

Collaboration

Winter 2018/2019

Journal of the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother

Vol. 43, No. 3



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On attending a *Savitri* workshop by Kannappan Singaram •
Reflections on faith by Seabury Gould •
From vairagya to gifts and blessings, Interview of Lucas by Matthias Pommerening •
Central processes and practices in Integral Yoga by Larry Seidlitz •
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About the art on the front and back cover

Front cover: "Dahlia," by Soleil Aurose (see note on the artist on p. 3).

Back cover: "Children's Imagination," by Yuri Mazur (from Adobe stock photos), offers a glimpse into the child-like wonder of peering into the beauty and mystery of the Divine.

The authors and poets

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Henry Vaughan (1621-1695) was a Welsh metaphysical poet, author, translator, and physician.

William Wordsworth (1770-1850) was a major English Romantic poet.

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From the office of Collaboration

In this issue, Current affairs includes articles on the passing of Rudy Phillips; the 2019 Integral Yoga Retreat in Greenville, SC; an Integral Yoga Retreat at the Madhuban center in the Himalayas; activities at the Sri Aurobindo Center, Los Angeles; and news of the website: motherandsriaurobindo.in. In Briefs, there is news about AUM 2019, the Auromira Centre in the UK, and the move of the Institute for Wholistic Education from Wisconsin to Hawaii.

AV Almanac has an article by Alan about the challenges of Auroville, and news by Aravinda on the government-planned highway through Auroville.

The Salon section features short essays by Julie of Light Omega about the Matrimandir Meditations and the Matrimandir, Kannappan Singaram on his experiences attending a *Savitri* workshop, and Seabury Gould on his experiences of faith.

In Chronicles, we have an interview of Auroville newcomer Lucas by Matthias Pommerening, about the former's spiritual journey leading him to Auroville.

In Essays, our first article is by Larry Seidlitz about two central processes in the Integral Yoga, "becoming conscious" and "finding the psychic being," as well as specific practices described by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother for achieving these aims. The second essay, by James Anderson, deals with an essential step in the Yoga, becoming an integrated conscious individual able to surrender.

Source material includes selections from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother about karma yoga. In Book review, we have a review by Larry Seidlitz on the third of Shradhdhavan's series of books on the English of *Savitri*.

We conclude the issue with a rich assortment of spiritual poetry in The poetry room, and inspiring quotations in Apropos.

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 April 1, 2019 to the editor at: editor@collaboration.org.

The artist

Soleil Aurose became enamoured with growing flowers under Narad's direction in the Matrimandir gardens, starting in 1971. For the last 12 years, Wolfgang and Soleil have been selling flower bouquets from their organic garden at the local grower's markets. Soleil regularly posts flowers on her Facebook page. Her other work can be reviewed at <http://www.soulcellsynthesis.com>.

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Artistic Editor: Karen Cornell; email: kcornell@cal.net.

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

About SAA: The Sri Aurobindo Association distributes information about Sri Aurobindo, the Mother, and Auroville, and supports projects related to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Auroville, and Integral Yoga activities in America. Current members: Lynda Lester, president; 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.



Current affairs

Passing of Rudy Phillips

by Julian Lines

Rudy Phillips, who served as President of the Foundation for World Education for ten years, passed away from complications of colon cancer on Monday, 26th November. At his bedside was his partner, Tom O'Brien, and his two sons. He was 77 years old.

Rudy had also served on the Board of Matagiri Sri Aurobindo Center and was instrumental in creating an annuity for founders Sam Spanier and Eric Hughes and helping to transfer the property to the nonprofit organization which now owns the land and buildings.

Both a lawyer and chemical engineer by training, Rudy brought his corporate background and skill set in service to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and Auroville and participated in numerous All USA Meetings. He served as President of Crompton and Knowles, a leading ingredient technology company.

He and Tom hosted many visitors from India in their New Jersey homes. For the past 16 years Rudy practiced massage therapy on Cape Cod where he and Tom had moved.

Rudy was an avid skier, painter, gardener, and scuba diver. He was deeply committed to human and civil rights.

Rudy is survived by his two sons Brock and Blake who themselves have two sons and two daughters respectively. The entire family had all been together for Thanksgiving. Tom commented on his partner's passing, "In an early morning dream state I saw Rudy walking in the Elysian Fields of paradise surrounded by light and feeling very peaceful and blessed. He sent love and encouraged me not to worry. He will also live on in the hearts of all who loved him."

2019 Integral Yoga Retreat in Greenville, SC

by Radhe Pfau

Sponsored by the Sri Aurobindo Center, SE in Greenville, SC, the Sri Aurobindo Integral Yoga Retreat will be held June 26th–30th, 2019. The Retreat theme is: Human Evolution, —the next step.



Rudy (L) with Tom O'Brien at Matagiri

Speaking of the future of our Earth, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother said "If man could once consent to be spiritualised." This year we dwell upon this theme of spiritualization as the next step on our evolutionary journey, especially on the 50th year of 'the descent of Superman', an event of tremendous significance whose full impact is yet to be understood.

As always, our focus will be on practical ways to align and consciously collaborate with this New Consciousness that is inevitably molding earth's future and shaping our destiny.

We are at a decisive hour in the history of the earth. It is preparing for the coming of the superman and because of this the old way of life is losing its value. We must strike out boldly on the path of the future despite its new demands. The pettinesses once tolerable, are tolerable no longer. We must widen ourselves to receive what is going to come. —The Mother, December 29, 1971

Be sure to save the dates: June 26th–30th, 2019. Should you have any questions, please email or call Radhe (radhe@lagracecenter.com; 505-515-1246) at the Sri Aurobindo Center, SE.

Integral Yoga Retreat at Madhuban

by Amit Thakkar

An Integral Yoga retreat will be held 30 March–8 April 2019 at Madhuban, The Himalayan Center of Sri Aurobindo Ashram Delhi Branch, India



Nestled in the majestic Kumaon ranges of the Himalayas in Northern India, Madhuban Sri Aurobindo Ashram is the ultimate destination for all spiritual seekers who want to deepen their spiritual journey.

During the retreat, we will be spending time with Tara didi who is in charge of the Delhi Branch of Sri Aurobindo Ashram. Growing up in the Ashram in Pondicherry under the personal care of the Mother, Tara didi is among the few who are the direct recipient of the Mother's infinite love and care while she was on the earth. Because of this special relationship, being in Tara didi's presence is like receiving the pure and selfless divine love of the Mother.

Besides our intimate sessions with Tara didi during the retreat, other activities will include yoga and group meditation, kirtans, reading and sharing circles, a day long trip visiting places around Madhuban, a visit to Sri Aurobindo Ashram at Nainital, and a day long trip visiting sites in Delhi.

You can see a short video about Madhuban Sri Aurobindo Ashram on youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bYsrnu0f-KA>

For more information, contact Amit Thakkar: Amit.thakkar2007@gmail.com

Activities at Sri Aurobindo Center, Los Angeles

by Jishnu Guha

We started 2018 with a New Year's Program formulating our aspiration for the coming year. Last year, we observed the four darshan days to concentrate on individual progress, and the Mahasamadhi of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo to offer our gratitude. The programs consisted of guided meditations, inspirational readings, devotional music, and Prasad distribution. Apart from special events we had weekly *Savitri* readings, satsangs, Tai chi sessions, and started martial arts for children. Educational sessions were held on the meter of *Savitri*. We hosted two retreats, the first one focused on "Importance of Physical education in Integral Yoga," and the other on "Children's Development" covering topics ranging from prenatal education to child development in the light of Integral Yoga.

The center ordered a fresh stock of books, 2019 diaries, and calendars from Pondicherry for the seekers. We enhanced our digital presence through a monthly newsletter and center Facebook page. Members of all ages offered ser-



Devotees at the Sri Aurobindo Center, Los Angeles

vices to the Mother through specific karma yoga sessions, or in daily life to clean and beautify the center. As 2019 approaches, Sri Aurobindo Center, Los Angeles is ready for the New Year Retreat for a new beginning.

About the website motherandsriaurobindo.in

by Narad

A number of years ago a vision for a website devoted to the works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother came to an Ashramite. He began with a small group of people to upload all the volumes of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and their disciples.

Over the years the work became more and more extensive and the works of Nolini Kanta Gupta and the earlier disciples were uploaded. Today the website is the largest in the world with 99 interviews of the early Ashramites, and their remembrances of Sri Aurobindo and Mother and a series of more than 200 interviews with disciples and devotees.

During the past 4-5 years we have begun a series of readings of *Savitri* by Ashramites and Aurovilians. We also have some very highly regarded continuing series, the earliest of which is 'Explorations in Savitri' with Dr. Alok Pandey, now totalling 109. A series on the early works of Sri Aurobindo, namely 'The Human Cycle' and 'The Ideal of Human Unity' is given by Professor Kittu Reddy. Dr. Pachegoankar shares his profound knowledge into the curative powers of Homeopathy.

Most recent is a welcome series on 'The Life Divine' with Ranganathan. We are receiving high praise for his clear and brilliant explanations.



Lastly we have instituted a section entitled 'Questions & Answers for a World in Crisis', begun as a result of questions put by teenagers from Mumbai schools. The series answers their questions and contains many other topics in the words of Sri Aurobindo and Mother.

In addition to all the above there are recordings of the OM Choirs, Weekly Guidance from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, information about the Ashram, a section of 'Special Visitors' to the Ashram, and both of the volumes on 'Flowers and Their Messages' as given by the Mother.

Please do visit our website, motherandsriaurobindo.in, or our YouTube site, motherandsriaurobindo, and a second YouTube site, Richard Eggenberger, which contains videos of all the interviews.

Briefs

The 2019 All USA Meeting will be held outside of Seattle, Washington Thursday June 20th to Sunday June 23rd. The venue is the Seabeck Center (seabeck.org), which caters especially to nonprofit organizations. Details will be announced on the collaboration.org website and on Facebook at facebook.com/aumconference.

The Auromira Centre in UK has Savitri Workshops every 2nd Sunday of the month; we have a Matrugoda Workshop with readings of Mother and Sri Aurobindo and discussion every 1st and 3rd Sunday of the month. We have darshan day functions with morning silent meditations and evening programs. Whenever we get visitors to speak on Mother and Sri Aurobindo, mainly from Pondicherry, we have them as guests as well. As usual with all centers, the main purpose is for silent meditation as and when devotees want to come.

Auromira Centre (The Relics Centre of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother); 126 Whitton Avenue East Greenford, Middlesex UB6 0PY, UK; Tel.+44 (0) 7867792369; Email: auromiracentre@gmail.com; Web: www.auromira.org

The Institute for Wholistic Education is moving to Hawaii as of March 15, 2019 to 1520 Ohialoke St., Honolulu, HI 96821 (262-497-2579; www.wholisticinstitute.org). 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. Lotus Press will remain in Wisconsin at 1100 E. Lotus Drive, Silver Lake, WI 53170.

AV almanac

Auroville: The antithesis of yoga?

by Alan

Reprinted with permission from Auroville Today, October 2018 issue

Aurovilians are not fooled by those chirpy visitor blogs that enthuse over the greenery, eateries and laid-back lifestyle of Auroville. Most of us know this is not an easy place to live. Every day we are pushed up hard against the sheer physicality of existence. The heat, the dust, the noise, the garbage, are very much in our faces, between our toes.

There is the daily struggle with flat tyres, broken pipes and erratic power supply, as well as more existential threats like, for some of us foreigners, the ever-present Damocles Sword of visa withdrawal or, on the community level, serious challenges to Auroville integrity, of which the proposed six-lane highway is just the latest example.

Everything here, and not just the iron laterite soil, seems to resist. It takes aeons to get planning permission for a parking shed; our famous community process, which involves endless meetings and three-day selection processes, rarely gives a satisfying outcome; the best-laid plans to improve our economy or decision-making often drain away into sand or have very different outcomes from those intended.

It can be argued that life in the big cities is far more challenging, what with the pollution, crowding, violence and poverty. We are insulated from this. But here there is an additional dimension, and that is the daily battles Aurovilians are waging within themselves as they try to change something within and do work in a different spirit, that of karma yoga. This is difficult enough in itself, but what makes it even more challenging is that this is a collective yoga. This means, as Sri Aurobindo pointed out, that this is not only an individual battle, it is a collective war waged over a considerable country. (The individual) has not only to conquer in himself the forces of egoistic falsehood and disorder, but to conquer them as representatives of the same adverse and inexhaustible forces in the world. Therefore, he concludes, his Yoga has much more of the nature of a battle than others.

Of course, we should beware of dignifying all our ordinary challenges as Kurukshetra-like battles in which the



future of cosmic evolution is at stake. And not all Aurovilians are doing an intensive sadhana: it is possible to live a relatively comfortable life here if one has the means to insulate oneself from the irritations of daily existence and is content to merely skim the surface (as one Aurovilian gnomically put it, “the intensity is equal to the receptivity”). Nevertheless, the combination of both physical and inner challenges in Auroville exerts such a pressure that it’s not surprising that many, perhaps most, Aurovilians live on the edge, and that the constant pressure sometimes explodes into rudeness, dogmatism and conflict.

It’s a paradox. Mother stressed the importance of Aurovilians doing the yoga, so one would have expected her to have ensured the most propitious conditions. These, one would assume, would include a modicum of comfort, security and quiet. But here we have none of these. In fact, as one Aurovilian put it, “the special thing about the collective life of those who are there to change themselves is the crazy multiplication of struggles.” In other words, to filch the title of a book by Jocelyn Shupack, in Auroville everything seems to be ‘the antithesis of yoga.’

So why is it like this? No doubt, our personal failings play a significant part. After all, we have been assured there is a ‘sunlit path’ for those who adopt the right attitude. However, what if these seemingly adverse circumstances are exactly what many of us need to hasten a radical change of consciousness?

Certainly, the outer turmoil of life here forces us to go deeper, to discover the real source of guidance and peace within. But, more than this, this yoga deals pre-eminently with the transformation of matter. So it’s entirely appropriate that in Auroville we are drowned, immersed, in matter in its rawest form.

But matter, as Mother discovered through her work on her body, is very hard to transform. It’s dense, stubborn, intractable. It’s that element in us which is the most tamasic, the most resistant to movement, change, and so it requires harder blows to wake it up.

Hence the utility of what Ram Dass referred to, during his visit to Auroville, of a yoga of the market-place, where our feet are kept constantly close to the fire.

This is more than a metaphor. For a distinguishing feature of this yoga is that we work with it directly in our bodies, both individual and collective. When a new highway wants to plough through Auroville, it’s felt as a physical wound; unresolved issues in other parts of our being frequently erupt in the physical dimension, while, as one of our experienced body workers observed, a spate of similar injuries or illnesses in the residents often reflects an imbal-

ance in the wider body of the community.

But what about that other collective process which we gripe about so much, the one that consists of endless meetings and disappointing outcomes? Here, too, we may discern a yogic utility. For in a non-hierarchical, consensus-based society where we are constantly forced to deal with each other, we are given the opportunity to knead one another, to knock off the rough edges, even to break each other down, so that we can begin to open to something else.

As to the failures of our collective process and best-laid plans, they are there to remind us not only not to settle for less but also that to change anything without first changing our consciousness is, as Mother pointed out, a ‘vain chimera.’

Frequent failure is also an inevitable concomitant of the extraordinary freedom we have to make experiments and pursue individual paths. The deeper reason for this freedom and apparent wastefulness may be that Mother is waiting for us to exhaust all other possibilities so that we will finally recognise and turn to the true path (an approach she said she was allowing in the Ashram concerning those who wanted to forcibly ‘uplift’ humanity).

And then there is that other, pervasive pressure to which we are subject here. “As for me you know, I don’t believe in external decisions,” said Mother in 1970. “Simply, I believe in only one thing: the force of Consciousness exerting a pressure like this (crushing gesture). And the Pressure keeps increasing...”

It’s a pressure that confronts us constantly with our own shortcomings—as one Aurovilian put it, “the more sincerely we aspire to reach that goal, the more we are put with our noses on to our own imperfections”—and with the exact circumstances necessary for each of us to make both individual and collective progress.

Mother explained, “There will be all the frictions, contacts, reactions, all that comes from outside, as tests, exactly on your weak point, the most sensitive spot. Here you will hear just the word, the phrase, that you would not like to hear, and people will make just the gesture that would offend you. You will find yourself repeatedly in the presence of a circumstance, a fact, an object, it matters not what, just that thing among all that you would not like to happen. And it is precisely that which happens, and happens more and more, because you do not do your yoga for yourself alone, you do the yoga for everybody, without knowing it, automatically.”

