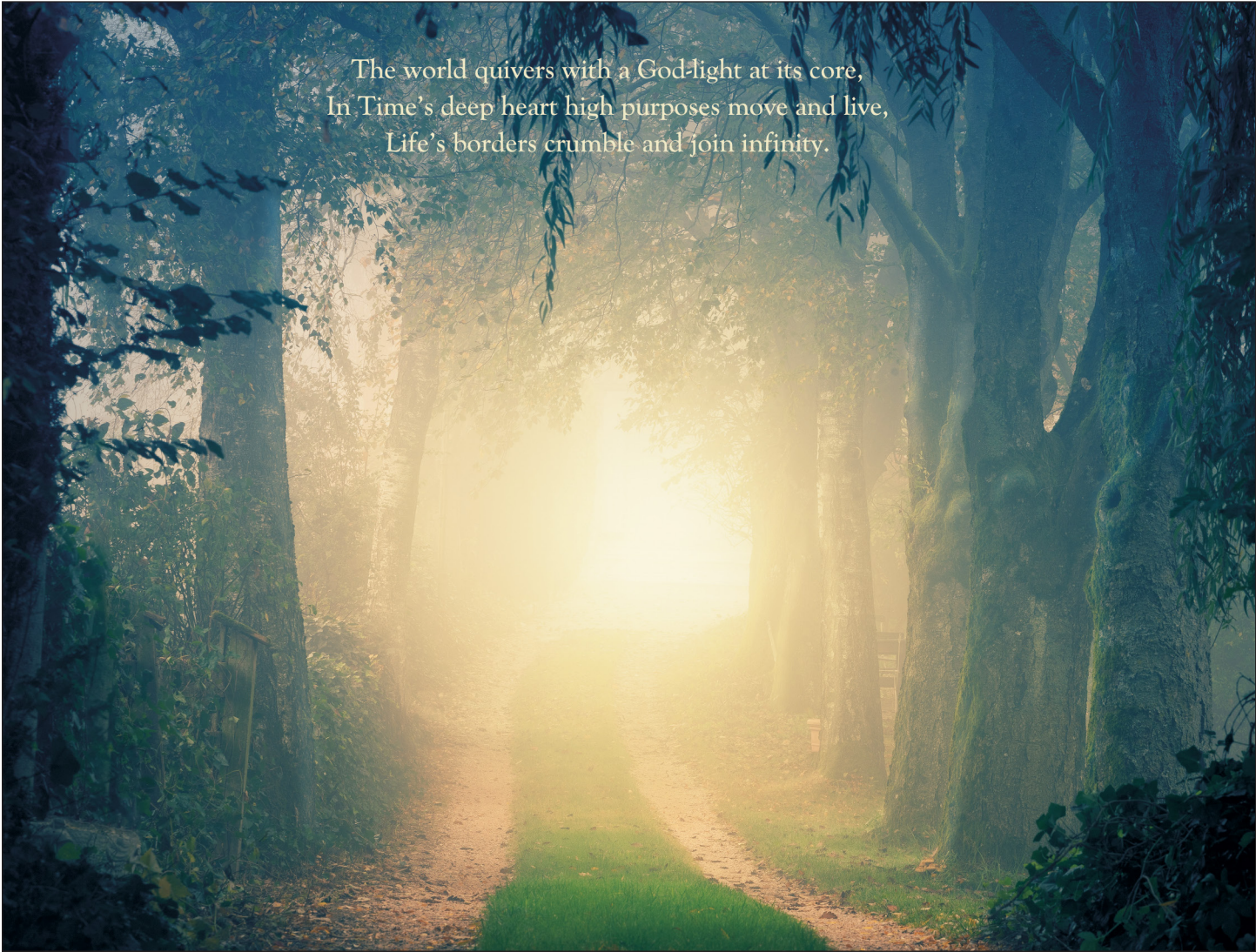


Collaboration

Spring 2019

Journal of the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother

Vol. 44, No. 1

A photograph of a narrow dirt path winding through a dense forest. The path is covered with fallen leaves and is flanked by tall, moss-covered trees. Sunlight filters through the canopy, creating a bright, hazy glow in the center of the path. The overall atmosphere is serene and ethereal.

The world quivers with a God-light at its core,
In Time's deep heart high purposes move and live,
Life's borders crumble and join infinity.

Remembering and offering by Martha Orton • First person exploration by Aditi Kaul •
“Yoga is nothing but practical psychology”—An interview with A.S. Dalal by Matthias Pommerening •
Parichand, Gardener of the Divine Mother by Shyam Kumari •
Love: The Truth that saves by Larry Seidlitz • The Mother as Savitri by Kailas Jhaveri •
Current affairs • AV almanac • Source material • The poetry room • Apropos



About the art on the front and back cover

Front cover: Untitled, from pixabay.com. Johannes Plenio's work may be seen on his website (<https://j.plenio.de>) as well as on pixabay.com (<https://pixabay.com/images/search/user:jplenio/>), and many others.

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The authors and poets

Matthew Arnold (1822–1888) was a highly regarded English poet and cultural critic who worked as an inspector of schools.

Samuel Coleridge (1772–1834) was an English poet, literary critic, philosopher and theologian who, with his friend William Wordsworth, was a founder of the Romantic Movement in England.

Kailas Jhaveri (richard.kailas@gmail.com) is a senior member of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and author of the autobiographical work *I am here*.

Aditi Kaul (aditikaul9@gmail.com) is currently based in Pondicherry and is deeply inspired by Integral Yoga. Her quest is to understand the “roughly created chaos” we humans are and bring some “divine order.”

