white
Where never came a staining sigh,
But only joy and Light.

All-kindness, All-humility,
Forgiveness unsurpassed,
I found The Mother greeting me
Despite my heavy past.

—Pujalal Dalvadi

The only way

Do not cross the ancient bridgeway,
Lest your pale feet bleed;
So sharp, so fine the razor's edging,
White purity we need.
There's but one way to make the journey,
Without the abysmal slide;
Let Grace Herself become the crossing,
And Love Divine your guide.

Nor venture lone the ancient stairway
To reach that world of gold;
These rough steps rise to dizzy spaces,
Your feet will lose their hold.
No man may scale this giddy skyway,
Alone and pure of pride;
Let Grace Herself become the climbing,
And Love Divine your guide.

—Themis



Apropos

Become and live the knowledge thou hast; then is thy knowledge the living God within thee. —Sri Aurobindo

The ego thinks of what it wants and has not. this is its constant preoccupation. The soul is aware of what it is given and lives in endless gratitude. —The Mother

Love gives us in a moment what we can hardly attain by effort after years of toil. —Goethe

There is no difficulty that enough love will not conquer, no disease that enough love will not heal, no door that enough love will not open, no gulf that enough love will not bridge, no wall that enough love will not throw down, no sin that enough love will not redeem... —Emmet Fox

The truth in you remains as radiant as a star, as pure as light, as innocent as love itself. —James Lane Allen

This is the way of peace: Overcome evil with good, and falsehood with truth, and hatred with love. —Peace Pilgrim

It is love alone that leads to right action. What brings order in the world is to love and let love do what it will. —Krishnamurti

Life is a series of natural and spontaneous changes. Don't resist them, that only creates sorrow. Let things flow naturally forward in whatever way they like. —Lao-tzu

The more conscious you become, the more aware you become of how unconscious you've been. —Patricia Sun

Love all God's creations, both the whole and every grain of sand. Love every leaf, every ray of light. Love the animals, love the plants, love each separate thing. If you love each thing, you will perceive the mystery of God in All. —Fyodor Dostoevsky

The more you recognize the immense good within you, the more you magnetize immense good around you. —Alan Cohen

Love is how it feels to recognize our essential unity. Awakening to oneness is the experience of Big Love. Knowing you are one with all, you find yourself in love with all. —Timothy Freke

A holy person is someone who is whole; who has, as it were, reconciled his opposites. —Alan Watts

Only that day dawns to which we are awake. —Henry David Thoreau

Perhaps the only limits to the human mind are those we believe in. —Willis Harman

The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen, nor touched... but are felt in the heart. —Helen Keller

The human spirit is stronger than anything that can happen to it. —C.C. Scott

Evil (ignorance) is like a shadow—it has no real substance of its own, it is simply a lack of light. You cannot cause a shadow to disappear by trying to fight it, stamp on it, by railing against it, or any other form of emotional or physical resistance. In order to cause a shadow to disappear, you must shine light on it. —Shakti Gawain

If the doors of perception were cleansed, everything would appear to man as it is, infinite. —William Blake

Time is too slow for those who wait, too swift for those who fear, too long for those who grieve, too short for those who rejoice, but for those who love, time is eternity. —Henry Van Dyke