But the key clue as to why the circumstances of Auroville are arranged as they are may be the one provided by Mother on December 13th 1969, when she told Satprem,



"There's only ONE way, it's for the ego to go away, that's all. That's the thing. It's when, instead of an "I", nothing remains there—completely flat, you know like this (immense, even gesture without a ripple) with a sort of...not even expressed in words, but a very STABLE expression of, "What you will, what you will"... Really with a concrete sensation that this (the body) doesn't exist it's only "made use of", as it were, and there's NOTHING but That. You eventually see it, you know ...a vision of this IMMENSE Force, this IMMENSE vibration pressing and pressing and pressing ...and then the world wriggling about underneath (!) and the thing opening—and when it opens, that enters and spreads.... It's the only solution, there's no other. ... The image is very clear of all this humanity clinging and climbing striving to catch like that, but actually not giving itself—it wants to take! And that won't do. It has to nullify itself. Then something else can come, can take its place. The whole secret is there.... Ultimately, that's the most difficult: to learn to disappear."

And 'disappearing' is particularly difficult for those of us with a Western background for we have been brought up to worship at the shrine of individualism. Isn't this precisely why the yoga of Auroville is so often akin to a 'test to destruction' rather than a sunlit path? Because, given that we are such stubborn material, it is only when the sense of the ego is crushed out of us that we are able to surrender to the new force that is "pressing and pressing". 'And my whole action is like this: a PRESSURE on them to make them abdicate the little person. Until it abdicates, the work cannot be done'.

And so we come to one of the central paradoxes of the Auroville experience. On the one hand, it can be extremely uncomfortable, even distressing, to submit to this elemental, even brutal sadhana. On the other hand, many of us would not want to be anywhere else and even, in our more conscious moments, feel intense gratitude for the opportunity of being put through this wringer.

Why? Because here we are confronted with something we feel is irreducibly 'real', something which continually challenges us to strip away our superficial selves, all our personal and cultural baggage, and become more 'real' ourselves, more true to our deepest Selves.

And while there are many difficulties, these also serve to accentuate, throw into high relief, the sheer beauty of this place, the profound peace of the Matrimandir, and the courage, commitment, generosity and love of fellow Aurovilians.

Highway: From threat to action in unity

by Aravinda, a member of the Highway Task Force

Reprinted from Auroville Today, October 2018 issue

Since the Highway Task Force (HTF) was formed by the community on July 12th, our team has been steadily working on a multitude of tasks, including all kinds of fact-finding and research, strategizing action, drafting messages, meetings with government and other institutions and individuals, and preparing maps and documentation on social and environmental impacts for the region.

In a nutshell, we are confident that better options for the highway alignment can be explored in collaboration with the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI). The main objective now is to persuade the relevant authorities that this highway, even with the proposed shift to the edge of the Master Plan ('second alignment'), would be disastrous for Auroville and the surrounding area.

An overview from mid July to date, in continuation of the AVToday article in the August issue:

- July 23rd and August 5th: Over 200 Aurovilians gathered around the Banyan at Matrimandir for protection of Auroville.

- July 24th: HTF members and a member of the Governing Board (GB) met the Lieutenant Governor (LG) of Pondicherry Dr. Kiran Bedi, who advised them to come back with some technical details and evidence of wide-based support from the people concerned. On 30th we went back with a petition signed by 400 Auroville residents and another petition from Kuilapalayam and Bommayarpalayam with over 700 signatures. All meetings with LG have been very supportive.

- July 26th: HTF members and the Working Committee (WC) met with Kuilapalayam residents who expressed their extreme grief and objection to the highway's second alignment close to their village. We explained that we were equally opposed to both alignments, and that we need to work together to prevent them.

- August 1st to 3rd: A second delegation from Auroville met with the NHAI Chairman in Delhi and presented our case, including possible alternatives, some of which might even be more economical. We were told that NHAI would look into our proposal. Eight meetings took place in three days, including with the Ministry of Human Resource Development (the ministry directly responsible for



Auroville), with the Chairman and a member of our Governing Board, and with our Member of Parliament (MP) from Villupuram district. We are grateful for the peaceful oasis of the Delhi Ashram which hosted us.

Note: We have since learned that the alternative routes proposed from Auroville to NHAI were drawn in understandable panic and rushed preparation for the first visit to NHAI, without complete information about continuation of the planned highway towards south [see AV Today #349, August issue]. Hence these options are not applicable. Another hurdle on our way has been an email from the Working Committee sent after the visit of July 2nd to the NHAI officer. Meant as a thank-you note for receiving the delegation and considering adjustment to the alignment, it was understood and filed as an official acceptance from Auroville of the second alignment just east of the Master-plan circle.

Among the next steps was a Residents Assembly Decision (RAD), for the Residents Assembly (RA) to clearly voice its stance—as described in the Auroville Foundation Act—and to be officially conveyed through the Foundation. Besides the RA, two other bodies complete the Auroville Foundation, i.e. the GB and the International Advisory Council (IAC, currently not constituted). The two resolutions, one on the highway and one on reappointing the IAC, received massive support from the community.

Meanwhile an online petition by an Indian citizen, change.org/p/protect-the-afforestation-attempts-of-auroville, has gathered over 70,000 signatures to date and is ongoing, with moving and uplifting comments appreciating the work done in Auroville.

Our MP called a meeting with the Collector of Villupuram on August 14th, with seven Aurovilians and two representatives from Kuilapalayam. The Collector clarified that his role is mainly for land acquisition and to maintain law and order. He advised us to consider the cost of any possible alternatives, the fact that these routes should bypass Pondicherry too (the intention is not a link with the Tindivanam highway but a bypass to join the Villupuram-Cuddalore-Nagapattinam road), and that any alternatives should not have a negative environmental impact or meet with social resistance, displace people or affect their livelihood. He proposed to call for a meeting in his office with the Project Director and staff from NHAI Chennai.

We updated the Governing Board during their meeting on 8th September and asked for their support with official contacts. The role of our Secretary Mr. Chunkath, who was out of country in July and August, would be crucial in all future steps.

Meanwhile, members of PondyCAN joined HTF in a meeting on July 28th, bringing in a wider regional perspective in relation to the highway. We are confident that through an inclusive process with all stakeholders, the best routing can be found, preserving peace and harmony as well as our vulnerable natural environment. A meeting at the Tibetan Pavilion on August 16th brought together representatives from Marakkanam in the north to Cuddalore in the south, followed by a successful full-day seminar on various bioregional planning aspects in Pondicherry on September 11th. (More to follow in the November issue of Auroville Today about this important initiative.)

After a pause of more than a month, suddenly the renewed activity of surveyors in Auroville's greenbelt in mid-September naturally raised deep-seated concern and anxieties, testing our faith and equanimity individually and collectively.

We have been assured that in spite of such unnerving signs, the highway plan is still in an exploratory phase with many important factors pending. The Environmental Impact Assessment which is mandatory for such a project has clear guidelines, and many of its criteria will speak volumes against the proposed alignment. We are also aware that the reaction of the local population is crucial for the Government, which cannot ignore it. We see the case of Chennai-Salem highway, also under the 'Bharatmala Pariyojana', which has been stalled by the High Court.

François was able to obtain a meeting on September 20th with the Principal Secretary of the Prime Ministers' Office in Delhi. Three of us met with him to bring to his attention the highway issue, and highlighted many unique aspects of Auroville, "a beacon for the world" in the words of the Prime Minister. We also met two other Secretaries in the same Office, including one who, as a former District Collector of Villupuram, knows Auroville intimately. All these meetings were very positive, and the work continues.

Ultimately, the external threat of this highway—in the words of a former chairman of Auroville International, a situation of 'all hands on deck'—is also a leverage to accelerate our inner alignment to the ideals of Auroville: an effective human unity, and being at the service of the divine consciousness. Every challenge we are facing now forces us to go deeper inside and work within and among ourselves, with sincerity, humility, gratitude, perseverance, aspiration, receptivity, progress, courage, goodness, generosity, equality and peace.

"We must learn to rely only on the Divine Grace and to call for its help in all circumstances; then it will work out constant miracles." —The Mother



Salon

Matrimandir Meditations and the Matrimandir

By Julie of Light Omega

The Matrimandir in India was envisaged and built by the one known as 'The Mother' who worked with Sri Aurobindo until his physical passing in 1950, and beyond that in the creation of Auroville, the 'City of the Dawn.' Her efforts and his made possible the initial downflow of energy within the Matrimandir which continues to this day.

Towards humanity's future

What is the Matrimandir, and why should we pay attention to it? This is an important question that has to do with the future of humanity and the beliefs we hold concerning that future.

The Matrimandir (Temple of the Mother) in India is a portal for the higher planes of spiritual light to emerge through and radiate out from. It is not the only portal upon the Earth, there are several others that serve different purposes, but it is one that has reached up to the highest planes of light in a powerful way, to bring the energy of light down through the intermediary dimensions onto the physical plane for the benefit of all of humanity.

In order to understand the nature of a 'multidimensional portal,' we need to think in terms of an energetic reality as the one in which we live. Such a reality is defined by the energy that is the true medium or matrix in which we live, rather than the solid appearance of things, including ourselves and our own bodies.

We are energy. Plants are energy. Planetary bodies are energy. All of Creation emerges from an energetic Source that is of Divine nature, and in the course of involution becomes progressively more solid as it moves towards the physical plane of experience and existence.

In the West we call the Source energy emanating from the Divine One 'light.' In the East, it is called 'shakti.' Though there are certain important differences between the two, both 'light' and 'shakti' have the purpose of evolving Creation in a continuous way, returning it to the higher stages of consciousness from which it came, and into the forms which can contain this consciousness. Thus, a portal assists the evolutionary purposes of Creation. It assists the 'light-

energy' or 'shakti-energy' in doing its work on the physical plane.

The Source of light is the Divine Oneness that is all and is in all. Though there is nothing else but this wherever we might look, our minds perceive reality in different terms. Most of us do not perceive the Oneness that is all, since at this time we view reality through physical eyes, not through our spiritual sight. As such, reality looks solid to us. Similarly, we view time and space through our physical senses, not through our spiritual senses, and so time and space appear to be linear to us. We perceive ourselves to be at a point in time and at a point in space, rather than feeling that we are part of the Oneness that is everywhere.

Through the energy of light that the portal of the Matrimandir brings through to this plane, our inner vision and our inner knowing is assisted in moving toward a view of reality that is more aligned with our spiritual senses and our spiritual knowledge. The Matrimandir energy helps us by elevating our awareness to the level of our soul or higher being. What this experience is like is different for each person, as each embodied soul incorporates Divine light in their own unique way. Yet, for each one who encounters the higher planes of light, they are changed by it in many subtle ways. And, with repeated encounters, a process is initiated that has powerful effects within consciousness and within the whole of life.

The Matrimandir as a structure has its residence in Auroville, India, where it is known as the 'soul of the city.' It was envisioned and built by the one known as 'The Mother' who worked with Sri Aurobindo until his physical passing in 1950, and beyond that in the creation of Auroville, the 'City of the Dawn.' Her efforts and his made possible the initial downflow of energy within the Matrimandir which continues to this day. The physical structure of the Matrimandir was completed in its present form in 2008, after 37 years of construction. The energy of the original transmission infuses this structure, and is made available in ongoing way to all who enter it.

Yet, the Matrimandir and the gardens which surround it are far more than physical entities. They are transmitters of spiritual light from the higher dimensions, now present within the Earth as well. The higher dimensions of light were made available in the beginning of the Matrimandir's existence through the contributions of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother. These higher vibrations have gone into the Earth and saturated it with the light of the cosmos, allowing all that grows there to emanate a unique light and consciousness. One could say that everything in the presence of that spiritual energy becomes more alive.



Nevertheless, the purpose of the Matrimandir is not simply local or location-specific. It is universal and planetary, and was conceived as such before its establishment. A planetary portal has an effect upon all beings, no matter where they live. It makes an energy available to all as a result of the fact that all are part of one body, both spiritually, energetically, and physically. Therefore, what can be incorporated into one part of that unified body becomes transmitted to the rest of it. All of humanity is the beneficiary of the light that has come through the portal of the Matrimandir.

At this time, however, a new aspect of the Matrimandir's creation is coming into being. This aspect has to do with the further grounding into the Earth of the higher energies of light, made more available today as a result of the increased potency of the embodied light now on the Earth. Such embodied light enables the Earth to hold more of the higher dimensional frequencies. What this means for human beings is that the light now present upon the Earth can assist all physical beings to transform at an accelerated rate into the potential of who they are meant to be. The embodying of spiritual light within the Earth has a direct effect on the consciousness of mankind.

Because of this advance in the capacity of the Earth to hold the light of the higher planes, human beings everywhere are being assisted in their spiritual evolution. To understand this, it is necessary to know that energy and consciousness are two aspects of the same thing. To incorporate higher frequencies of spiritual light is, at the same time, to change one's consciousness so that it corresponds more to the soul or Divine inner core of awareness. Taking in more light is taking in more consciousness of one's own divinity, which in turn allows one to live more fully as a human-Divine being upon the Earth.

This goal of 'divinizing' human consciousness is the purpose for which the Matrimandir came into being, a purpose described by Sri Aurobindo in many of his writings. The Matrimandir embodies and radiates that purpose. The 'divinizing' of human consciousness is taking place for all of humanity now, even in the presence of opposing forces which would thwart that movement forward. Indeed, we are at a time, now, when it is possible to anchor the Matrimandir energy through the creation of a new portal here in the West, in America. This brings us to the purpose of the Matrimandir Meditations.

The Matrimandir Meditations are a means by which the new portal of Matrimandir is being opened and anchored in America. They bring the original energy of the Matrimandir through the higher dimensions of light onto the physical plane through a combination of Divine action and human intention. One could say that the Divine purpose of the Matrimandir is to assist in the evolution of humanity's consciousness, and allow for a Divine flow of light through a new portal where it meets human longing to reach toward the Divine. The new portal is created through each joining that takes place on the physical plane with the higher dimensions of light for the purpose of healing and transformation of oneself and the Earth. The meditation assists both the individual in his or her healing process in whatever ways are needed, and the energy body of the Earth itself.

Matrimandir Meditations are not about 'doing' but about receiving. One reaches up with one's intention to receive the downflow of sacred light, holding that this light seeks to become embodied within each of us. By embracing this joining and desiring to be as open as possible to it, the work of

Matrimandir Meditations are not about 'doing' but about receiving. One reaches up with one's intention to receive the downflow of sacred light, holding that this light seeks to become embodied within each of us.

light is accomplished.

Such alignment can be practical in many ways, and exists in potential within many spiritual traditions, though it is called by different names. One does not need to develop new religious beliefs in order to align with the higher planes of light. These planes of energy and consciousness are already part of our inner being, and it is the purpose of the meditation to awaken them and to bring them into a more conscious state. Alignment with light is a spiritual practice of great importance at this time in our history, and so these meditations are offered as a blessing in support of mankind's evolutionary purpose.

All who seek to take part in the experience of the Matrimandir energy may do so at this time. Such energy is made available for each one who aspires to a greater awareness of their own Divine being and is a gift and a legacy of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother for the benefit of all of mankind.

We bless and sanctify the holy purpose for which the Matrimandir and the streams that emanate from it have come into being.



On attending a *Savitri* workshop

By Kannappan Singaram

The workshop was conducted by Debashish Banerji at the Sri Aurobindo Sadhana Peetham in Lodi, CA on August 18, 2018.

Today I experienced something very phenomenal that I had never experienced before. Debashish Banerji in his talk on *Savitri* put everything in the right context, and it gave me a framework to approach *Savitri*. For the first time, I learned how the 12 books are organized, what is meant by the symbol Dawn, what an Avatar really is, why the Avatar is required, what is the difference between an Avatar and a normal being, why there is the need for aspiration, and why the intervention of grace is needed.

Debashish began his talk by giving the context to where the *Savitri* story occurred. He showed how parallel themes existed in other western texts, and how it was natural for Sri Aurobindo to expound on this topic of the truth conquering falsehood. *Savitri* is an embodiment of Sri Aurobindo and Mother's consciousness and it is mantric poetry. I had no clue in the past on how to approach *Savitri*, and did not know what the symbol Dawn means. I was thrilled to learn it exemplifies three things: 1) the day that Satyavan must die, 2) the day *Savitri* would awake to confront the challenge of his death, and 3) the dawn of a new cosmic cycle. The dualities of life and death, light and darkness, joy and sorrow, truth and falsehood always baffled me, and it used to be such an embarrassment for me to become aware of my own multiple parts. It was a consolation for me to learn how the independence given to the four emanations of the Supreme turned into their opposites and established themselves in the creation. It was interesting to learn how aspiration rises from below, how it is met by grace from above, and the changes this can bring about in the established rule of things.