Shyam Kumari (shyamkumari@auromail.net) is a senior member of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and an author of many books related to the Yoga.

Rick Lipschutz (lipchutzr@gmail.com), a sadhak, lives in western Massachusetts where he is writing *The Soul that Makes Us Matter* and participating in a pilot project in Open Dialog Therapy.

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

Martha Orton (morton@gmail.com) is a clinical social worker and Sri Aurobindo devotee, scholar, and author living in Charlottesville, VA.

Radhe Pfau (radhe@lagracecenter.com) is Executive Director of La Grace Sri Aurobindo Integral Life Center near Greenville, SC.

Matthias Pommerening (matthias.pommerening@auroville.de) is exploring psychology, Integral Yoga, and Auroville.

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

Larry Seidlitz (lseidlitz@gmail.com) is an author, an editor, and conducts online courses and research on Integral Yoga.

Carel Thieme (carel@auroville.org.in) is a long-time Aurovilian involved in many Auroville activities and co-editor of *Auroville Today*.

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From the office of Collaboration

In this issue, *Current affairs* reports on the two annual Sri Aurobindo conferences in the US: the All USA Meeting being held June 20-23 in Washington State, and the Integral Yoga Retreat being held June 26-30 in Greenville, South Carolina. We also have an update on activities at the Mother's Center of Boulder, Colorado. *AV Almanac* has an article by Carel Thieme of *Auroville Today* about recent developments in the International Zone of Auroville.

In the *Salon*, we have two short articles. The first by Martha Orton is a personal reflection on the Mother's famous advice to "Remember and offer." The second article is by Aditi Kaul and describes the process of "First person exploration," a method of systematic introspective inquiry and observation of one's being and nature that is aimed toward spiritual growth.

In *Chronicles* we have two pieces on two extraordinary members of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. The first is an interview of A.S. Dalal which was conducted by Matthias Pommerening, and focuses on Dr. Dalal's many psychologically oriented compilations of Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's words on various topics. The second, written by Shyam Kumari, is about Parichand, an exceptional sadhak who was the main gardener in the Ashram during the Mother's time. Shyam Kumari has written the stories of many sadhaks in the Ashram in her series of books, *How They Came to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother*. This particular story was intended for a fifth volume that so far has not been published.

In *Essays* we have two talks that are focused on Sri Aurobindo's epic poem *Savitri*. The first, by Larry Seidlitz, focuses on the deeper nature and significance of love as described in *Savitri*, in Sri Aurobindo's *Letters on Yoga*, and in the Mother's talks to the children of the Ashram school. The second talk is by Kailas Jhaveri, a senior member of the Ashram, and concerns the many parallels between the character Savitri in the poem and the Divine Mother of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

In *Source Material*, we commemorate the descent of the superman consciousness, an intermediate consciousness between the human and the supramental being, which occurred 50 years ago on 1 January 1969. The first selection, by Sri Aurobindo, concerns the mind of light, a mind illuminated and transformed by the supramental consciousness. This is followed by two selections from the Mother, the first describing her own personal realization of this consciousness in 1958, and the second describing her experience of the descent in 1969.

We close the issue with a selection of fine spiritual poetry in *The poetry room*, and spiritual 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 August 1, 2019 to the editor at: editor@collaboration.org.

The artists

Johannes Plenio (front cover artist) lives with his wife and three daughters near Munich, Germany. He is a passionate landscape photographer and uses creative techniques to "paint with light."

Larisa Koshkina (back cover artist) lives in Russia where she photographs natural landscapes and creates colorful illustration compositions.

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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

AUM 2019: Evolving through challenges into oneness consciousness

June 20-23, 2019 at Seabeck Conference Center, Seabeck, WA, USA

Adapted from: www.collaboration.org/aum/aum-2019

The All USA Meeting (AUM) is an annual conference for people interested in: consciousness, evolution, and the future of humanity; the practice of Integral Yoga; the vision of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother; and the sustainable international community of Auroville, India (www.auroville.org). People come to AUM to network with others on the evolutionary path, to experience a deeper reality, and to widen their understanding of Integral Yoga. Many feel a spiritual atmosphere at AUM that is helpful for individual and collective progress.

Overview

We hear it every day and it affects us on many levels—objectively and subjectively. The world is in crisis and challenged in many ways (e.g., climate changes and species die off as human impacts on the planet have ushered in a new geologic epoch called the Anthropocene). Challenges and crises of a personal nature are also common, and some are related to the changes taking place at larger scales. But, still, there is the dilemma of what to do or not do? Maybe if the crisis is at root a problem of consciousness, then the challenge would call us to move toward an auspicious outcome by adjusting our consciousness.

Sri Aurobindo and Mother offer insights and suggestions for addressing our individual and collective responses to challenges and crises on personal, community, and global levels. Part of the breakthrough they envision is realizing all is connected and part of the Divine play, and, if we can act in harmony with the Divine's intention, we can help bring about a better self and a better world. Thus, realizing and learning to live in oneness on all levels may lead us to deeper understandings and paths forward. But even if we reach some understanding of a Divine reality, we still have to learn how to live in the material world. In the *Synthesis of Yoga*, Sri Aurobindo explains:

Our first imperative aim when we draw back from mind, life, body and all else that is not our eternal being, is to get rid of the false idea of self by which we identify ourselves with the lower existence and can realize only our apparent being as perishable or mutable creatures in a perishable or ever mutable world. We have to know ourselves as the self, the spirit, the eternal; we have to exist consciously in our true being. Therefore, this must be our primary, if not our first one and all-absorbing idea and effort in the path of knowledge. But when we have realised the eternal self that we are, when we have become that inalienably, we have still a secondary aim, to establish the true relation between this eternal self that we are and the mutable existence and mutable world which till now we had falsely taken for our real being and our sole possible status. . . . In order that there should be any real relation, it must be a relation between two realities.

Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 368

So, please come and join us for an exploration of how wisdom teachings from Integral Yoga and other perspectives can encourage new insights into our situation and perhaps new ideas for personal or collective action. As unique individuals, we have different ways of learning, understanding, planning, acting, and communicating. This gathering is not about finding one way to address crises or fashioning a consensus of any kind. Rather, through our individual and collective practices and explorations, we hope to discover ways to work more effectively toward solutions that emanate from our depths and our heights while engaging our whole beings.

Themes

We will discuss and participate in collective experiences to address these important questions:

How can we support and learn from one another in these turbulent times?

What is the spiritual significance of the unfolding socio-ecological challenges? How can we align our personal aspirations with a higher vision?

How can we experience the deeper realities of Truth? What can they show us?

What can the yoga of Sri Aurobindo and Mother and the wisdom of others teach us about how to develop and use higher levels of consciousness to foster personal, social, political and ecological change?

How can we exert more control over our waking, external consciousness so that our mental state is more



attuned to our inner being, allowing us to see and act in the world with greater clarity and more effective energy?

How can we connect with our inner Divinity, discern and trust its guidance, and yoke it to the evolutionary project of individual and collective transformation?

How can we connect with the psychic being in us, trust in its guidance, and express its harmony in our daily lives?

This AUM will bring an inspiring set of gatherings to allow us to explore these themes and questions together. The events will include presentations, discussions, activities, music, movement, meditation, time in Nature, pranayama, poetry, feasting, conversation, and volleyball. Much of it will be interactive. In addition to serving the Integral Yoga community, we hope to attract others in the region who might want to explore with us and add their own perspectives.

Location

The setting at the Seabeck Conference Center (seabeck.org) is a beautiful one: surrounded by forest, meadows, and water on Hood Canal, 40 miles west of Seattle, Washington with beautiful views of the majestic Olympic Mountains.

Topics and Presenters

- The Ideal of Human Unity at the Dawn of the Anthropocene, Karen Litfin
- Reason and Responsibility in Yoga, Rod Hemsell
- Secrets of the Yoga, B Sullivan
- Parallels between Shamanism, Ancient Knowledge, and Integral Yoga: A Way Forward, Raina Imig
- Open Heartful Awareness, Don Salmon and Jan Maslow
- Awareness through the Body, Suryamayi Clarence-Smith
- Expressions of Oneness as Mantric Doors to Experiencing Oneness, Bill Leon and Ron Jorgensen
- Poetry as a Path for Inner Development with Introductory Poetic Steps; Tai Chi, Ron Jorgensen
- Integrated Practice of Pranayama as a Tool for Health, Healing, and Yoga, JV Avadhanulu
- Hatha Yoga, Morgan Kellock

Costs and Registration

Accommodations are varied and range from \$360/person to \$475/person depending on type of room and number of people per room. The fees cover a bed for 3 nights, all meals, and a full agenda of events. The daily program commuter rate is \$100 (which includes meals and site fee).

For more information and registration, see www.collaboration.org/aum/aum-2019 or contact Bill Leon (billleon@geoeducation.org / 206-914-6663) or Edith Stadig (service@rayapublishing.com / 808-635-5908).

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.

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.

Briefs

The Mother’s Center of Boulder, Colorado offers meditation and knowledge circles, kirtan, workshops, retreats and other life-enriching events. As the birthing journey is very important to us, we have monthly pregnancy and postpartum sharing circles. We also make our space available for like-minded groups wanting to offer conscious events. Most of what we do is free or by donation. We hold Sri Aurobindo’s and Mother’s vision and ideals as the foundation of this work. www.themotherscenter.org. Please contact info@themotherscenter.org.



AV almanac

Things are moving in the International Zone

by Carel Thieme

Reprinted from Auroville Today, March 2019 issue

The International Zone Coordination Team shared the International Zone's latest developments and future plans in an open community meeting in January. One day earlier, a separate presentation had been made on the European 'Cluster Concept'.

Without doubt, the main mover behind the International Zone development is Professor Andrea Cammarata from Italy. Andrea is a "Friend of Auroville" and a volunteer. Six months a year he works as a Professor at the Polytechnic University of Milan, the largest technical university in Italy; the other six months he works in Auroville, helping to develop the International Zone.

"It started about five years ago," says Andrea. "I had read a few books on Sri Aurobindo, The Mother and Satprem and then decided to visit Auroville. I was drawn to the town planning work and, in particular, to conceptualizing the International Zone". In collaboration with the International Zone Coordination Team (IZCT), the Pavilion Groups, L'avenir d'Auroville and Auroville International, he gave form to what so far had just been a vague concept.

The work started studying the "huge collection of materials" on the Zone, in particular what The Mother had said about it. Then the area was analyzed in detail, and possible strategies for the future were defined. These included the water management; the Zone's overall landscape and a definition of how much green and blue space it should contain; the relationship with the village of Bharatipuram that has developed within the Zone; a full infrastructure plan; and the buffer needed to protect the Zone from the outside.

Water recycling has been given a primary place. Today, an estimated 7,000 people are visiting the Visitors' Centre, located on the outer border of the International Zone. This number is expected to increase dramatically. In the middle of the Zone is the village of Bharatipuram, which has an estimated 1,000 residents; nearby there is the village of Kottakarai where an estimated 5,000 people are living. The IZCT plans to treat and re-use part of the black water from

these sources. In this way a blue environment in the form of ponds and streams can come into existence. The water will also allow for a green environment. "Fifty percent of this zone will be blue and green," says Andrea.

The presence of the villages is both a challenge and an opportunity. The International Zone will provide work opportunities and so benefit those living in the villages. Some specific shared services will be provided to allow the village to become more sustainable, which would be an advantage for all of us.

The challenge will be to stop the further development of the village into Auroville, and grow harmoniously together, although some areas in the village may need to be bought as and when the need for the Zone's development calls for it.

There are also two farms inside the Zone: Ayyapaddi and Solitude. The IZCT considers their presence a blessing, as they are crucial in terms of water use and water recycling. Moreover, their location near the Edaiyanchavadi – Kottakarai tar road is a buffer for the buildings inside the Zone.

Clusters and nations

When The Mother spoke about the International Zone, she talked about national pavilions, each expressing what a nation had contributed to the evolution of mankind. This concept has partially evolved. Instead of large pavilions, the focus is now on clusters, each with one or more large buildings at its core with facilities that can be used by all, and the pavilions of individual nations as satellites around it.

"You find the seed of the 'cluster' idea in The Mother's approval of the winning model of the competition for Bharat Nivas, the Pavilion of India," says Andrea. "The central buildings (we can also call it a cluster) housed the auditorium, a restaurant, and others facilities. Around it were the pavilions of the states of India."

The cluster idea has been followed in subsequent designs of the Zone: by Roger, by Piero, by Helmut in his 'agora' concept for the European pavilions, and by Pino. The nation concept of which The Mother spoke is still fully alive, but it is now part of a continental-based clusters system.

Andrea points at the changing world. "If you compare the present world situation with 30 years ago, you see immense changes. Since 1990, 34 new countries have come into existence. International integration is happening more than ever before. Entire populations have moved from one area to another. Europe consists today of 50 countries, Asia 48, Africa 54, Oceania 14 and the Americas 35. To imagine that all of them would have their own individual pavilion



is very difficult. To bring together common functions in a central building, with smaller nation buildings around it, makes much more sense – also from the point of view of human unity.” He mentions that each satellite can be different in size and adds that the nation soul does not necessarily have to be expressed through a building. “It can also be expressed through an artistic installation, or a particular garden, or by a monument. The Canadian Inuksuk is an example.”

The cluster idea has now been enthusiastically accepted. Today, there is a European pavilion group, a North East Asia pavilion group (for China, Taiwan, Mongolia, Japan, and the Koreas); an African pavilion group (for the entire African continent); the Bratstvo or Brotherhood pavilion group (primarily for Russia, Ukraine, Belorussia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and the Caucasus countries); and an American pavilion group (for all the countries in the Americas). The pavilion groups for South East Asia, Oceania and the Middle East still need to be formed. At the centre of the International Zone is Bharat Nivas, the Pavilion of India, which, says Andrea, could also serve as the focal point for the pavilions of Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bhutan, Nepal, Myanmar and Sri Lanka.

But the composition of each cluster has not yet been finalized and is bound to remain flexible in the years to come. The Bratstvo cluster, for example, could also have satellites from the former Eastern Block countries, but some of these might prefer to find a place in the European cluster.

The economics of the Zone

While the construction of the central buildings and the satellites will have to be funded from donations, each cluster will need to be self-sustaining for its maintenance. How this is to be done is under discussion and needs further study. One possible source of income is tourism. The International Zone is envisaged as a place of interaction and continuous exchange between Auroville and the outside world and many day-tourists visiting the clusters and their eateries can be expected. But the Zone will also need cheap student and volunteer accommodation. “We learned that from the Africans, who insisted on having a place for exchange students. They started with safari camping, now they are going further. This is in accordance with the Mother’s views on the Zone. Both in the Mother’s vision, and in the 1968 and 2001 Master Plans, the International Zone is expected to host exchange and research between Auroville and the rest of the world. To fulfill this mission one needs a supporting infrastructure.”

Towards a Detailed Development Plan

Asked if Auroville is ready for making the Detailed Development Plan (DDP) of the International Zone, Andrea briefly hesitates before answering, “Yes, absolutely”. His hesitation, he says, is because some parameters are still to be fixed, such as the exact location of the focal points of each cluster. “There are some deviations from the earlier designs of Roger as the area has changed and the landscape is different. But there is nothing dramatic. So we can start the DDP. In the last three months I did an intensive team-building work. The IZ Tech team already includes eight or nine Aurovilian architects, seven international professionals, three planners, two landscapers and a green/blue planning unit. This is promising, though we may need to hire some outside experts. We also hope that the cluster teams will provide other professionals who can be included in the team”.

But he stresses that the DDP cannot be made by experts alone. “We have to work with the people. The strategies, the ideas, the perspective, the possibilities of the area, all have to be worked out together and shared with the people who are interested. Only a joint effort has any chance of success.”

But even before the DDP is finalized, work on the ground can start. Some of the Zone’s infrastructure, such as the loop road, can be built now. Bratstvo can be given permission to start building the core of their cluster, and the African Pavilion group to build their dormitory and caretaker spaces.