As *Savitri* wakes up and confronts the issue of death in the second canto of Book One, Sri Aurobindo flashes back to the reason for *Savitri*'s birth. Debashish explained the Avatarhood of King Aswapati as the Avatarhood of Aspiration, aspiring for the Divine's intervention, and the Avatarhood of *Savitri* as an Avatarhood of grace, an intervention to bring out something new. This helps one to understand "The Yoga of the King: The Yoga of the soul's release," and King Aswapati's growing awareness of the secret knowledge that leads to the spirit's freedom.

In Book Two we see Aswapati's travel to several worlds spanning the physical, vital, mental, and psychic, where

he is raising his consciousness from one level to fall back and then rise again to a new level of consciousness. When he reaches the psychic and the levels beyond the mind, he questions why the beauty and greatness of the subtle worlds don't exist in the physical world. He takes this problem in his hand for the world, and he aspires to the Divine Shakti.

Book Three, *The Book of the Divine Mother*, depicts Aswapati's darshan of the Divine Mother and the dialog between the two. The Divine Mother tells Aswapati that the world is not ready yet, but Aswapati through his unwavering aspiration still sought the intervention of her grace. The Divine Mother agrees to intervene, and thus is born *Savitri*. In Book Four, *Savitri* as the Avatar of grace grows up to become a smart, beautiful, and powerful woman stepping out to find her husband.

Debashish gave a very humorous account of different traditions and cultures, explaining concepts that are difficult to contemplate in very simple terms. He talked about Christ as an aspect of Satyavan, and Satyavan as the prize to be won from Death. One thing that really struck me is the fact that if you leave yourself quiet enough, you will clearly see something in you aspire up above like a flame and the grace up above responding to it. This two-way movement one can physically perceive and experience in silence.

In Book Five, *Savitri* meets Satyavan in the woods and then returns back to the palace to inform her parents. In Book Six, at the palace she learns that Satyavan has only 12 swift months to live. *Savitri*, the Ishwarakoti, is also constantly put in situations to progressively express her divinity, and here too she decides to stick to her decision to be married to Satyavan. Debashish explained that the dialog between the queen mother and Narad in Book Six is an expression of the terrestrial helpless anguish. *Savitri*, with the burden of the foreknowledge of Satyavan's impending death, goes to the forest to spend time with her husband.

The destined day of Satyavan's departure arrives, the symbolic dawn, and it is at this same time that *Savitri* discovers her inner power to bring about a new cosmic cycle. *Savitri* momentarily questions the injustice of life, but she herself being the Divine Mother refuses to agree to this injustice and prepares to fight it. In Book Seven she takes an inward journey to discover her powers. Satyavan's death occurs in Book Eight, and then in Books Nine and Ten *Savitri* follows Satyavan and the Lord of Death. Here we see the ensuing debate between *Savitri* and Lord of Death and how Death could not carry forward his work. Debashish emphasized the gradual shift in Death's attitude towards *Savitri*, finally returning Satyavan to her in Book 11, but then suggesting that they live together in a non-earthly



world. Here again the Avatar is put to the test, but she remains firm on the fact that what she won is not for them but for the earth. In Book Twelve, Satyavan and Savitri return to earth.

Among the many insights Debashish shared with us, he explained the subtle differences between different yogic practices. He also explained that this beautiful poetry is a mantric poetry that carries the sound vibration of Sri Aurobindo's consciousness, and that we can feel the physical presence of Mother and Sri Aurobindo by reading *Savitri* every day. It is not merely for the sake of feeling this presence, but the key is to become conscious instruments of Mother and Sri Aurobindo and active participants in the evolution of consciousness. It was so exciting to learn how the Love of Divine Mother visits us. It now makes sense that even when we are not pure enough, when we are not powerful enough, how it stays with us and does its work. In this context, the work to be done is unique to each one depending on where they are in life. Finally, the importance of sadhana, why it is required for an individual, and what is the place of the individual in this collective Integral Yoga, is now becoming very clear.

Reflections on faith

by Seabury Gould

I am thankful for the times in my life when I've had a deepening of my faith. I have faith in the meaningfulness of this life's journey. I honor synchronicity. I relate to the Spirit of Guidance.

I cherish the words of Sri Aurobindo where he says "The faith demanded of us amounts to a large and ever-increasing and a constantly purer, fuller and stronger assent of the whole being and all its parts to the presence and guidance of God and the Shakti."

Faith and that ever-increasing assent of the whole being to the presence of the Divine, for me, goes hand-in-hand with the guidance throughout my life's journey.

I think back to 1973 as a crucial turning-point. I heard about Sri Aurobindo and the Mother right after she left her body. I read words of Sri Aurobindo and felt a calling to go to India.

In 1973 a musical milestone was that I first played Irish music that year. Irish/Celtic music has been the genre of music that I have probably played the most in my life.

In 1973 I traveled out of the US for the first time, to England (including Glastonbury), Scotland, and Ireland. I was also in a significantly loving relationship with a girl that year.

My father passed away in 1973, and since my mother predeceased him in 1967, I was 19 years old without parents, but I was welcome at the homes of my older sisters. And my faith was strong enough. Moreover I had made my first contact with the Mother who says, "The difficulties come always to make us progress. The greater the difficulty, the greater can be the progress".

I believe there was a part of me which was somehow conscious of the Supreme Good behind all things. To understand anything you have to see it in the framework of

the larger truth that encompasses it.

In 1974 I stepped out in faith for the unknown and left for India. I went

to Andhra University, learned the Telugu language, and began my studies of Karnatic vocal music. I studied various translations of the Gita. Sri Aurobindo's *Essays on the Gita* was profoundly inspiring. Indeed the Gita is a scripture that "arises out of a critical moment in the soul of a man face to face with the crowning action of his life."

My time in Auroville and Pondicherry a few years later was like another lifetime within this life, but that's another story.

The Grace IS at work everywhere. As the Grace IS always with us, I take to heart the Mother's reminder to "concentrate in your heart with a silent mind, and you are sure to receive the guidance you aspire for."

Life has proceeded with multifaceted endeavors and travels and what seems like again and again, yet another return to aspiration for the Divine. My faith hasn't always been unshakeable.

Despite my stumblings and shortcomings, putting my life's journey in perspective, and turning to *Savitri* as an oracle, I resonate with Sri Aurobindo's wise reminder: "All can be done if the god-touch is there".

The Grace IS at work everywhere. As the Grace IS always with us, I take to heart the Mother's reminder to "concentrate in your heart with a silent mind, and you are sure to receive the guidance you aspire for."



Chronicles

From vairagya to gifts and blessings

From an interview with Lucas by Matthias Pommerening

Two souls that incarnated in Germany, named Lucas and Matthias, connected by their aspirations for changes in consciousness, met to talk about what brought Lucas to Auroville, where he recently started his newcomer process. Lucas' outer travels led him around the world, throughout India, to Pondicherry, and finally Auroville. Inwardly, a deep need for and the recognition of the necessity of fundamental change in human society and the world led him to seek a new consciousness within. Here he tells us about his inner and outer journeys.

Why are you here in Auroville, with this interest in spirituality, if you could be making money or pursuing an academic career as a psychologist in a more familiar environment in the West? What calls you here?

In answer to why I am not making money, that is very much linked to the story of how I came to spirituality. The shortest possible answer is: "Simply because I can't." I would feel really miserable, I believe, by being a corporate psychologist, for example. It started really young that I felt some kind of dissatisfaction with the world, with the state of the world and the society as it was and still is. Only with time I came to a point when I was able to communicate or to elaborate on what it is that bothers me about it. Before it was just a sense of dissatisfac-



Lucas and Matthias in Auroville.

tion or it was a sense of "It can't go on like that. Something is terribly wrong." So, I think that's what they call in yoga vairagya, which is a sense of disgust or dissatisfaction with the world, with life. That's a very powerful means to use in yoga. So I was brought [to yoga] through that.

Seeing the darkness that there is in the world around me, and later on also in myself, a deep need was born to find something else, to say: "Okay, we need to change." It was so obvious: I realized at some point that we cannot just change the outer, we have to change the consciousness of people to really make it solid, otherwise any kind of outer-imposed order will just be destroyed by any inner disorder.

I started traveling. I left Germany when I was 19, after I had finished school. I needed to get out of that culture, I needed to get out of that space. I needed to get out of family, culture, tradition, which I had felt an aversion towards before, I had rejected a lot of it, but I was still in it, and I didn't have the creativity or capacity to just create something new out of myself in the

midst of all this. So I really needed to physically get out of that atmosphere to see what I had subtly felt before: "Ah, something's wrong. Something's not right, this is not how we are supposed to live. We can do much better."

It was just a subtle feeling. Then I started traveling and really got out of there and started feeling how dissatisfied and unhappy I had been. I had just used the available means, socially available means, to dull myself because I found that I had no way out. Traveling, I started coming upon communities, started to see people living a different life. At first [my exploration] was more on the social level.

Then I started reading Krishnamurti, which did open me to this idea of inner work. This was followed by reading Alan Watts, Terrance McKenna, and The Gita according to Prabhupada, the translation of the ISKCON founder. So, along those lines I started searching within. I think it was the dissatisfaction and this absolute inability to play the game. Being in a space of superficiality would make me feel awkward and incapable



of playing along. Well, if I drank, it would be okay. But it was so superficial, and a strong sense of discomfort would set in. I would feel something else being communicated on a heart or a gut level, and that which was spoken was very different from that, so it was a jarring feeling. But I couldn't get out of it, I wasn't strong enough to change that, so I had to get out. That's why I mean: I didn't have any choice, so to speak. I needed to find something else, there was no other way. I don't think that money and all that is evil, I just think that the way society works right now is ... yeah. So it's basically vairagya and dissatisfaction that brought me on the track [of inner exploration].

The old patterns were still moving on, the outside being so interesting. It is so interesting when you are traveling. You go here and there, outer places change and it gives

you some sense of newness and discovery and exploration. But I had read Krishnamurti and I met somebody who had been meditating—which I had never met before! Ever! In my whole life I had never met someone who had meditated! I mean, before I saw it more in drugs. I saw the possibility of mind-altering drugs and of consciousness-expanding drugs, there I saw possibilities and my interest lay in that very young. But it was more studying, understanding it. Because I was interested in “How do we get out of this mess?” I knew we had to do it inside, and drugs seemed like the accessible way, so far.

So I had met somebody who had meditated when I was twenty and started reading Krishnamurti and

Alan Watts and all those. It still took me a long time, until I really started doing that, looking inside. Because the outside was still perpetuated by the past: “The answers lie outside ... Your teacher has the answer ... There is a right answer.” So there was quite a long time of reconditioning that happened, subconsciously or unconsciously. I didn't really understand it and I couldn't do that by myself—it just happened. I kept on traveling because I couldn't go back. I had intended to go for one year and then go back and study psychology. And I couldn't do it. It was really so clear that I had to burn the bridges back home. I had to go on. It was like I suddenly had discovered this small, little, tender plant inside of

story. And, like I said, it took me a long time, because the outside was always so interesting. That's what I used to do, that's what I used to know from my culture.

And also, of course, you first have to go through some pain, usually. When you look inside, usually, there is some pain. It doesn't just start [without that]. When you never looked inside, usually a discomfort comes at some point. Or even if it's first beautiful you will come to a point where it's painful. So then I always used the patterns I used before, of dulling myself down, stuffing myself. Be it with other people or drugs or new places, or intellectual endeavor, or—it doesn't matter, anything can be used for that. So

When I was 17 or 18 I had for the first time the idea of going to India. So it seemed all very well laid out, when I look back. It was just step by step by step these things happened, and they seemed all written, in a sense, or set up. But while I was in it, of course, I couldn't see that. It is only in retrospect that I can see the pattern, the beauty of this story.

it took me a long time and getting really sick, so that I had no more energy to socialize, and was so weak that I had to be by myself.

me, and if I went back, it would have just been crushed and dissolved. So I needed to go on traveling. I can say this in retrospect, but then it was just a hunch. I had a feeling for it, but it was not so articulate. I knew I had to go on and protect this small little plant until it was strong enough to withstand going back.

So I traveled for four years before I returned. I came to India. When I was 17 or 18 I had for the first time the idea of going to India. So it seemed all very well laid out, when I look back. It was just step by step by step these things happened, and they seemed all written, in a sense, or set up. But while I was in it, of course, I couldn't see that. It is only in retrospect that I can see the pattern, the beauty of this

Then I was in the mountains of the Himalayas, in the hills—it was not really far up. But I was in this small house and I just knew that I had to take care of myself.

So I had a lot of time to myself. I had a lot of time to read and to meditate and to just look at the horizon changing colors. And that's when it really started, I think. I mean, where does it really start, where does it end? But that was another step, that's when I really started looking within and to perceive beauty and the rhythm of That in nature. I remember very vividly this silhouette of a tree against the sky and I was in utter awe and joy of the beauty of this tree and the patterns against the sky. It was just more than a tree. It was, again, first vairagya and then getting



sick. So I was again forced, because I didn't want to learn. I had known it for two years, but I needed that whip, that crack of the whip to get me to it, unfortunately. So we grow by pain and by wounds, most of the time.

When I came to India for the first time I had already come to Auroville, it was one of the first places I came to. But I didn't really connect to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother back then, I was not at that point yet. I was still very much outside. But the impression was there and also a teacher that would later be a teacher or professor, I met him already, briefly. But I needed to see India, I needed to get this feeling of India. And India was very interesting. When I came to India in my journey, I landed in Chennai, and I got off the plane and it just felt like home. It just felt like: "Ah, finally I can breath." You know? It was hot and stuffy—very hot, it was in August. So hot and sticky. Chennai, polluted, looked like fog, but it wasn't fog. You could not look further than a block away. So it was not a nice, not a pleasant experience in the outer sense. But I felt deeply at home. And I never felt that in any other country since or before. I never, certainly, felt it in Germany. I knew there was something here that I needed to do. And then I came to Auroville—not my space yet, but something was seeded there. I came to see India and moved on.

When I had to leave the country, I went to Nepal, and I got sick and then I had to go back to India. When I got sick I had to start looking within. After that, I started to travel slowly. I didn't want to see outside so much anymore. I felt at certain places certain atmospheres and they were really amazing, but I was interested more in having a place for myself where I can have enough time and space to have these inner stories going on. So from then

on it deepened, or it changed to something more inside, really.

After four years of traveling I had the feeling that I had to go back to Germany, to connect the old consciousness with the new consciousness. I went back, stayed in Germany for a year and tried to pick up the pieces of the old life which I had, which really felt so different, felt so much like another life. Before and after I was 20 years old—I can't really put when it started, but there was a clear before and after. When I was 24 I wanted to go back to Germany and bring these two lives back together to see what it actually was. I went back to my parents, lived there, because I had no more money at that point. I lived in Germany and tried to figure out what I would do with all this. Because I knew I didn't want to go to University. I knew I could learn much on the road and I needed to look deeper. But also the need started now: "Okay, I need to be in the world." You know, it's not just about withdrawing. So I was a bit clueless, back in Germany. It started to grow together again, the new and the old consciousness, but I was a bit clueless about how I would go on.

It came along the opportunity to study Integral Yoga Psychology in Pondicherry, which I immediately knew was what I had to do. It was three days before the end of the submission deadline. The moment I read it, it was certain. It was absolutely "This is what I have to do." I mean it was like: "Yes, I can go back to India and finally I can do something to learn and actually work in this world as well and not just travel around and do random jobs." Because my interest in psychology was still there. This opportunity also just came along, it just felt, again set, set up. I went back to Pondicherry, met this professor who I had met the first time I came to India three years be-

fore, and studied nine months there. It was psychology in the light of Sri Aurobindo and that was another turning point. That was a very major turning point, because then it really brought in some connection. Before I was reading different people. I was reading Alan Watts, Vivekananda, you name them, but it was never like: "Okay, he's my teacher."