Andrea warns that the DDP will have to be flexible. “Theoretically, the DDP will outline the order of the needs, such as fencing the area and making the loop road, but in practical terms it never works out like that. If suddenly someone comes with enough money to start this or that project, then things will happen in parallel. So perhaps a few cluster cores or pavilions will start to be constructed while the general infrastructure of the Zone is still in process. Of course, all that on the basis of a DDP which has been accepted by the community.”

Is getting community approval a concern? Andrea doesn’t believe so. “The DDP of the International Zone might be more readily accepted by the community as they are participating in the process of its making. Participation is open to all those who want to be involved. In fact, we are asking more people to participate. They could be part of the Pavilion Group or of the IZCT and if they have also a technical skill, they can join the IZ Tech Team.”



Salon

Remembering and offering

by Martha Orton

The brief phrase given to us by the Mother, advising us to “Remember and offer”, can be regarded as the core practice of the Integral Yoga. Sri Aurobindo explains the importance and significance of this in *The Synthesis of Yoga*, particularly in the chapters “Ascent of the Sacrifice, 1-2”. The present author has written an appreciation of Sri Aurobindo’s explication of this process elsewhere, and intends the present essay to express a more personal perspective (see *Collaboration*, Summer 2005, Vol. 30, No. 2).

In his famous and often-quoted statement, “All life is yoga,” Sri Aurobindo sums up the essence of his conceptualization of the Integral Yoga and also gives us a clear link to the meaning and significance of the Mother’s advice to “Remember and offer.” This is so because of the nature of offering and the significance which Sri Aurobindo attaches to it as inherent in the practice of the Integral Yoga. In describing the triune path of the Integral Yoga, Sri Aurobindo explains with vivid richness how the paths of knowledge, works, and devotion merge and become one. Briefly, he explains that seeking knowledge of the Divine naturally leads to love for the Divine as consciousness and connection develop, that offering one’s work to the Divine naturally leads to knowledge of the Divine through the closeness developed in the process, and that offering one’s love to the Divine naturally leads, through the ardor and intimacy of connection, to service through works and to knowledge of the Divine. One can start at any of these points of approach and incorporate all the other aspects of yogic practice along the way to one’s goal of union with the Divine and also realize the fullness of all of them in that union.

Since Sri Aurobindo, in his comprehensive unitary vision of Brahman, regards the Divine as constituting all that is, everything that exists, and also regards all this to be the Divine, he does not support dividing the world into the divine and the undivine, the usual distinction between the holy and the worldly. Moreover, in his conceptualization of the evolution of consciousness—his vision of the progressive revelation of the inherent Divine in life, matter and the world—Sri Aurobindo explains that the divinity within the manifestation will not permit its suppression forever and will inevitably express itself—doing so with transforming effect.

Human beings, in their self-awareness, have the ability to cooperate consciously with the expression and manifestation of divinity, initially doing so in their aspiration to develop themselves in whatever aspect of their nature seems most important to them. As consciousness increases, so does the aspiration for development, ultimately leading to spiritual aspiration for inner growth and realization. We see this aspiration expressed in all the mystic traditions and can also recognize it in many forms in human life in general. The psychologist Abraham Maslow has written extensively of the progression of human development and included spiritual aspiration as being at the peak of human experience. [The present author has described this in *The Quest for Knowledge and Mastery: A Theory of Motivation in the Light of Sri Aurobindo*, Puducherry, SACAR, 2008.]

The aspiration for spiritual growth is often spontaneously expressed by the urge to remember the Divine and offer whatever we do. It is surely an essential aspect of the Integral Yoga. Inherent in this process is the development of a progressively closer relationship with the Divine. In essence this becomes a reciprocal process of offering and grace. However, it must be noted that the Divine Grace does not depend on any human action, Divine Grace simply IS. The importance of this simple, though profound, process has been expressed by one of the long-term sadhaks of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Udar Pinto, who has told a story in which the Mother explained to him he was not doing the yoga entirely correctly. He writes that she told him he should brush his teeth with her! [“Interview with Udar Pinto” by Anie Nunnally, Newsletter No. 5, East-West Cultural Center/Sri Aurobindo Center, Los Angeles] That is, that he should keep her in his consciousness always, even in the simplest and most mundane acts. In making this somewhat surprising assertion, the Mother was pointing out vividly that the pursuit of spiritual growth does not depend on great experiences or holy observances, but also develops from a gradual and constant practice of remembrance, aspiration and offering. “All life is yoga,” in Sri Aurobindo’s conception, and inherently so.

In my personal life, I have found that remembering and offering greatly eases my heart in times of trouble. The act of reminding myself to do this also has become less necessary over time, but reminding seems to be needed more often for common ordinary circumstances. It is usual for a person to simply go about the day more directed by personal volition, in essence being directed by the requirements of external circumstances, individual ego and personal wants. This is pretty much the default mode for human nature. But when we engage on a spiritual path, the



potential for change is greatly increased. We are aspiring to improve upon our usual human nature. This can include offering ourselves to the will of the Divine, surrendering our will to the Divine's will as part of the process of offering our daily actions. Doing so consequently deepens our offering and constitutes a step beyond offering our problems for the Divine to solve for us.

In offering our problems in times of trouble or crisis, we are not only acting in our own self-interest, but also acknowledging that we need help—that our personal human capacities are not sufficient to manage all that needs to be managed in our lives. We recognize the presence of the Divine and our dependence on Him. We may be reluctant to recognize the significance of personal crises in developing our connection and relationship with the Divine and feel as a friend of mine once said, “Oh, no, not another damn growth experience!” However grudging our involuntary acquiescence may be, we usually do see the potential for growth in such times.

In remembering the reality of the Divine in whatever form or degree of personal relationship we conceive, we develop an increasingly conscious and active awareness of the presence of the Divine in our lives. With this remembrance, and even more so with offering our actions—what we do in life and how we go about our actions and spend our days—these are increasingly influenced and moulded by this process. Increasingly our behavior, thought processes, and decisions come under the influence of our sense of the Divine's presence. In this manner, we come ever more under the influence of the Divine and ever more surrendered to the will of the Divine. Altogether we progress in closeness to the Divine and advance in our individual spiritual evolution.

The Divine Grace is a constant reality and a constant presence, regardless of our conscious engagement with it. In the practice of the Integral Yoga, truly integrating this awareness into daily life is much enabled by remembering the presence of the Divine and offering even our smallest and most mundane actions and hopes. In doing so we discover the truth of Sri Aurobindo's assertion that “All life is yoga.”

First person exploration

by Aditi Kaul

First person exploration is an attempt to build a system of psychological inquiry wherein the researcher takes on the journey of self-discovery with an intention of developing an objective view of one's subjective self in order

to unravel the hidden aspects of one's personality with utmost sincerity and honesty. This method of inquiry attempts to create an experiential knowledge system as a result of systematic self-observation with the help of certain tools, self-reflective journaling being one of the most important tools for this purpose. The journal creates a safe space for an individual to explore and freely write about one's experiences without being judged or boxed into any kind of category. This regular writing helps in articulating one's ideas and experiences in a cohesive manner which with time enables the researcher to observe certain inner patterns which one seldom notices in one's everyday surface living.

This is an inner exploration as compared to the behavior-centric approach of western psychology which focuses on observing the “external,” the one that is seen. The fact that our well-being is connected to interpersonal relationships we share and the environment we live in cannot be denied, but what is largely missing from the literature is the awareness of the inner psychological processes that influence our interactions and the way we behave in the world. We build up certain defenses and ways of being in the process of growing up as a way to interact with the world, and over a period of time these defenses become our lens to view the world and we completely lose touch with the deeper parts of our being. Our inner being simply gets veiled by the defense mechanisms as we get busy with the “dos” and “don'ts” of the roles we play in different people's lives. We tend to believe we are the roles we play and completely identify with the action and completely forget the source of our actions. The Western paradigm of research uses these “ways of being” to categorize and label people and largely focuses on the “why” of behavior, whereas the real treasure is in decoding the “why” of intention which comes from a deeper knowledge of the self.

Unveiling the inner being and discovering our inner worlds is a matter of subjective research. More and more people are required to undertake systematic first person inquiry to dwell deeper on the hidden layers of our complex being in order to develop a better understanding of the functions of our inner psychological processes. In turn, this awareness will come to our rescue and will help us make conscious choices in our everyday lives. When an individual becomes more deeply rooted within and has developed an ability to view the surroundings from a perspective which is not tied to ego-driven desires or motives, but comes from the inner balanced state of being that originates from the deep wisdom of the self, the quality of all interactions changes and one has an enriching experience with an improved quality of life.



Chronicles

“Yoga is nothing but practical psychology” —An interview with A.S. Dalal

by Matthias Pommerening

Question: Mr. Dalal, thank you for this interview. Many readers might know you from the line “compiled by A.S. Dalal” on the cover of your compilations on various themes from the works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, such as *Our Many Selves* or *A Greater Psychology*, or compilations of essays by yourself and other psychologists, for example in *Psychology, Mental Health and Yoga* and *Sri Aurobindo and the Future Psychology*. You also authored the book *Eckhart Tolle & Sri Aurobindo: Two Perspectives on Enlightenment*. What inspired you to do this work?

A.S. Dalal: My interest in psychology was almost in-born. It started very early when I was in high school. I was at that time impressed by the findings of psychological factors on health. Then, when I went to college, I would have majored in psychology, but in those days, in the 1940's, psychology was a part of philosophy. It was taught in the department of philosophies. It was not a separate branch of studies. So I majored in philosophy but all my courses were on psychology. I studied general psychology, social psychology, the psychology of religion and educational psychology. I had perhaps one course on philosophy. Then soon after I came in contact with Sri Aurobindo's teaching. Sri Aurobindo's teachings are nothing but applied psychology,



applied spiritual psychology. I did not know it then. But later I came across Sri Aurobindo's own words, “Yoga is nothing but psychology.” My studies started with Western psychology, which is quite different from spiritual psychology as taught and contained in yogic teachings. So there was always an interest in integrating the two from the very beginning.

Then, when I stayed in the Ashram as an inmate, from 1952 to 1959, I did one compilation on *Savitri*, Sri Aurobindo's magnum opus. That was around 1953. At that time the book *Savitri* was in the press and I was working in the Ashram press. So I was inspired to do a compilation on it. At that time there were no computers, at least I had no access to computers. So what I did was, I got Mother's permission to get off-prints of the printed forms. As the book was printed, I would get copies of each form. And I would mark and cut out passages, paste them and made a book. And that was my first offering to the Mother. Later on, that was some

years ago, I did a compilation called: “*The God-Touch*,” a compilation on *Savitri* which adopts the classification based on a psycho-spiritual framework. It deals with different parts of the being: The vital, the mental, the psychic and the spiritual, the cosmic consciousness and transcendental consciousness, and so on.