They were very gentle with us at the Indian Psychology Institute. They were very focused on the psychology aspects, that's why I was very interested in it, but they never forced anything upon us. They used vocabulary which was not too charged from the past, like "God" and "Divine." When you come from the West, most people are very allergic to this. And also I knew Indians for whom it was the same. So they spoke of consciousness, the highest you can imagine, visualize, connect to, or your highest part, or your higher self. They used certain words and ways to get us to discover these things by ourselves and not just be thrown into the terminology of something. That was a great gift, that was truly a great gift. Because I could accept the logic and the clarity they presented, without it being charged with a religious teacher. I only came later to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, because they had opened my mind enough, in this institute, to let experience in, which before had been blocked by an aversion to religion, by an aversion to the falsity of New Age esotericism which we know in the West. That is so distorted in so many ways, and brings about skepticism and doubt, which go along with the vairagya, which I had in the beginning. They [skepticism and vairagya] are probably needed to get out of the distortions that we have in the West. But then to not have them as stumbling blocks, to open oneself to something that is true, which is more



real, they need to be slowly dissolved. With that, an opening and experiences came, an intensity of concentration on these topics, which I really feel blessed to have had, in this small group of people. They just offered it to us for a year—what a gift, really: What a blessing to give to someone. It changed all of us. Very strongly, very strongly. And after that: Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. I started reading them. Before, I was never really able or I was never really intrigued by it. But after that I started reading and I was amazed. I was just mind-blown. I started referring to them and I started having a connection with them.

Before, the vairagya had brought me spirituality in a way that made me feel like: “I want this to be my last life. I want to get out of this.” It was really disgust. It was like: “What is this? I need to get out of here!” Then, over time, I realized that it is not about leaving. It is about freedom. Freedom is very important—liberation is the key. But it is not to leave this place. It is our own limitations which make us believe that. It is our own distortions in the mind, the murkiness of our own feelings, which really need a ... gentle and strong heart choosing to be here and doing the work, instead of a ... disgusted turning away from it.

In the beginning vairagya was the leverage I had and later it became more of a trust and a faith in the vision of what I could see through Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. And that changed the story again. It brought the spirituality into life. Before it was

a painful cleavage between the inner wish to go away and the outer, which seemed so imperfect and so distasteful. But I knew that the times of sitting in caves was gone, it was not for that anymore. Because I was often, in Germany already, socially, societally interested. I felt for the collective. I felt: “Wow, what a culture we live in. This is barbaric, this is ridiculous, we can and we need to do it differently.” That was more the time of youth. Then came: “I need to get out of here, I need to be free.” And then it came together, it came together with Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. And by that time, after I had done that course, I was also clear that I finally found something

When I came to India in my journey, I landed in Chennai, and I got off the plane and it just felt like home. It just felt like: “Ah, finally I can breath.” You know? It was hot and stuffy—very hot, it was in August. So hot and sticky. Chennai, polluted, looked like fog, but it wasn’t fog. You could not look further than a block away. So it was not a nice, not a pleasant experience in the outer sense. But I felt deeply at home.

with which I could do the work which I wanted to do. Because I saw the need from the beginning that consciousness needs to change. So how can I be in the world and do a job, do a work, to bring myself into society, give to the rest, and be a part in this change of consciousness. And here I suddenly saw the possibility of it.

Before I’ve seen it in therapy, which is my interest. Most people only change when their pain of staying where they are is getting so high, it’s getting so unbearable where they are, that it becomes less painful to change. I saw the ability of widening consciousness in moments of intense, unbearable experiences. That was why I was interested in therapy. I finally

found a basis in Indian Psychology, in Integral Yoga, which actually spoke about the possibility of getting out of it and not just fixing it, which spoke of consciousness as the central point and not just a phenomena on the side of the brain, like a side- or epi-phenomenon of the brain. So a lot of truth rang in that and I finally found a path in which I could do my inner work and follow my inner need of freedom and at the same time serve the whole and do something to uplift. I found that with Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. That is my medicine. It helps me. Other people need other things, other things work for them. For me it’s that.

Through that I wanted to actually manifest it in life and not just have it inside. The strong need of: “The outer and the inner have to come together.” After the course I went back to Germany which was a hard time, because again I was a bit lost: “So how do I manifest this now?” But I had found a therapist in Auroville who was willing to train me and I had found a place, Auroville, where—far from perfectly—the people were trying this and speaking about this, attempting it, aiming for it. There are also people like that around the world, but not so condensed in one place. It became quite clear: This was the place to outwardly manifest my inner quest. Because they are not separate, they really are not.



Essays

Central processes and practices in Integral Yoga

by Larry Seidlitz

Because in some respects the path of Integral Yoga is bafflingly complex, it may be useful to consider some of its central processes and practices. One of the reasons this Yoga may appear complex is that Sri Aurobindo's writings about it are so extensive and often difficult to understand. This problem may be more an appearance than real, for there are ways around it. One way around is that the Mother's writings, many of which are based on questions and answers with students of the Ashram school, are easier to understand. In addition, Sri Aurobindo's *Letters on Yoga*, which were written in reply to individual sadhaks' questions and dilemmas relating to the practice of the Yoga, are also easier to understand than most of his books. Moreover, with the new edition of Sri Aurobindo's complete works, these letters are now nicely organized in four volumes in sections with titles and subtitles according to topic. Still, they run over two thousand pages, which may either be an impediment or a tremendous blessing, depending on how you look at it.

Another problem is that there is no fixed or clear-cut path or discipline to be followed. Many other paths of yoga have clear rules and practices to follow. Moreover, they typically have a living Teacher who may provide personal assistance and guidance. It may still be difficult to discipline oneself to strictly follow such paths, but at least



it is clear what the path is and how to tread it. In Sri Aurobindo's Yoga, people have a great deal of freedom to follow the way that seems suited to their unique individuality and predilection. There certainly are guidelines that have been given for the Yoga, but for the most part these are broad, and even these are flexible. There are also many specific practices that have been suggested, but it is not incumbent on practitioners to follow them. Out of the vast array of possible practices and advices to follow, it may be difficult to discern which ones to select, and it is easy to lose focus. Instead of having a living guru to guide us, we are asked to turn to the Divine within for individualized guidance, and in the early stages of the path, we may not be able to discern this inner guidance clearly, or at all.

But an even greater challenge that makes this Yoga confusing is that it aims at transforming the lower nature of mind, life, and body; and the lower nature by its very nature is bafflingly complex. Most other paths do not attempt to disentangle the seemingly innumerable knots of the lower nature that keep us tied down to our ignorance, they cut them. It is much easier to cut the knots to rise up into the higher consciousness than it is to untie them. While purification of the lower nature is also necessary in other paths, quieting the nature so that it does not obstruct its transcendence

is different than perfecting and divinizing the nature. The aim of this Yoga is not simply to transcend the lower nature and rise into the divine consciousness, it is to create a divine life here on earth in the body. So it seems that it is generally necessary for practitioners of this Yoga to wrestle with the lower nature in the process of converting and changing it, and as long as we are still centered in the ignorance, that wrestle can be confusing.

Therefore, this paper has been written to provide some guidelines and practices that practitioners may find useful in navigating the troubled waters of the Integral Yoga, especially in its early stages, selected from the abundance of Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's writings and talks.

Two central aims

As a starting point, I would like to draw on advice the Mother gave to a girl who was among the first children admitted into the Ashram school. She told me that the Mother would emphasize to the children two points: "become conscious" and "find your psychic being." Sri Aurobindo seems to confirm this advice in slightly different language when he wrote the following:

As he [a person] can use his thinking mind and will to restrain and correct his life impulses, so too he can bring in the action of a still higher luminous mentality aided by the deeper soul in him, the psychic being, and supersede by these greater and purer motive powers the domination of the vital and sensational force that we call desire. He can entirely master or persuade it and offer it up for transformation to its divine



Master. This higher mentality and this deeper soul, the psychic element in man, are the two grappling hooks by which the Divine can lay hold upon his nature. (*The Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 79)

I will begin by elaborating on these two central aims of the Yoga, and then describe some specific practices suggested by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother for achieving them.

Becoming conscious

Becoming conscious means to become aware of what is happening within oneself as well as without. Become aware of your thoughts, your feelings, your sensations, your actions, your motivations, your goals. That is a first step, not an easy one, but a necessary one if we aim to perfect our nature. Not only do we need to become aware of what these things are at each moment, we need to become aware of where they come from and how they come into us. Again, Sri Aurobindo explained:

Our mind is a receiving, developing and modifying machine into which there is being constantly passed from moment to moment a ceaseless foreign flux, a streaming mass of disparate materials from above, from below, from outside. Much more than half our thoughts and feelings are not our own in the sense that they take form out of ourselves; of hardly anything can it be said that it is truly original to our nature. A large part comes to us from others or from the environment, whether as raw material or as manufactured imports; but still more largely they come from universal nature here or

from other worlds and planes and their beings and powers and influences; for we are overtopped and environed by other planes of consciousness, mind planes, life planes, subtle matter planes, from which our life and action here are fed, or fed on, pressed, dominated, made use of for the manifestation of their forms and forces. (*The Synthesis of Yoga*, pp. 75-76)

It's a complex passage, but essentially it is saying that most of our thoughts and feelings come into us from outside, sometimes from others in our physical environment, but more often from beings and forces from other dimensions of existence that are hidden from our awareness. What he says of our thoughts and feelings also goes for our sensations, emotions, impulses, motivations, and goals. In general, we are a receiving station for all of these movements of nature, but as we are unaware of these movements constantly swirling in the universal nature around us, and become aware of them only when they enter and register strongly in our own mental, vital, or physical being, we take them as our own, originating in and by our own individual being, or even more directly, as our very self.

Therefore it is very important that we become aware of the movement of these forces into us and through us, for we also send them back out and pass them on to others around us. We catch a thought, an emotion, an impulse from outside, elaborate on it, give it a certain turn or twist according to our individual nature, maybe act on it or maybe not, and then send it back out again, either through our actions or through our subtler vibrations of bodily sensation, feeling, desire, intention, thought. We must become aware of

what is thus flowing through us, but also of the act or process of receiving and sending. For it is possible, and this is key, to prevent the entry of such forces, or if they should get in, to minimize or nullify their effects and also their further spread into the universal atmosphere around us. The Mother explained it thus:

To be conscious, first of all. We are conscious of only an insignificant portion of our being; for the most part we are unconscious. It is this unconsciousness that keeps us down to our unregenerate nature and prevents change and transformation in it. It is through unconsciousness that the undivine forces enter into us and make us their slaves. You are to be conscious of yourself, you must awake to your nature and movements, you must know why and how you do things or feel or think them; you must understand your motives and impulses, the forces, hidden and apparent, that move you; in fact, you must, as it were, take to pieces the entire machinery of your being. Once you are conscious, it means that you can distinguish and sift things, you can see which are the forces that pull you down and which help you on. And when you know the right from the wrong, the true from the false, the divine from the undivine, you are to act strictly up to your knowledge; that is to say, resolutely reject one and accept the other. The duality will present itself at every step and at every step you will have to make your choice. You will have to be patient and persistent and vigilant—"sleepless", as the adepts say; you must always refuse to give any



chance whatever to the undivine against the divine. (*Collected Works of the Mother (CWM)*, Vol. 3, p. 2; Questions and Answers, 7 April 1929)

So this is the first aim: to become conscious of the movements of nature in and through us, distinguish those which help us on the path from those that retard our progress, and then, accept the former and reject the latter.

Finding the psychic being

The second point that the Mother emphasized to the children of the school was to “find your psychic being.” The psychic being is the developing soul personality that evolves over the course of many lifetimes around the psychic entity or soul, the divine center of our evolving individual being. Ordinarily, the psychic being is deep within and hidden or covered over from our awareness by other personalities and the activities of our mind, life, and body. While it may exert some influence on our thoughts, feelings, and physical activities, that influence is usually diluted and mixed with the other influences from the surrounding nature to which we give expression. That is why we must “become conscious” of these other influences and “sift” the divine influences coming from our psychic being from those external undivine influences. At the same time, we must consciously seek to come into contact with our psychic being, listen to its guidance, and follow its natural Godward movements.

Thus, we see that this aim is closely intertwined with the first aim: to find our psychic being we must learn to distinguish its movements and influences from those coming from the external nature. Moreover, as we come

into closer conscious contact with our psychic being, we are better able to distinguish between helpful and adverse movements of the nature, find a surer guidance than that of the mind, and gain an increasing control over the movements of the nature. In one of his letters, Sri Aurobindo provided this guidance about the nature and quality of the psychic influence:

The contribution of the psychic being to the sadhana is: (1) love and bhakti, a love not vital, demanding and egoistic but without conditions or claims, self-existent; (2) the contact or the presence of the Mother within; (3) an unerring guidance from within; (4) a quieting and purification of the mind, vital and physical consciousness by their subjection to the psychic influence and guidance; (5) the opening up of all this lower consciousness to the higher spiritual consciousness above for its descent into a nature prepared to receive it with a complete receptivity and right attitude—for the psychic brings in everything right thought, right perception, right feeling, right attitude. (*Letters on Yoga*, Vol. III (*LY III*), p. 339)

That [feeling the Mother’s Presence, Love, Joy, Beauty] is one part of the psychic experience—the other is a complete self-giving, absence of demand, a prominence of the psychic being by which all that is false, wrong, egoistic, contrary to the Divine Truth, Divine Will, Divine Purity and Light is shown, falls away, cannot prevail in the nature. With all that the increase of the psychic qualities, gratitude, obedience, unselfishness, fidelity to the true

perception, true impulse etc. that comes from the Mother or leads to the Mother. When this side grows, then the other, the Presence, Love, Joy, Beauty, can develop and be permanently there. (*LY III*, pp. 338-39)

It should be clarified that the above descriptions pertain to the experience of the psychic being in its purity, unmixed with mental and vital influences, but that usually, before this purer action is possible, it works indirectly through the mind and vital, coloring and uplifting their activities with a psychic influence. Sri Aurobindo wrote:

A certain sensitive feeling for all that is true and good and beautiful, fine and pure and noble, a response to it, a demand for it, a pressure on mind and life to accept and formulate it in our thought, feelings, conduct, character is the most usually recognised, the most general and characteristic, though not the sole sign of this influence of the psyche. (*The Life Divine*, pp. 926-27)

In the first long stage of its growth and immature existence it has leaned on earthly love, affection, tenderness, goodwill, compassion, benevolence, on all beauty and gentleness and fineness and light and strength and courage, on all that can help to refine and purify the grossness and commonness of human nature... (*The Synthesis of Yoga*, pp. 155-56)

Naturally, if one does not yet have a direct contact with the psychic being, such indirect influences through



the mind and feelings help to refine the nature and align it with the psychic being, such that the direct contact and influence eventually may be established and grow stronger.

Practices for becoming conscious

Having established some conception of these two primary objectives of the sadhana in its early stages, let us turn to practices that lead to their realization. We can start with practices that are more directly relevant to becoming conscious and follow with others pertaining to realization of the psychic being, but as we have seen, these two objectives are closely intertwined, and thus the practices leading to each are mutually reinforcing and overlapping.

One key to both of these objectives is to draw the consciousness back from the surface thoughts and feelings and center it more and more deeply in the inner being. Sri Aurobindo wrote:

You must gather yourself within more firmly. If you disperse yourself constantly, go out of the inner circle, you will constantly move about in the pettinesses of the ordinary outer nature and under the influences to which it is open. Learn to live within, to act always from within, from constant inner communion with the Mother. It may be difficult at first to do it always and completely, but it can be done if one sticks to it—and it is at that price, by learning to do that that one can have the siddhi in the Yoga. (LY III, p. 227)

In fact all these ignorant vi-

tal movements originate from outside in the ignorant universal nature; the human being forms in his superficial parts of being, mental, vital, physical a habit of certain responses to these waves from outside. It is these responses that he takes as his own character (anger, desire, sex etc.) and thinks he cannot be otherwise. But that is not so; he can change. There is another consciousness deeper within him, his true inner being, which is his real self, but is covered over by the superficial nature. This the ordinary man does not know, but the Yogi becomes aware of it as he progresses in his sadhana. As the conscious-

ness of this inner being increases by sadhana, the surface nature and its responses are pushed out and can be got rid of altogether. (LY III, p. 214)

It is from this inner poise of the consciousness, centered deep within, that one becomes conscious in the yogic sense of the term. It is from this poise that one can be conscious in a detached manner from the movement of thoughts, feelings, and impulses that come into oneself from outside, and also get the ability to reject those that are incompatible with one's spiritual progress.

It is also possible to detach yourself and look at these activities as if they were not your own but a mechanical action of Nature which you observe as a disinterested witness. One can then

become aware of an inner being which is separate, calm and uninvolved in Nature. (LY III, p. 239)

It is so, by standing back from these forces [in the surrounding world], neither attracted nor disturbed by them, that one gets freedom, perceives their falsity or imperfection and is able to rise above and overcome them. The consciousness that comes forward may be either the psychic or the spiritualised mind—it is probably the former. (LY III, pp. 238-39)

Detachment means standing back with part of the consciousness and observing what is being done without being involved in it. There is no “how” to that;

you do it or try it until it succeeds. (LY III, p. 238)

In developing this detachment and witness poise of the consciousness that is centered within, observing the outer nature and its movements without becoming involved in their activities, it will be useful to practice this detached observation in regular periods of meditation. Sri Aurobindo has suggested various methods of meditation and concentration (LY II, pp. 297-321); here I simply focus on a method for standing back from the thoughts and feelings as a detached witness, and applying a quiet will for them to cease:

The method of gathering of the mind is not an easy one. It is better to watch and separate oneself from the thoughts till one becomes aware of a quiet space



within into which they come from outside. (*LY II*, p. 302)

All thoughts really come from outside, but one is not conscious of their coming. You have become conscious of this movement. There are different ways of getting rid of them; one is to reject them one by one before they can come in; another is to look at them with detachment till they fade away. (*LY II*, p. 302)

There are always two things that can rise up and assail the silence,—vital suggestions, the physical mind's mechanical recurrences. Calm rejection for both is the cure. (*LY II*, p. 305)

Success does not come at first, but if consent [to the thoughts] is constantly withheld, the mechanical whirl eventually lessens and begins to die away and one can then have at will an inner quietude or silence. (*LY II*, p. 304)

By practicing meditation regularly, one trains the consciousness to become centered more deeply within in quietude and detachment from the activities of the outer mind and life. Through practice, one establishes a stronger and stronger connection with this inner part of the being and over time becomes able to enter it at will. Gradually this inner poise must be generalized so as to be the normal condition of the consciousness in daily life.

It is quite natural that at first there should be the condition of calm and peace only when you sit for concentration. What is important is that there should be this condition whenever you

sit and the pressure for it always there. But at other times the result is at first only a certain mental quiet and freedom from thoughts. Afterwards when the condition of peace is quite settled in the inner being—for it is the inner into which you enter whenever you concentrate—then it begins to come out and control the outer, so that the calm and peace remain even when working, mixing with others, talking or other occupations. For then whatever the outer consciousness is doing, one feels the inner being calm within—indeed one feels the inner being as one's real self while the outer is something superficial through which the inner acts on life. (*LY II*, p. 313)

The Mother suggested another method for establishing peace and quiet in the being:

You sit quietly, to begin with; and then, instead of thinking of fifty things, you begin saying to yourself, "Peace, peace, peace, peace, calm, peace!" You imagine peace and calm. You aspire, ask that it may come: "Peace, peace, calm." And then, when something comes and touches you and acts, say quietly, like this, "Peace, peace, peace." Do not look at the thoughts, do not listen to the thoughts, you understand. You must not pay attention to everything that comes [...] And then, repeat all the time like a kind of—how shall I put it?—as an idiot does, who repeats the same thing always. Well, you must do the same thing; you must repeat, "Peace, peace, peace." So you try this for a few minutes and then do what you have to do; and then,

another time, you begin again; sit down again and then try. Do this on getting up in the morning, do this in the evening when going to bed. You can do this [...] and then you must continue; and there comes a time when you no longer need to sit down, and no matter what you are doing, no matter what you are saying, it is always "Peace, peace, peace." Everything remains here, like this, it does not enter (gesture in front of the forehead), it remains like this. And then one is always in a perfect peace... after some years.

But at the beginning, a very small beginning, two or three minutes, it is very simple. For something complicated you must make an effort, and when one makes an effort, one is not quiet. It is difficult to make an effort while remaining quiet. Very simple, very simple, you must be very simple in these things. It is as though you were learning how to call a friend: by dint of being called he comes. Well, make peace and calm your friends and call them: "Come, peace, peace, peace, peace, come!" (*CWM*, Vol. 6, pp. 313-14; Questions and Answers, 8 September 1954)

If one is usually or sometimes becomes externalized in the outer consciousness, attending to the tasks of daily life, one can also develop the practice of stepping back from the surface activity periodically into the inner quietude, especially when things become agitated or one is uncertain about what one should do. This is what the Mother advocated in the following passage.

You live almost projected, as it were, outside your own body, and



when you meet some unpleasant being similarly projected you get upset. The whole trouble arises out of your not being accustomed to stepping back. You must always step back into yourself—learn to go deep within—step back and you will be safe. Do not lend yourself to the superficial forces which move in the outside world. Even if you are in a hurry to do something, step back for a while and you will discover to your surprise how much sooner and with what greater success your work can be done. If someone is angry with you, do not be caught in his vibrations but simply step back and his anger, finding no support or response, will vanish. Always keep your peace, resist all temptation to lose it. Never

decide anything without stepping back, never speak a word without stepping back, never throw yourself into action without stepping back. All that belongs to the ordinary world is impermanent and fugitive, so there is nothing in it worth getting upset about. What is lasting, eternal, immortal and infinite—that indeed is worth having, worth conquering, worth possessing. It is Divine Light, Divine Love, Divine Life—it is also Supreme Peace, Perfect Joy and All-Mastery upon earth with the Complete Manifestation as the crowning. When you get the sense of the relativity of things, then whatever happens you can step back and look; you can remain quiet and call on the

Divine Force and wait for an answer. Then you will know exactly what to do. Remember, therefore, that you cannot receive the answer before you are very peaceful. Practise that inner peace, make at least a small beginning and go on in your practice until it becomes a habit with you. (CWM, Vol. 3, p. 160; Questions and Answers 1930-1931)

In the midst of daily life, it is easy to become caught in its movement and lose one's conscious connection with the inner being; that is why this practice of stepping back is so important to reestablish the connection when it is temporarily broken. At the same time,

In the midst of daily life, it is easy to become caught in its movement and lose one's conscious connection with the inner being; that is why this practice of stepping back is so important to reestablish the connection when it is temporarily broken.

when engrossed in the outer consciousness and movements of life, it is easy to be caught off guard and carried away in wrong movements of the vital or mental consciousness. In one's moments of unconsciousness, forces hostile to one's spiritual growth, through mental or vital suggestions or impulses, may lead one astray into wrong movements. Therefore one must be vigilant, watchful, so that when such wrong suggestions come, one detects them, protects oneself from them, and refuses to allow them to take hold of one's being and express themselves through it. Similarly, when externalized in the outer consciousness, one may temporarily forget one's spiritual aim, go through the repetitive motions of life as if half-asleep, and thus lose opportunities for making progress.

Therefore we must also be vigilant in detecting and utilizing the continuous opportunities that life affords us for making spiritual progress. The Mother explained:

Vigilance means to be awake, to be on one's guard, to be sincere—never to be taken by surprise. When you want to do sadhana, at each moment of your life, there is a choice between taking a step that leads to the goal and falling asleep or sometimes even going backwards, telling yourself, "Oh, later on, not immediately"—sitting down on the way.

To be vigilant is not merely to resist what pulls you downward, but above all to be alert in order not to lose any opportunity to progress, any opportunity to overcome a weakness, to resist a temptation, any opportunity

to learn something, to correct something, to master something. If you are vigilant, you can do in a few days what would otherwise take years. If you are vigilant, you change each circumstance of your life, each action, each movement into an occasion for coming nearer the goal.

There are two kinds of vigilance, active and passive. There is a vigilance that gives you a warning if you are about to make a mistake, if you are making a wrong choice, if you are being weak or allowing yourself to be tempted, and there is the active vigilance which seeks an opportunity to progress, seeks to utilise every circumstance to advance more quickly.



There is a difference between preventing yourself from falling and advancing more quickly. And both are absolutely necessary.

He who is not vigilant is already dead. He has lost contact with the true purpose of existence and of life.

So the hours, circumstances, life pass in vain, bringing nothing, and you awake from your somnolence in a hole from which it is very difficult to escape. (CWM, Vol. 3, pp. 202-03; "On the Dhammapada")

Practices for finding the psychic being

When one lives within in the inner being, detached from the activity of the outer nature, in peace and quietude, one comes into closer contact with the psychic being. Sri Aurobindo explained:

The ease and peace are felt very deep and far within because they are in the psychic and the psychic is very deep within us, covered over by the mind and vital. When you meditate you open to the psychic, become aware of your psychic consciousness deep within and feel these things. In order that this ease and peace and happiness may become strong and stable and felt in all the being and in the body, you have to go still deeper within and bring out the full force of the psychic into the physical. This can most easily be done by regular concentration and meditation with the aspiration for this true consciousness. It can be done by work also, by dedication, by doing the work for the Divine only without thought

of self and keeping the idea of consecration to the Mother always in the heart. But this is not easy to do perfectly. (*LY II*, p. 299)

The Mother has similarly discussed the importance of this inner concentration to find the psychic being, while also noting the necessity of the active will in finding it:

I said "not easy" [coming into contact with the psychic being] because the contact is not spontaneous—it is voluntary. The psychic being always has an influence on the thoughts and actions, but one is rarely conscious of it. To become conscious of the psychic being, one must want to do so, make one's mind as silent as possible, and enter deep into the heart of one's being, beyond sensations and thoughts. One must form the habit of silent concentration and descent into the depths of one's being.

The discovery of the psychic being is a definite and very concrete fact, as all who have had the experience know. (CWM, Vol. 16, p. 399; Some answers from the Mother, 6 October 1969)

Here we may point to some other methods of concentration which are helpful in establishing contact with the psychic being. Sri Aurobindo explained that one may concentrate from any of three centers, at the top of the head, the forehead, or the heart, depending on which is easiest for the individual sadhak. However, he generally recommended concentrating in the heart center if one is able to do so, as it leads to the realization of the psychic being. He wrote:

The power of the concentration in the heart-centre is to open that centre and by the power of aspiration, love, bhakti, surrender remove the veil which covers and conceals the soul and bring forward the soul or psychic being to govern the mind, life and body and turn and open them all—fully—to the Divine, removing all that is opposed to that turning and opening. (*LY II*, p. 307)

In the heart-centre one concentrates in an aspiration, for an opening, for the presence or living image of the Divine there or whatever else is the object. There may be japa of a name but, if so, there must also be a concentration on it and the name must repeat itself there in the heart-centre. (*LY II*, pp. 308-09)

Japa means repetition of a name of the Divine. In this Yoga, sadhaks often repeat the name "ma," "Sri Aurobindo," or "Divine Mother." Sri Aurobindo once suggested as a japa "Sri Aurobindo Mira," Mira being a name for the Mother. He has indicated that japa is very powerful if it is done with faith and in the right attitude (*LY II*, p. 327). There are also many other mantras that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have recommended that are effective in helping to awaken the psychic being.

The Mother has also suggested a distinct method of concentration that involves imagining going deep down within in the heart center in order to find the psychic being:

Some of these images are very common to all those who have had the experience. For example, when one goes down into the depths of one's being to find the psychic right at the bottom



of one's consciousness, there is this image of descending into a deep well, going down deeper and deeper, descending, and it is as though one were truly sinking into a well. (CWM, Vol. 7, p. 267; Questions and Answers, 17 August 1955)

In order to find the soul you must go in this way (gesture of going deep within), like this, draw back from the surface, withdraw deep within and enter, enter, enter, go down, down, down into a very deep hole, silent, immobile, and there, there's a kind of... something warm, quiet, rich in substance and very still, and very full, like a sweetness—that is the soul. (CWM, Vol. 9, p. 310; Questions and Answers, 9 April 1958)

Besides meditation and concentration, aspiration to the Divine is both necessary and effective in finding and bringing out the psychic being:

Aspiration constant and sincere and the will to turn to the Divine alone are the best means of bringing forward the psychic being. (LY III, p. 360)

There is no deep meaning [of aspiration]—the meaning is plain. It is the call of the being for higher things—for the Divine, for all that belongs to the higher or Divine Consciousness. (LY II, p. 56)

Aspiration is a turning upward of the inner being with a call, yearn-

ing, prayer for the Divine, for the Truth, for the Consciousness, Peace, Ananda, Knowledge, descent of Divine Force or whatever else is the aim of one's endeavour. (LY II, p. 57)

A simple, straight and sincere call and aspiration from the heart is the one important thing and more essential and effective than capacities. (LY II, p. 55)

Intense aspiration is always good, but let there also be calm and peace and joy in the mind and heart, and a confidence that all will be done in its due time. (LY II, p. 59)

Aspiration, the direct call of the being from the heart center to the Divine, is particularly effective because it inevitably brings a response from the Divine.

Pulling comes usually from a desire to get things for oneself—in aspiration there is a self-giving for the higher consciousness to descend and take possession—the more intense the call, the greater the self-giving. (LY II, p. 61)

Aspiration, the direct call of the being from the heart center to the Divine, is particularly effective because it inevitably brings a response from the Divine. One can aspire for different things, including the full opening of the psychic being and its coming forward in the nature. Naturally, faith and confidence in one's call are important and helpful in bringing the results. At the same time, it is important to leave the result in the hands of the Divine; aspiration to be effective should be free of desire. There should be no dis-

appointment if the result is not forthcoming; the result must be left to the Divine Will to bring at the appropriate time and in the best way for our overall spiritual development, which only the Divine knows.

In addition to aspiration from the heart center, love and devotion are particularly powerful means for awakening and bringing forward the psychic being:

The realisation of the psychic being, its awakening and the bringing of it in front depend mainly on the extent to which one can develop a personal relation with the Divine, a relation of bhakti, love, reliance, self-giving, rejection of the insistences of the separating and self-asserting mental, vital and physical ego. (LY III, p. 360)

The true love for the Divine is a self-giving, free of demand, full of submission and surrender; it makes no claim, imposes no condition, strikes no bargain, indulges in no violences of jealousy or pride or anger—for these things are not in its composition. In return the Divine Mother also gives herself, but freely—and this represents itself in an inner giving—her presence in your mind, your vital, your physical consciousness, her power re-creating you in the divine nature, taking up all the movements of your being and directing them towards perfection and fulfilment, her love enveloping you and carrying you in its arms Godwards. It is this that you must aspire to feel and possess in all your parts down to



the very material, and here there is no limitation either of time or of completeness. It one truly aspires and gets it, there ought to be no room for any other claim or for any disappointed desire. And if one truly aspires, one does unfailingly get it, more and more as the purification proceeds and the nature undergoes its needed change. (*LY II*, p. 338)

The various methods that have been described for becoming conscious and finding the psychic being are direct and effective means for realizing these aims. At the same time it should be borne in mind that there are other means for progressing towards these goals. Karma yoga, in particular, has not been discussed, yet is a necessary component of Integral Yoga and is effective for both becoming conscious and finding the psychic being. In a general sense, any practice or activity that brings one more closely into conscious contact with the Divine will also help in progressing toward these two fundamental aims of the Yoga. It is especially notable that regularly reading Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's writings and talks is very helpful for spiritual progress generally and for achieving these two specific aims. Setting aside some appointed time each day for both reading and practicing inner concentration is highly recommended. Sri Aurobindo's *Letters on Yoga*, and the Mother's *Questions and Answers* are relatively easy to understand and provide important insights on the various movements of the outer nature of which we must become conscious, and practical suggestions for practicing the Yoga. In addition to the important information that they contain, their writings also transmit the light and force of their consciousness and are a great help in establishing inner contact with their

Presence (*CWM*, Vol. 8, pp. 162-164). For the finding of the psychic being, the Mother's *Prayers and Meditations* (*CWM*, Vol. 1) may be particularly recommended, for these prayers effectively express the true psychic attitude and help to awaken it in the reader.

Finally, it should be noted that personal effort must be augmented and eventually superseded by inner surrender and openness to the action of the Divine Force within oneself.

Conscious individuality

by James Anderson

From the January 2017 issue of *NAMAH*

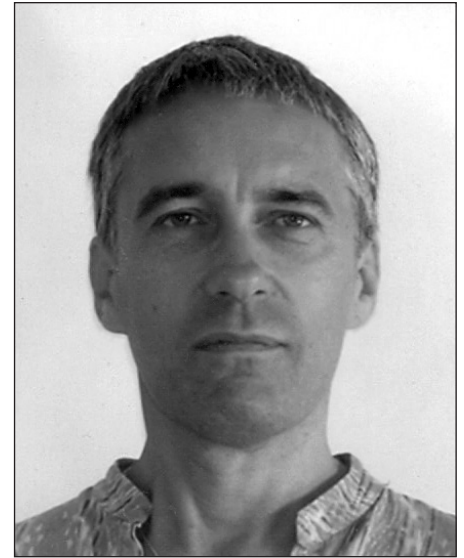
*B*ecoming a conscious individual entails dismantling every one of our false constructions and opening to the Truth inside to govern our entire being. It is about being an authentic human being and embarking on this process is essential to our growth, health and well-being. The author shares his experiences.