So, interest in psychology has been ingrained in me from a very young age. And when I did the compilations, that was my chief interest: To present the psychological aspects of Sri Aurobindo's teachings as would be understandable and appealing to the Western mind. So I did 14 compilations. And that work came to an end a few years ago. Compilations I would like to do a few more but now I don't have the energy to do that anymore. As Mother says, there are two aspects to the work, to the spiritual work. There is an outer work and there is an inner work. The outer work depends on physical, vital and mental energies. So that comes to an end after a while. One can no longer do much requiring these energies. But the inner work continues until the last breath. But whatever I study, whatever I observe, I tend to do it from a psychological viewpoint.

Question: You would like to do more compilations?

A.S. Dalal: Yeah, I would like to do one on grace. And faith. Also the unique aspects of Sri Aurobindo's teachings, how are they different from other traditional yogas of India. These subjects have been dealt with here and there, by a number of people, but I am thinking of something more comprehensive. That requires a lot of energy.

Question: Why choose those themes?



A.S. Dalal: I feel that those are the deepest, deepest aspects of sadhana. Sri Aurobindo's sadhana is based principally on surrender, which requires faith and the reliance in the grace—not so much on personal effort. There is some effort, personal effort, involved, but traditional yogas have over-emphasized personal effort. Ramakrishna used a metaphor to distinguish the two paths, that of the baby monkey and that of the baby cat. The baby monkey has to cling to the mother and the mother carries it from place to place. That is personal effort—you have to cling to the truth. On the other hand, the baby cat that simply lies on the ground, there is no effort. The mother picks it up and does everything for it.

So, as we grow in sadhana, we realize, that personal effort can do very little. It just prepares us for the grace. Reliance on grace is the highest, the highest faith. That is why I've been interested in doing a compilation on that, to bring out that aspect of Sri Aurobindo's sadhana. It's about realizing that the personal effort cannot do much, hardly anything. In fact, Sri Aurobindo says in one of his letters, that if you are left alone, you can do nothing. Though, in another context, he says that you have to make personal effort until you achieve complete surrender. Then the divine takes up the burden.

The divine actually is doing everything, even our aspiration, even our personal effort, is due to grace, is due to the divine's action. But we don't realize that, we think that we are doing it. But everything is done by the divine. And as we grow in sadhana, we realize that more and more, that the divine does everything and the wisest thing is to rely, is to take refuge in the divine. The Sanskrit term is "nirbhar," which means reliance. Total reliance on the



divine. Whatever happens, whatever difficulties come, whatever circumstances develop. We should be able to see that the divine is behind everything. The divine is doing the sadhana. And we have only to collaborate. And the best form of collaboration, says the Mother, is simply to accept whatever happens. Surrender.

Question: How do you see your previous publications and how would you like them to be read in this context? Couldn't the approach to the yoga through intellectual understanding go along with a focus on personal effort on the side of the reader?

A.S. Dalal: I think they have to start with the mind, with the intellect, to understand the yoga. So my early work was, in a way, preparatory, the earlier compilations. They prepare the mind intellectually. They are good to begin with. By the way, Mother has said, that Sri Aurobindo should be read not by books, but by subjects. Now, for the beginner, it is very difficult to do this. They will take up a major book, read it from cover to cover, but then not much sticks. There is something that one gathers and which remains, but intellectually they cannot formulate something clear and definite that they can grasp. So, compilations that deal with specific subjects,

drawn from different books, they are helpful, more helpful. And people do find compilations, not only mine, also others', helpful to start with. Along with that, if they have the inclination, they can and should read the major works, to get the atmosphere, the full context.

Question: If someone was to read just one of your compilations, which one would that be ideally?

A.S. Dalal: I think there are two compilations which one can begin with. One is my first compilation, *Living Within*, which is more practical and deals with the various disturbances of the being, the mental, vital, physical and subconscious and their yogic solutions. So it appeals to many. It has gone into, I think, eleven or twelve printings and has so far been the most popular. The other one is a more recent one. The main title is *Morality, Idealism, Religion and Yoga*, and the subtitle is: "The meaning of spirituality." Most people are confused. They are not able to distinguish among these four. A highly moral person is described as a spiritual person. A highly idealistic person is described as a spiritual person, a religious person is regarded as a spiritual person—but all these are different from spirituality in its true sense. And that compilation helps in the words of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, to distinguish among these four, to distinguish spirituality from morality, idealism and religion.

Question: Do these themes relate to any of Sri Aurobindo's major works?

A.S. Dalal: At first *The Human Cycle* appealed to me most, because it is psychological. It appealed to me more than *The Life Divine*, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, or the *Essays on the Gita*.



The Human Cycle I read at least twice, because it's psychology. The title at that time was: "The psychology of social development", but not social development as it is generally understood today. Social development today means the development of the individual socially in terms of early maturation prior to cognitive development. But Sri Aurobindo meant the development of society, the various stages of physical, vital, mental and then the spiritual, through which, according to his spiritual vision, society is destined to evolve.

Question: We seem to live in a time of crisis. Many young people are looking for new perspectives to make sense of what's happening. Why would a young person pick up and read *The Human Cycle*, what could they get out of it, from your point of view?