Introduction

Becoming a true individual can be a real grind and can be done only consciously. For good reason, the Mother calls it a "conquest" where the "will to change" is mandatory (1).

It is the first stage of yoga, because "once you have realised within you something like a personal independent and conscious being, then what you have to do is to break the form and go farther (2)." It is the first requirement of human growth; it is about becoming an authentic human being.

Sri Aurobindo refers to "two periods of this Yoga, — one of the process of surrender, the other of its crown and



consequence. In the first the individual prepares himself for the reception of the Divine into his members. For all this first period he has to work by means of the instruments of the lower Nature, but aided more and more from above (3)." This period seems to involve and conclude with the formation of a conscious and true individual which is the subject of this article.

Creating this complete integer can be at least a lifetime's work but embarking on it is essential to our health and well-being.

It is not just a matter of simple psychology as every element of the human condition is interlinked in the complex matrix of our human nature. It has a holistic effect. Once the true identity is formed, it has ripened to the ultimate stage, the surrender of what one is to the Highest Power. There can be no surrender more significant than this: what is being offered is a vast state of freedom and self-mastery. The identity with the boundless reveals the divine secret behind our human potential.

The status quo

The trouble is, very few people have an idea of who or what they real-



ly are. The true individuality treasure is concealed. The usual human being is analogous to a caged animal, tethered to the past and a creature of habit. Even when it feels most free, it travels unconsciously down familiar grooves and follows only repeated patterns. It remains imprisoned inside its own veneer. Its body and even its emotional responses are both controlled largely by habit.

It remains enslaved by the routines and motions of ordinary life and over the years it becomes a reflection of it. Even before birth, a preparatory phase is already under way and afterwards it is reinforced by a vast range of societal and environmental conditioning, "that slow formation through hours and hours, through days and days, experiences added to experiences, which gradually builds up a consciousness. You are underneath it as beneath a bell-glass (4)." During adulthood, the human becomes more complicit in building his own dungeon. A pressure for conformity solidifies and he edges towards death in at best, a state of semi-conscious drowse. He grasps any handfuls of happiness that are offered along the way but overall he can access only a pallid sense of well-being. Inside and out he is fenced in by barriers that limit his capacity to expand and breathe.

False identification

The reason for this is false identification. It is not easy to correct. Although the nature is almost entirely borrowed, it proves always so difficult to relinquish. The human being is immersed in what are only mere instruments: mind, life and body. He loses his true identity. Not least, this situation reduces the effectiveness of the instruments themselves.

This state of affairs can become

very inimical to his health. It is only the Truth which gives them a purpose. The innate divinity gets shielded from our gaze and a thick 'crust' proceeds to cover our true nature (5).

In some, it seems so thick that it completely chokes everything underneath. For instance, we identify ourselves and others by the body and the personality. Individuality should not be confused with personality. Personality is a superficial front and, with the body, comprises a substantial part of what society defines us by. This false identification applies to every side of our nature. A true individual, however, centres his or her entire being on the Truth. It is not something that can be put into words. It is not really a list of attributes and qualities. One just 'is' and automatically knows when any action or thought is out of resonance. It is a spontaneous condition. It is the connection inside which facilitates this: there is something indeed very true within and it is only this consciousness that can steer back to our genuine source.

But humanity is conditioned into a herd mentality and it takes strength and courage to break free of the pack. The pack evokes always an element of safety and compromise.

As long as one stays within the tramlines, one gets the accustomed benefits of the ordinary life. One can all too easily become a part of the walking dead and unless one makes a strenuous effort to stay awake, it will cage and ensnare the soul. It is this false identification which must be shed first if one is to become an authentic human being.

One movement can become the first step to breaking this barrier. The true individual is the Divine Inhabitant living within and if one can recognise this, even for a few seconds, the momentum will be entirely reversed.

So the first stage in becoming a true individual is always one of self-giving:

In the depths of your consciousness is the psychic being, the temple of the Divine within you. This is the centre round which should come about the unification of all these divergent parts, all these contradictory movements of your being. Once you have got the consciousness of the psychic being and its aspiration, these doubts and difficulties can be destroyed....

When the central being has made its surrender, the chief difficulty has disappeared. The outer being is like a crust. In ordinary people the crust is so hard and thick that they are not conscious of the Divine within them. If once, even for a moment only, the inner being has said, 'I am here and I am yours', then it is as though a bridge has been built and little by little the crust becomes thinner and thinner until the two parts are wholly joined and the inner and the outer become one (6)."

So a foundation is established. This may be the first significant realisation and springboard to a new life. The psychic being has a radiating influence. A whole new process starts to unwind and one moves to new synchronous realms by collaborating with it. We do this with consciousness because it requires consciousness to distinguish the true from the dross. I have found the work of erecting a true individuality take two forms. In a sense, one is preparatory to the other but both seem simultaneously to run side by side. The first task is to dismantle whatever conceals the truth of our being and the second is to open the gates to our divine potential.



Three factors

From my perspective there are three influences which stop man from drowning and assist his rise to true human-hood: personal effort, the descending force and the psychic being.

Looking at the first, in the absence of any guiding light, there is considerable huffing and puffing while the lower nature tries to produce its share of the progress. Each element wants always its own piece of cake.

They are always giving instructions and signals. In fact these messages conflict usually with one another and we are rarely able to move forward in a straight line. So which do we heed?

Many of these signals are erroneous but there is invariably a leading aspect to our nature that provides a glimpse of what our individuality is truly about. Identifying this will give us some kind of foundation on which to build. Initially this is where we pitch our camp and this is where considerable effort is concentrated and expended. It is not the securest of platforms and one open to considerable misinterpretation. Much effort is needed because there will be times when the psychic being is almost entirely obscured.

One's personal will is the only start: one prays for light in the darkness and is fumbling continually for one's next move. The guidance appears spasmodically and for a long time this effort is our only recourse before any kind of inner connection is cemented.

In the midst of all this, at every juncture, there is the descending Force which is at work, shaping and moulding the personality into an individual. We need to give ourselves to this Force. If we remain open to it, it can go right down to the deepest cells of our body.

Initially it works behind the scenes but as soon as we experience

its workings vividly, its effect can be one of alchemy. For many of the traditional yogas, changing the nature is an impossibility. So this process requires the supreme determinism. Here is an opening to the Grace, the ultimate sanction. It is a process that unwinds as soon as one gives oneself. In the Integral Yoga particularly, one gradually becomes more and more conscious of it. For me, it started as a vague sensation at the top of my head. It accompanies one for life and, when one is conscious of it its influence becomes ever more tangible and immediate.

One can feel it eventually coursing through one's veins. I feel that one must be awake to it to benefit from its fullest influence.

Progressive harmony

I have found that the work of individualisation is done also through the process of inner alignment. It is by a progressive harmony that a true individual is created. Individuality needs to be cemented and it is harmony which is the glue that holds it all together.

Harmony is a principal attribute of the psychic being. Starting from a narrow and thin base, with attention, this harmony will expand and grow. As the harmony becomes more perfect, a true integer gradually evolves.

It will take considerable time and patience. Our aim is creating a homogenous whole, but initially we will find inevitably many barriers inside. Our being is compartmentalised and we become aware of it being pulled in all kinds of different directions. This awareness is essential because these barriers can be dismantled by the practice of self-observation.

Self-observation is an art which is enhanced only by continual practice.

The work separates the true from

the dross in a quiet and undemonstrative way. By reading the signals from our body, we come to find the truth behind the enigmas of our scattered psychology. If we call for help in this task from the highest source, it is invariably given. The work responds always with the descending Force. When we are relaxed and connected, we simply scan the body from top to bottom.

An inner torch might even come to hand. It depends upon the nature, but if undertaken with the fullest sincerity, the right means will come forward always to carry out the task. The process substitutes automatically the true by the false and leaves behind a sense of overriding peace. It demonstrates that knowledge possesses a great power, the power to truly change and transform. Its base is always the psychic force which is present but hidden inside every human being.

The psychic being is never satisfied with piecemeal solutions. It asks for integrality, which means that the harmony has to be established over both the entire inner and outer being. A true individual radiates the psychic influence over the whole being. This includes the body. Deep in its cells, the form yearns to reveal and express the spirit that is concealed behind it. The body is the crucible of this change:

The limitations of the body are a mould; soul and mind have to pour themselves into them, break them and constantly re-mould them in wider limits till the formula of agreement is found between this finite and their own infinity (7).

It is my deepest aspiration that the spirit can express itself in a total way throughout the body. This is why the crust must go. Anything 'habitual' is



precisely this and needs to be transcended. When the form is invaded by the spirit it ceases to be mere 'crust' but an intrinsic part of the new individual. That is because it has become conscious. The body that we are given is our instrument for transformation. The very nature of the body determines the type of transformation that has to unfold. I find this such a truth to comprehend when I find it so often in the greatest difficulty! However, it is always the spirit which defines the body, and not the body itself, as is commonly understood, and one must be persevering and patient in allowing this true light to step forward.

When the instrument becomes conscious, it identifies with its true master and user.

The process of transformation demands us to make them one.

The subconscious

The Truth can sometimes have a shattering effect. In one blow, all past formations are demolished. It raises also that silt that accumulates at the bottom of our nature.

These elements come down from regions which are very difficult to identify and interpret. However, the human being is driven to a very great extent by these subconscious impulses. Its body wriggles about in a snare of subconscious habits; its emotional reactions are but a reflex of this repetitive force. It cannot claim true individuality as long as it is controlled by this shadow.

If one is sincere in this work, this sediment must never be allowed to settle; it needs to be disturbed as frequently as possible. However this process can never be forced and it is not advisable

to preconceive it. When one is ready, the force of the sadhana will start to do its work. It is a process which, given time, naturally arises and if one remains attentive, one gets a sense of where and when the process is underway. It is a matter of opening integrally to higher realms of consciousness and light. Sooner or later, it is bound to percolate down to the lowest parts.

It sometimes happens unnoticed but if one is awake the effect is much more conclusive.

Recently I had a feeling of thousands of tiny, obscure granules shaking and separating from deep down inside. The whole episode shook me to

I believe that as long as the self-giving is sincere and true, we have just to mind our nature. We have to keep our stable clean. That is our only look-out. The change will come automatically if one refers continually to the psychic truth inside.

the core. At the time and immediately afterwards, it was like having a food mixer switched on at high velocity inside. I felt dreadful: low energy, agitated mind and with all these dark negative patterns swirling around inside, unable to find a place to settle and not knowing where to go. This sensation continued almost for an entire day but a beautiful clarity and refined energy awaited me when I awoke the following morning. It was a cleansing.

Creating an individual

I believe that as long as the self-giving is sincere and true, we have just to mind our nature. We have to keep our stable clean. That is our only look-out. The change will come automatically if one refers continually to the psychic truth inside. This is the true agent of change and the true individ-

ual that is present in all of us. At the point from where we first surrender to it, to constantly referring to it in all our inner movements and outer actions, our speech and our silence, when we rise and when we sleep, it gradually steps forward and becomes increasingly individualised.

Our nature starts to merge more into it. The spirit behind the outer form starts to truly shine. One becomes more vast and free; there is a greater feeling of health, abundance and well-being. The process behind can take the form of detailed inner work. Indeed, I find it helps to unravel the knots hidden inside my nature. But it

is not something we can afford to devote some of our time to. One must learn to live exclusively there: surely this is the only way to self-mastery and con-

scious individuality.

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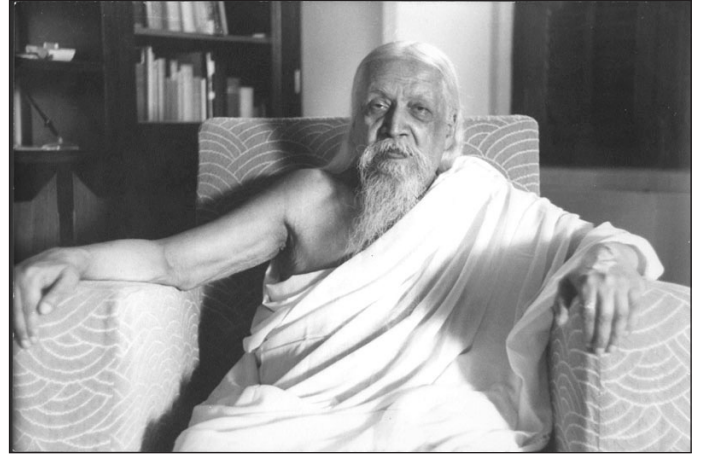
Source material

The yoga of the intelligent will

by Sri Aurobindo

For evidently there are two possibilities of the action of the intelligent will. It may take its downward and outward orientation towards a discursive action of the perceptions and the will in the triple play of Prakriti, or it may take its upward and inward orientation towards a settled peace and equality in the calm and immutable purity of the conscious silent soul no longer subject to the distractions of Nature. In the former alternative the subjective being is at the mercy of the objects of sense, it lives in the outward contact of things. That life is the life of desire. For the senses excited by their objects create a restless or often violent disturbance, a strong or even headlong outward movement towards the seizure of these objects and their enjoyment, and they carry away the sense-mind, “as the winds carry away a ship upon the sea”; the mind subjected to the emotions, passions, longings, impulses awakened by this outward movement of the senses carries away similarly the intelligent will, which loses therefore its power of calm discrimination and mastery. Subjection of the soul to the confused play of the three gunas of Prakriti in their eternal entangled twining and wrestling, ignorance, a false, sensuous, objective life of the soul, enslavement to grief and wrath and attachment and passion, are the results of the downward trend of the buddhi,—the troubled life of the ordinary, unenlightened, undisciplined man. Those who like the Vedavadins make sense-enjoyment the object of action and its fulfilment the highest aim of the soul, are misleading guides. The inner subjective self-delight independent of objects is our true aim and the high and wide poise of our peace and liberation.

Therefore, it is the upward and inward orientation of the intelligent will that we must resolutely choose with a settled concentration and perseverance, *vyavasāya*; we must fix it firmly in the calm self-knowledge of the Purusha. The first movement must be obviously to get rid of desire which is the whole root of the evil and suffering; and in order to get rid of desire, we must put an end to the cause of desire, the rushing out of the senses to seize and enjoy their objects. We must draw them back when they are inclined thus to rush out, draw them away from their objects,—as the tortoise draws in his limbs into the shell, so these into their



source, quiescent in the mind, the mind quiescent in intelligence, the intelligence quiescent in the soul and its self-knowledge, observing the action of Nature, but not subject to it, not desiring anything that the objective life can give.

It is not an external asceticism, the physical renunciation of the objects of sense that I am teaching, suggests Krishna immediately to avoid a misunderstanding which is likely at once to arise. Not the renunciation of the Sankhyas or the austerities of the rigid ascetic with his fasts, his maceration of the body, his attempt to abstain even from food; that is not the self-discipline or the abstinence which I mean, for I speak of an inner withdrawal, a renunciation of desire. The embodied soul, having a body, has to support it normally by food for its normal physical action; by abstention from food it simply removes from itself the physical contact with the object of sense, but does not get rid of the inner relation which makes that contact hurtful. It retains the pleasure of the sense in the object, the *rasa*, the liking and disliking,—for *rasa* has two sides; the soul must, on the contrary, be capable of enduring the physical contact without suffering inwardly this sensuous reaction. Otherwise there is *nivṛtti*, cessation of the object, *visayā vinivartante*, but no subjective cessation, no *nivṛtti* of the mind; but the senses are of the mind, subjective, and subjective cessation of the *rasa* is the only real sign of mastery. But how is this desireless contact with objects, this unsensuous use of the senses possible? It is possible, *param drstvā*, by the vision of the supreme,—*param*, the Soul, the Purusha,—and by living in the Yoga, in union or oneness of the whole subjective being with that, through the Yoga of the intelligence; for the one Soul is calm, satisfied in its own delight, and that delight free from duality can take, once we see this supreme thing in us and fix the mind and will on that, the place of the sensuous object-ridden pleasures and repulsions of the mind. This is the true way of liberation.



Certainly self-discipline, self-control is never easy. All intelligent human beings know that they must exercise some control over themselves and nothing is more common than this advice to control the senses; but ordinarily it is only advised imperfectly and practised imperfectly in the most limited and insufficient fashion. Even, however, the sage, the man of clear, wise and discerning soul who really labours to acquire complete self-mastery finds himself hurried and carried away by the senses. That is because the mind naturally lends itself to the senses; it observes the objects of sense with an inner interest, settles upon them and makes them the object of absorbing thought for the intelligence and of strong interest for the will. By that attachment comes, by attachment desire, by desire distress, passion and anger when the desire is not satisfied or is thwarted or opposed, and by passion the soul is obscured, the intelligence and will forget to see and be seated in the calm observing soul; there is a fall from the memory of one's true self, and by that lapse the intelligent will is also obscured, destroyed even. For, for the time being, it no longer exists to our memory of ourselves, it disappears in a cloud of passion; we become passion, wrath, grief and cease to be self and intelligence and will. This then must be prevented and all the senses brought utterly under control; for only by an absolute control of the senses can the wise and calm intelligence be firmly established in its proper seat.

This cannot be done perfectly by the act of the intelligence itself, by a merely mental self-discipline; it can only be done by Yoga with something which is higher than itself and in which calm and self-mastery are inherent. And this Yoga can only arrive at its success by devoting, by consecrating, by giving up the whole self to the Divine, "to Me", says Krishna; for the Liberator is within us, but it is not our mind, nor our intelligence, nor our personal will,—they are only instruments. It is the Lord in whom, as we are told in the end, we have utterly to take refuge. And for that we must at first make him the object of our whole being and keep in soul-contact with him. This is the sense of the phrase "he must sit firm in Yoga, wholly given up to Me"; but as yet it is the merest passing hint after the manner of the Gita, three words only which contain in seed the whole gist of the highest secret yet to be developed. *Yukta āsita matparah*.

If this is done, then it becomes possible to move among the objects of sense, in contact with them, acting on them, but with the senses entirely under the control of the subjective self,—not at the mercy of the objects and their contacts and reactions,—and that self again obedient to the highest self, the Purusha. Then, free from reactions, the senses will be delivered from the affections of liking and disliking, es-

cape the duality of positive and negative desire, and calm, peace, clearness, happy tranquillity, *ātmāprasāda*, will settle upon the man. That clear tranquillity is the source of the soul's felicity; all grief begins to lose its power of touching the tranquil soul; the intelligence is rapidly established in the peace of the self; suffering is destroyed. It is this calm, desireless, griefless fixity of the buddhi in self-poise and self-knowledge to which the Gita gives the name of Samadhi.

The sign of the man in Samadhi is not that he loses consciousness of objects and surroundings and of his mental and physical self and cannot be recalled to it even by burning or torture of the body,—the ordinary idea of the matter; trance is a particular intensity, not the essential sign. The test is the expulsion of all desires, their inability to get at the mind, and it is the inner state from which this freedom arises, the delight of the soul gathered within itself with the mind equal and still and high-poised above the attractions and repulsions, the alternations of sunshine and storm and stress of the external life. It is drawn inward even when acting outwardly; it is concentrated in self even when gazing out upon things; it is directed wholly to the Divine even when to the outward vision of others busy and preoccupied with the affairs of the world. Arjuna, voicing the average human mind, asks for some outward, physical, practically discernible sign of this great Samadhi; how does such a man speak, how sit, how walk? No such signs can be given, nor does the Teacher attempt to supply them; for the only possible test of its possession is inward and that there are plenty of hostile psychological forces to apply. Equality is the great stamp of the liberated soul and of that equality even the most discernible signs are still subjective. "A man with mind untroubled by sorrows, who has done with desire for pleasures, from whom liking and wrath and fear have passed away, such is the sage whose understanding has become founded in stability." He is "without the triple action of the qualities of Prakriti, without the dualities, ever based in his true being, without getting or having, possessed of his self." For what gettings and havings has the free soul? Once we are possessed of the Self, we are in possession of all things. (*Essays on the Gita*, pp. 98-102)

In the liberated state it is not the inner Purusha only that remains detached—the inner Purusha is always detached, only one is not conscious of it in the ordinary state. It is the Prakriti also that is not disturbed by the action of the gunas or attached to it—the mind, the vital, the physical (whatever Prakriti) begin to get the same quietude, unperturbed peace and detachment as the Purusha, but it is a quietude, not a cessation of all action. It is quietude in action itself. (Sri Aurobindo, *Letters on Yoga I*, p. 46)



Remember and offer

by the Mother

***I**t has been said that in order to progress in Yoga one must offer up everything to the Divine, even every little thing that one has or does in life. What is precisely the meaning of that?*

Yoga means union with the Divine, and the union is effected through offering—it is founded on the offering of yourself to the Divine. In the beginning you start by making this offering in a general way, as though once for all; you say, “I am the servant of the Divine; my life is given absolutely to the Divine; all my efforts are for the realisation of the Divine Life.” But that is only the first step; for this is not sufficient. When the resolution has been taken, when you have decided that the whole of your life shall be given to the Divine, you have still at every moment to remember it and carry it out in all the details of your existence. You must feel at every step that you belong to the Divine; you must have the constant experience that, in whatever you think or do, it is always the Divine Consciousness that is acting through you. You have no longer anything that you can call your own; you feel everything as coming from the Divine, and you have to offer it back to its source. When you can realise that, then even the smallest thing to which you do not usually pay much attention or care, ceases to be trivial and insignificant; it becomes full of meaning and it opens up a vast horizon beyond.

This is what you have to do to carry out your general offering in detailed offerings. Live constantly in the presence of the Divine; live in the feeling that it is this presence which moves you and is doing everything you do. Offer all your movements to it, not only every mental action, every thought and feeling but even the most ordinary and external actions such as eating; when you eat, you must feel that it is the Divine who is eating through you. When you can thus gather all your movements into the One Life, then you have in you unity instead of division. No longer is one part of your nature given to the Divine, while the rest remains in its ordinary ways, engrossed in ordinary things; your entire life is taken up, an integral transformation is gradually realised in you.

In the integral Yoga, the integral life down even to the smallest detail has to be transformed, to be divinised. There is nothing here that is insignificant, nothing that is indifferent. You cannot say, “When I am meditating, reading philosophy or listening to these conversations I will be in this



condition of an opening towards the Light and call for it, but when I go out to walk or see friends I can allow myself to forget all about it.” To persist in this attitude means that you will remain untransformed and never have the true union; always you will be divided; you will have at best only glimpses of this greater life.

For although certain experiences and realisations may come to you in meditation or in your inner consciousness, your body and your outer life will remain unchanged. An inner illumination that does not take any note of the body and the outer life, is of no great use, for it leaves the world as it is. This is what has continually happened till now. Even those who had a very great and powerful realisation withdrew from the world to live undisturbed in inner quiet and peace; the world was left to its ways, and misery and stupidity, Death and Ignorance continued, unaffected, their reign on this material plane of existence.

For those who thus withdraw, it may be pleasant to escape from this turmoil, to run away from the difficulty and to find for themselves a happy condition elsewhere; but they leave the world and life uncorrected and untransformed; and their own outer consciousness too they leave unchanged and their bodies as unregenerate as ever. Coming back to the physical world, they are likely to be worse there than even ordinary people; for they have lost the mastery over material things, and their dealing with physical life is likely to be slovenly and helpless in its movements and at the mercy of every passing force.

An ideal of this kind may be good for those who want it, but it is not our Yoga. For we want the divine conquest of this world, the conquest of all its movements and the realisation of the Divine here. But if we want the Divine to reign here we must give all we have and are and do here to the Divine. It will not do to think that anything is unimportant or that the external life and its necessities are no part of the Divine Life. If we do, we shall remain where we have always



been and there will be no conquest of the external world; nothing abiding there will have been done....

When we are concentrated in mental movements or intellectual pursuits, why do we sometimes forget or lose touch with the Divine?

You lose it because your consciousness is still divided. The Divine has not settled into your mind; you are not wholly consecrated to the Divine Life. Otherwise you could concentrate to any extent upon such things and still you would have the sense of being helped and supported by the Divine.

In all pursuits, intellectual or active, your one motto should be, "Remember and Offer." Let whatever you do be done as an offering to the Divine. And this too will be an excellent discipline for you; it will prevent you from doing many foolish and useless things.

Often in the beginning of the action this can be done; but as one gets engrossed in the work, one forgets. How is one to remember?

The condition to be aimed at, the real achievement of Yoga, the final perfection and attainment, for which all else is only a preparation, is a consciousness in which it is impossible to do anything without the Divine; for then, if you are without the Divine, the very source of your action disappears; knowledge, power, all are gone. But so long as you feel that the powers you use are your own, you will not miss the Divine support.

In the beginning of the Yoga you are apt to forget the Divine very often. But by constant aspiration you increase your remembrance and you diminish the forgetfulness. But this should not be done as a severe discipline or a duty; it must be a movement of love and joy. Then very soon a stage will come when, if you do not feel the presence of the Divine at every moment and whatever you are doing, you feel at once lonely and sad and miserable.

Whenever you find that you can do something without feeling the presence of the Divine and yet be perfectly comfortable, you must understand that you are not consecrated in that part of your being. That is the way of the ordinary humanity which does not feel any need of the Divine. But for a seeker of the Divine Life it is very different. And when you have entirely realised unity with the Divine, then, if the Divine were only for a second to withdraw from you, you would simply drop dead; for the Divine is now the Life of your life, your whole existence, your single and complete support. If the Divine is not there, nothing is left. (CWM, Vol. 3, pp. 23-27; Questions and Answers 1929-1931)

Book Review

The English of Savitri: Volume 3; Book Seven – The Book of Yoga

Reviewed by Larry Seidlitz

This review appeared in the SABDA newsletter, April 2018

The Mother called *Savitri* the supreme revelation of Sri Aurobindo's vision, and therefore it behooves us to read and understand it to the best of our ability. In this third volume of Shraddhavan's book series, which she subtitled "Comments on the language of Sri Aurobindo's epic, *Savitri—A legend and a symbol*," the author elucidates the meaning of "Book Seven—The Book of Yoga," which describes in seven cantos Savitri's practice and experience of yoga. The first volume of the series focused on "Book One—The Book of Beginnings" and the second volume explicated "Book Three—The Book of the Divine Mother." As in the second volume, in which the author provided a summary of the omitted Book Two, in this third volume Shraddhavan provides a canto-wise summary of the intervening Books Four, Five, and Six of *Savitri*. At the end of the book, she also provides a two-page summary of "Book Eight—The Book of Death," which consists of just one short canto.

In her Foreward, Shraddhavan puts Book Seven into the context of the overall epic, both in terms of its story line, and also in terms of the chronology of its composition. For example, we learn that Book Seven belongs to the later period of the epic's composition, six of its seven cantos having been "dictated to Nirodbaran after March 1947." Its first canto, however, "contains passages which date back to the earliest stages of the composition of the epic, from 1916 onwards into the 1920s." She also provides a brief overview of the stages of Savitri's yoga which are elaborated in her commentary throughout the book.

Like the earlier two volumes of the series, this book is based on transcripts of the author's classes on *Savitri* held at Savitri Bhavan in Auroville, and like the earlier books, the transcripts are well-edited such that the text is crisp, clear and error-free. Also, as indicated by the subtitle, the book focuses on elucidating the meaning of the language used in the epic, rather than on subjective interpretation of the poem. It explains the meaning of the words and lines, examining them line by line throughout the whole of Book



Seven. It explains unfamiliar words, sometimes identifying their connotations or original meanings; unusual turns of phrase; allusions to various Vedic and ancient Greek myths; and reiterations of related preceding words, lines, or themes. She also frequently provides contextualization for particular lines or passages in terms of the unfolding story as well as in terms of modern theories or ancient traditions to which they allude. All of this helps us to understand the poem better through a deeper and richer appreciation of its language.

Savitri is remarkable in that it can capture a world of meaning in a line, a passage, a canto, one of its twelve books, or the epic poem as a whole. “Book Seven—The Book of Yoga,” is no exception. Whereas the first three books of *Savitri*, comprising nearly half of the epic, describe Aswapati’s yoga, Book Seven details Savitri’s yoga, though Books Nine through Eleven could be said to be a continuation of her yogic experience and transformation into its further dimensions. Still, in the course of Book Seven, Savitri develops from a newly-wed young woman, and though exceptional, one who is unaware of her life’s purpose and is still subject to grief and pain, to a great yogini who has undergone the psychic and spiritual transformations, that is, who has realized her individual soul, Nirvana, and the cosmic consciousness.

The first canto of Book Seven, having the long title “The Joy of Union; the Ordeal of the Foreknowledge of Death and the Heart’s Grief and Pain,” provides a transition from “Book Six—The Book of Fate” to the latter six cantos of Book Seven which describe her yogic transformation. It begins with some powerful lines which convey the essence of Sri Aurobindo’s teaching about fate and free will. It continues with beautiful imagery of the forest hermitage in which Savitri resides with her new husband Satyavan, and exquisite passages about the highest reaches of human love. Savitri’s bliss of union with Satyavan, however, gradually becomes overrun by the dread and grief born of her foreknowledge of his impending death within one year’s time, a terrible secret which she locks concealed within her breast.

“Canto Two—The Parable of the Search for the Soul” describes a deep experience that Savitri has during one fateful night in which she was bearing the “load of grief” within her breast, facing the “ever-nearing Fate” of Satyavan’s approaching death. A Voice from her being’s summit speaks to her, and in turn she out of her heart replies and converses with it. The Voice brings a crucial message, one applicable to us all, a call to seek for her soul: “Remember why thou cam’st: / Find out thy soul, recover thy hid self, / In silence seek God’s meaning in thy depths, / Then mortal nature

change to the Divine.” Not only does it beckon her to find her soul, it also quintessentially describes the way to do this in a brief passage. As she turns within to seek for her soul, she experiences a dream which “Imaged to her the world’s significance.” This significance, described in the remaining pages of the canto, covers such fundamental issues as the spiritual evolution on earth, the inner spiritual being hidden behind “the little surface of man’s life,” the immanent Divine, the duality of good and evil, karma and rebirth, and the possibility of spiritual transformation through the agency of the soul within, if we would enable the soul to “...step into common nature’s crowded rooms / And stand uncovered in that nature’s front / and rule its thoughts and fill the body and life.” Shraddhavan elaborates on each of these important issues and helps us to grasp them.

“Canto Three—The Entry into the Inner Countries” recounts Savitri’s journey into the subtle realms of the inner being that intervene between the outer waking self and the deep recesses of the soul. It summarizes in a fashion much of “Book Two—The Book of the Traveller of the Worlds” which elaborated in 15 cantos Aswapati’s similar journey. This is a journey through the worlds of the inner being: the subconscious, the subtle material, the vital, the mental, and the spiritual realms nearest to the soul. The author leads us through these mysterious realms, step by step, carefully explaining each recondite word, symbol, and turn of phrase.

In “Canto Four—The Triple Soul Forces,” Savitri encounters in her inner journey three Madonnas, three beings representative of her soul, and paired with them, three male voices representing distorted reflections of them. Each of the three Madonnas claims to be Savitri’s soul, but Savitri understands that whereas they may be forces or outward expressions of her soul, they are not her true, inmost soul. Savitri addresses the first as “Madonna of suffering, Mother of grief divine,” and says, “Thou art a portion of my soul put forth / To bear the unbearable sorrow of the world.” The distorted reflection, “[t]he beast that crouching growls within man’s depths,” calls himself “the Man of Sorrows,” and blaming God, sums up his character thus: “I suffer and toil and weep; I moan and hate.” Savitri tells the Madonna that while she (the Madonna) has the power to solace, she has not the strength to save, and that when Savitri finds her deepest soul, she will bring the needed strength and wisdom to complement the Madonna’s compassion.

Ascending in her inner journey, Savitri encounters the “Madonna of might, Mother of works and force.” This Madonna brings strength to the battle against the adverse forces in the world, and protection to those on the upward



spiritual path. The distorted reflection represents “[t]he Ego of this great world of desire.” Savitri tells the Mother of Might that while she brings power, she lacks the wisdom that can deliver mankind, and that when she finds her true soul, she will bring that wisdom to join with that power.

Third, Savitri encounters the “Madonna of light, Mother of joy and peace.” This Madonna explains that she brings into the world peace, knowledge, beauty, goodness, and kindred forces that help in its spiritual ascent. The voice of this Madonna’s distorted reflection identifies himself as “the all-discovering thought of man.” This mind, however great its discoveries, is bound by the senses and lives within limits, and it is doubtful of any higher spiritual power. Savitri tells the Madonna of light that she cannot divinize mankind through the power of thought, and that only by filling mankind’s yearning heart with heaven’s fire, and bringing God down into his body and life can this be achieved. The canto ends with Savitri promising to return with this power.

In “Canto Five—The Finding of the Soul,” the first section recounts Savitri’s passage through “a night of God” prior to finding her soul. While staying close to the text, the author explains this experience to us. After passing through this darkness, “the emptiness broke” and the “spaceless Vast became her spirit’s place.” Savitri then feels very close to her soul, and “[t]he air trembled with passion and delight.” She then enters a “mystic cavern,” “the dwelling of her secret soul.” There she encounters living symbolic figures carved in the stone walls, and the author discusses these mystic images. In the second section of the canto, Savitri meets her secret soul, which is imaged as a Being whose detailed description is elaborated by the author. At the end of the section, this soul, a deity, and Savitri, its human portion, “rushed into each other and grew one.” The third section relates a mystical transformation that Savitri undergoes as a result of this experience of union. Her chakras, the subtle energy centers of her being, open one by one, and we are led by the author through this vividly described, extraordinary experience and its results.

In “Canto Six—Nirvana and the Discovery of the All-Negating Absolute,” Savitri undergoes another fundamental spiritual realization. The first section begins by further describing the beautiful experience resulting from her psychic awaking and transformation, but then she encounters another dreadful barrier: “An abyss yawned suddenly beneath her heart.” It is described as a “formless Dread” and “[a]n ocean of terror and of sovereign might, / A person and a black infinity.” As Shraddhavan explains, “[t]hat being of darkness tries to convince Savitri that she has no right to exist,” and “[a]ccording to him, all appearance is

illusion.” But then a voice of Light comes and tells Savitri that this dark void is a passage to a greater realization, not the end: “Fear not to be nothing that thou mayst be all; / Assent to the emptiness of the Supreme / That all in thee may reach its absolute.” In the second section, the author leads us through Savitri’s experience of silencing the mind, standing back from all thoughts in “the witness soul,” until finally “[a] silent spirit pervaded silent Space.” The third section elaborately describes this experience of Nirvana, and in a number of passages the author relates it to Sri Aurobindo’s explanations of his own experience of Nirvana.

“Canto Seven—The Discovery of the Cosmic Spirit and the Cosmic Consciousness” relates a further transformation of Savitri’s spiritual realization. The first of its two sections provides a further elaboration of the Nirvana experience and its outward manifestations in Savitri’s life. For example, we are told that for the most part those around her did not notice the change in her, “They saw a person where was only God’s vast, / A still being or a mighty nothingness.” She continued to act in the way she acted before, and she spoke in the same manner that she used to speak. However, for her the experience was completely different: “There was no will behind the word and act, / No thought formed in her brain to guide the speech: / An impersonal emptiness walked and spoke in her.” In the second section, the experience changes from a sense of the utter unreality of things to one of “[a] stark and absolute Reality.” As Sri Aurobindo writes: “The sense of unreality was slain: / There all was conscious, made of the Infinite, / All had a substance of Eternity.” Shraddhavan takes us line by line through Sri Aurobindo’s fantastic description of this experience, such as these lines: “Nowhere she dwelt, her spirit was everywhere, / The distant constellations wheeled round her; / Earth saw her born, all worlds were her colonies, / The greater worlds of life and mind were hers; / All Nature reproduced her in its lines, / Its movements were large copies of her own.”

In short, *Savitri*’s “Book Seven—The Book of Yoga” describes both the psychic and spiritual transformations of the Integral Yoga in Sri Aurobindo’s most powerful and vivid language, mostly dictated to Nirodbaran during the last years of his life at the height of his command over the written word. Both the language and the subject matter are exceedingly complex and sophisticated. By taking us through these descriptions line by line, elaborating on their surface and extended meanings, relating them to the context of the poem and to other relevant expressions, Shraddhavan helps us develop a deeper and richer understanding of the poem and the truths that it expresses.



The poetry room

From Savitri: The Book of Yoga

Aloof and standing back detached and calm,
A witness of the drama of herself,
A student of her own interior scene,
She watched the passion and the toil of life
And heard in the crowded thoroughfares of mind
The unceasing tread and passage of her thoughts.
All she allowed to rise that chose to stir;
Calling, compelling nought, forbidding nought,
She left all to the process formed in Time
And the free initiative of Nature's will.
Thus following the complex human play
She heard the prompter's voice behind the scenes,
Perceived the original libretto's set
And the organ theme of the composer Force.
All she beheld that surges from man's depths,
The animal instincts prowling mid life's trees,
The impulses that whisper to the heart
And passion's thunder-chase sweeping the nerves;
She saw the Powers that stare from the Abyss
And the wordless Light that liberates the soul.
But most her gaze pursued the birth of thought.
Affranchised from the look of surface mind
She paused not to survey the official case,
The issue of forms from the office of the brain,
Its factory of thought-sounds and soundless words
And voices stored within unheard by men,
Its mint and treasury of shining coin.
These were but counters in mind's symbol game,
A gramophone's discs, a reproduction's film,
A list of signs, a cipher and a code.
In our unseen subtle body thought is born
Or there it enters from the cosmic field.
Oft from her soul stepped out a naked thought
Luminous with mystic lips and wonderful eyes;
Or from her heart emerged some burning face
And looked for life and love and passionate truth,
Aspired to heaven or embraced the world
Or led the fancy like a fleeting moon
Across the dull sky of man's common days,
Amidst the doubtful certitudes of earth's lore,
To the celestial beauty of faith gave form,
As if at flower-prints in a dingy room
Laughed in a golden vase one living rose.
A thaumaturgist sat in her heart's deep,

Compelled the forward stride, the upward look,
Till wonder leaped into the illumined breast
And life grew marvellous with transfiguring hope.

—Sri Aurobindo

From The excursion¹

Such was the Boy—but for the growing Youth
What soul was his, when, from the naked top
Of some bold headland, he beheld the sun
Rise up, and bathe the world in light! He looked—
Ocean and earth, the solid frame of earth
And ocean's liquid mass, in gladness lay
Beneath him:—Far and wide the clouds were touched,
And in their silent faces could he read
Unutterable love. Sound needed none,
Nor any voice of joy; his spirit drank
The spectacle: sensation, soul, and form,
All melted into him; they swallowed up
His animal being; in them did he live,
In such access of mind, in such high hour
Of visitation from the living God.
Thought was not; in enjoyment it expired.
No thanks he breathed, he proffered no request;
Rapt into still communion that transcends
The imperfect offices of prayer and praise,
His mind was a thanksgiving to the power
That made him; it was blessedness and love!

—William Wordsworth

World of light [In remembrance of Rudy Phillips]¹

They are all gone into the world of light!
And I alone sit ling'ring here;
Their very memory is fair and bright,
And my sad thoughts doth clear.

It glows and glitters in my cloudy breast
Like stars upon some gloomy grove,
Or those faint beams in which this hill is dressed,
After the sun's remove.

I see them walking in an air of glory,
Whose light doth trample on my days;
My days, which are at best but dull and hoary,
Mere glimmering and decays.



O holy hope! and high humility,
High as the heavens above!
These are your walks, and you have showed them me
To kindle my cold love.

Dear, beauteous death! the jewel of the just,
Shining nowhere but in the dark;
What mysteries do lie beyond thy dust,
Could man outlook that mark?

He that hath found some fledged bird's nest may know
At first sight, if the bird be flown;
But what fair well or grove he sings in now,
That is to him unknown.

—Henry Vaughan

Fibres of light¹

I do not know why, but when I say 'Hail Master!'
the sun and stars seem to run in my breath,
my muscles are as if fibres of light,
my being flies to strange lands and waters,
my lips touch gardens of flowers, my hands I exchange
for some other hands,
a stranger moves my tongue.
The Universe runs into me, and I into the Universe,
I seem a strange misty form. Like vapor I pass into the
being of others, and they passing within me become
my guests.
It seems fair forms of rolling beauty roll as waves on
the sea—Hail, Lord! All are each other's!
Our shape and limbs run into each other.
I find my bones at times strike within me against the
bones of someone else.
Our deeds and thoughts jostle and run into each other.
I see a hundred souls blend in me, and I interchange my
blood and brain thus with a hundred more in a single
breath; and, calm in solitude, I find a society.

—Anonymous (translated)

For ever Thine²

A bud I came to Thee, O Lord!
To Thee and to the Mother-Force,
Of Love and Light and Life of love,
Of things divine the earthly source.

I left behind old things men prize,
And things that tie us down to earth,
And dived into Thy blissful heart
And had my being's brighter birth.

I chose to work Thy will in life,
And felt the blessedness Thou art;
A selfless service fills my days
And drives my dedicated heart.

Thy sweet and haunting Mother-name
Upon my lips has settled still;
My soul desires one-pointedly
To know and grow into Thy will.

A simple child I long to live
For ever at Thy feet divine,
And grow into Truth's image bright,
For ever Thine, for ever Thine.

—Pujalal Dalvadi

At your feet³

Bring me that vision again
of lying at your feet
like a small child asleep,
gathered up peacefully,
fully trusting in You.

Bring me that vision again
of your lotus feet above me
as I go about my day
aware of your presence
constantly with me.

Such is the nature of Grace
that worthiness is not an issue;
for if it were, this blessing
would never come to me.

—Martha Orton

Change³

Does aspiration fade with time
or simply settle into the fabric
of the consciousness
so integrally that



it doesn't stand out
as distinctly as it did
in the beginning of the quest
for Truth, Light, Oneness?
Or is it that ardor dims,
the fire burns less
intensely now,
glowing not raging,
sustaining warmth, giving energy,
not burning up in a conflagration
of *bhakti* and yearning?
As long as it burns
it gives precious Light.

—Martha Orton

Still night above the sleeping lake

Still night above the sleeping lake,
The sounds of life are silenced as am I.
Soft upon the welcoming grass I lie
Watching the indifferent stars drift by.
In this microcosm of the evolving world
All seems at peace, a meditative mood
Descends like balm upon the troubled earth.
One feels that evil shall sum up to good
Humanity find a modicum of peace,
Divided nations unity restore,
The hatreds that for centuries inflamed
The heart shall wither away and be no more.
Yet change is such a monumental task,
Apparent only if we look within
And know this false persona but a mask,
Allow the thickened ego-self to thin,
Become the enlightened souls we were meant to be
To find ourselves and from the past break free.

—Narad (Richard Eggenberger)

Progress

The older ways that we have been
Lived well, felt deeply,
Loved and played,
Have seen their days of fullness,
Ripened and decayed.

What we have been
Has served its end

Now disappearing undeterred
The past an old familiar song,
The new as yet unheard.

Small selves dissolve
Our limits dim
Have grown to reach a greater height.
Profounder depths reveal the truth,
Emerging and expanding light.

What once we were
Is now so small
Within our being, vaster grown
We stand prepared, we're ready
To welcome the unknown.

—Loretta Shartsis

Briefly

From all the months I worked at Campbell's,
stacking and wrapping and ringing up sales,
he's all I have left to carry with me.

But what does he look like?
He doesn't look like much of anything.
His features fade from the small print on my memory
card and blink out.

I retain little save his demeanor of a nonentity used to
getting slapped.
I have a picture of a man whose hair is in a hurry,
holding a book in his hand that he is promising to buy.

Please, I want to pay you for it.
Do you prefer a bill or coins?
Large coins, or small ones?

But before I purchase this,
may I speak to you briefly?
Briefly means so much to me.

I talk to him, either for a very short,
or a very long time—
depending who you listen to—me or the manager.
He's placing in my palm small bills wrapped around a
handful of change,
and I hear him saying, "I've been waiting for five hours



to talk to someone, and what a wonderful conversation
we've had."

You don't have these conversations on the clock.
You don't have that kind of nice time for those people.
You know that place on the hill?

Yes, I know that place, I am those people.
Well that's where they come from.
We've all seen them around.

What gives you the idea we provide a drop in center
here for these mental beings from their spaceship?
But we are those mental beings on this spaceship here.

I remember about my manager not much more than this:
he hired me without energy, he fired me with enthusiasm;
but it was worth it for the golden

change that still is with me,
here, somewhere in my heart
from the person who got me fired.

How long could we possibly have talked?
What are any of us here for?
A blip!

I was this man
before I was this workless worker
and always will be.

Out, fool, out of the door
he goes with the brief kindled life
of all these walking shadows;

but the brevity of the soul's
experience lit for me
the way out of dust and the long death.

—Rick Lipschutz

All or nothing

You're all that's left me now, for you alone
Can fill this burning void within my breast;
And till that time when we're again as one,
I shall endure perpetual unrest

And know a hundredfold the bitter ache

That lovers feel whenever they are parted;
Such sufferings I'll bear though it should take
A thousand lives before we're reunited.

Yet if the struggle someday seems too much,
And I should seek instead life's common joys,
I only pray you keep them from my reach,
Till I can see the error of my ways.

For all the world would be a paltry prize
If purchased through so great a compromise.

—Rich Catalano

Bright star

Earth's breath, expression of cicadas' song
A shoreless surf that rattles through the leaves
And layers like a sea of living sound
Above the muted roaring of the falls.

Bright star, you are Apollo, Lord of Light,
We drink you, and you know us in our cells,
We recognize our power in your heat,
Surrender is coherence in your love.

A passion and a poetry and force
Upholds the mystic heart in time and keeps
Her wordless beauty on my lips, like white
Crisp birch trees face the soul's Venusian source.
Soft skin, not paper wraps their naked trunks.

How happy is the lifetime of a tree,
To take in sun and water and to breathe,
To rise in an ascension towards the heights,
To generate a dome that holds our world.

Whose being is self-giving to the One,
Whose growth contains star circles through the sky.

—Sam Cherubin

¹ From *Poetry for the Spirit*, edited by Alan Jacobs. London: Watkins, 2002.

² From *Devotion*, edited by Lloyd Hofman and Vignan Agni. Auroville, India: Integral Enterprise.

³ From *Calling into the Dark*, by Martha Orton. Chestertown, Maryland: Last Leaf Press.



Apropos

This erring race of human beings always dreams of perfecting their environment by the machinery of government and society; but it is only by the perfection of the soul within that the outer environment can be perfected. What thou art within, that outside thee thou shalt enjoy; no machinery can rescue thee from the law of thy being. —Sri Aurobindo

When you have achieved the consciousness that God is in you, with you, for you, that awareness must reshape every thought, word and deed, and make you wish good, speak good, and do good. —Sathya Sai Baba

By choosing we learn to be responsible. By paying the price of our choices we learn to make better choices. —Marsha Sinetar

A great deal of talent is lost to the world for the want of a little courage. —Sydney Smith

Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear, not absence of fear. —Mark Twain

We could never learn to be brave and patient if there were only joy in the world. —Helen Keller

Egoism makes one see glory in petty achievements, happiness in trivial acquisitions, joy in temporary authority over others. But, the Immortal in him is awaiting discovery to confer bliss and liberation from birth and death. —Sathya Sai Baba

Emotions are like waves. Watch them come and go on the vast ocean of existence. —Hindu proverb

No one is to be called an enemy; all are your benefactors and no one does you harm. You have no enemy except yourselves. —Francis of Assisi

Better a thousand enemies outside the house than one inside. —Arabian Proverb

There is no fool like the fool who will continue to kick the rubbish of his mistakes along the path ahead of him, and then be compelled to stumble over these mistakes a second time. —Fred Van Amburgh.

Cease today to merely hope. Stop daydreaming. Forget about wishing, and remember to formulate the consciousness which corresponds with what you truly desire in life. —Frank Richelieu

Buddha left a road map, Jesus left a road map, Krishna left a road map, Rand McNally left a road map. But you still have to travel the road yourself. —Stephen Levine

If you want to go east, don't go west. —Ramakrishna

We are all in the process of growth, a continual evolution—some very quickly and pronounced, other more slow and steady, but all are changing, growing and evolving...we are here to share in the blossoming of consciousness. —A Spiritual Warrior

Step by step is the law of growth. God does not expect the acorn to be a mighty oak before it has been a sapling. —George Carpenter

Humility is the recognition that what you don't know is more than what you do know. —Anonymous

To be humble to superiors, is duty; to equals, is courtesy; to inferiors, is nobleness; and to all, safety; it being a virtue that, for all its lowliness, commandeth those it stoops to. —Thomas More

Lowliness is the foundation of loftiness. —Lao-tzu

The best way to show gratitude to God is to accept everything with joy. A joyful heart is the inevitable result of a heart burning with love. —Mother Teresa