A.S. Dalal: To understand the psychological stages through which the individual and society go through. And one can see those aspects, psychological aspects of one's being there. They are beautifully described. The physical mind, for example, distinguished from the cultural mind. Civilization, for example, distinguished from culture. That distinction was and is even now hardly understood by many people. Civilization is based on the physical mind, the outer, ordinary mind. But culture is something deeper. And the spiritual is something still higher. By the way, regarding the changes that the world is going through now, it is interesting what Sri Aurobindo says:

The changes we see in the world today are intellectual, moral,

physical in their ideal and intention: The spiritual revolution waits for its hour and throws up meanwhile its waves here and there. Until it comes the sense of the others cannot be understood and till then all interpretations of present happenings and forecast of man's future are vain things. For its nature, power, event are that which will determine the next cycle of humanity. (*Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo*, Vol. 13, *Essays in Philosophy and Yoga*, p. 211).

The Human Cycle relates to that.

So it's a good practice to keep on reading as often as one can, especially books like Savitri. Mother herself has said that each time something new is revealed.

The spiritual change, the spiritual revolution, is taking place, has been taking place. If we look at the outer changes, we wonder at all this, how the spirit can be born out of all this chaos and confusion. But they are signs of the spiritual revolution that is taking place. And we can't understand the signs until we understand the fact of the underlying spiritual revolution; the pressure of the spirit, of the Supermind in bringing out the chaos in order to be worked out.

Question: So we can't understand the current signs with our outer mind, but an intellectual understanding of Sri Aurobindo's vision of the evolution of individual and collective consciousness, as presented in *The Human Cycle*, might still help?

A.S. Dalal: Yes. There are signs, but we don't know the true interpretation of the signs. We take them at their

face-value and we see chaos and confusion, corruption and all the negative things. And we wonder and can't see the spirit in all this. Even in India, in particular, which is really the chosen country for the spreading of the spirituality. India is destined to be the spiritual teacher of the world. Each Nation has a special mission and India has that mission of teaching yoga to the world. But if we look at what's happening in India outwardly, we can't see this, we can't see the spirit. We see only the opposite. So an intellectual understanding helps. But one needs faith for that, faith in the spiritual evolution of mankind. *The Human Cycle* is based on Sri

Aurobindo's vision, his realization, not on theory. He quotes, I think, it's a German au-

thor, Lamprecht, who talked about similar stages of the growth of society from a theoretical viewpoint.

Question: Is there anything else you would like to share with the readers?

A.S. Dalal: I think, a repeated reading of Sri Aurobindo's writings is very helpful, almost essential, to understand it better and better. Because, at first, on the first reading, you won't get much. But each time we read, we get a little more. It grows on us. And so it's a good practice to keep on reading as often as one can, especially books like *Savitri*. Mother herself has said, that each time something new is revealed. Invariably, she uses that term. Invariably, she says it happens invariably. That is very true of all of Sri Aurobindo's writings and the Mother's writings. So repeated reading is highly recommended.



Parichand: Gardener of the Divine Mother

by Shyam Kumari

Tall and dignified, Parichand-da, as we called him, walked with a kingly gait. He had a majestic personality which was a result of a total disregard for himself. He arranged his life in such a way that beyond what the Mother gave to him, the same as she gave to all her children, he had no personal possessions. Bare and austere was his life.

Yet there was an opulence in his atmosphere. There were flowers and fruits, seeds and plants, which he gave to all the Ashramites. That he served the Mother like a humble servant is natural but, along with the Mother, he served the children of the Mother with a true humility. Every day many people went to him to ask for flowers for their birthdays, for seeds, plants and pots, for fruits and herbs, for tools and labourers and other such things. His help exceeded his allotted work, there was no end to his self-giving. And even for the humblest person he had a benevolent smile and hands full of the gift of smiling flowers.

Again and again I observed that even when engrossed in reading Sri Aurobindo, he would get up with the alacrity of a teenager, even up to his eighties, and attend to each visitor with a gracious smile and generous heart. People left him with lighter steps and happier hearts, as if being with him lessened their burden and cares and put them in touch with the Mother's consciousness. Thus, he became a benefactor to scores of people in the Ashram.

People of all ages and all types found in him a ready refuge. Day after day, year after year, decade after dec-



ade, Parichand listened with patience and love to the woes of those who were attracted to him. He was absolutely discreet. Whatever was told to him remained forever in the depth of his heart. He never betrayed the confidence of anyone, he never provoked personal disagreements and he never spoke against anybody. If he had to warn somebody he did in a very light and subdued manner and just mentioned, without emphasising, the unpleasant things that had to be told. His was the approach of a loving father and brother.

It is a testimonial to his greatness that this great scholar who knew seven languages and who had a first class master's degree and who loved to immerse himself in Sri Aurobindo's works, never resented the time given to others; whether intellectuals or simple folk. He would explain to me with alacrity any problems I had in understanding any of the works of Sri Aurobindo or the Mother and with the same willingness he would listen to my problems. I always wondered at the generosity of his self-giving.

After the passing of the Mother, the task of steering, guiding and buoying up those who were floundering in the early reaches of yoga, fell upon

great souls like Nolini Kanta Gupta, Champak Lal, Pranab, Parichand, Nirod and many others. Time, that most scarce commodity in our Ashram life, stretched itself out unendingly in Parichand's accommodating heart, so that he could shelter many of us acolytes. I remember with wonder at the restraint with which he listened to the unpleasant things people had to say about others and the great yogic finesse with which he put people on the right track.

His was the suggestive mode, not the evangelistic. He showed us by example what true renunciation is because he felt that since the broad sweeps of the Integral Yoga are exhaustively detailed in the books of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, there was no need to tell people about them. The urge to change had to come from within. He didn't like to preach, nay, even to suggest. His devotion and dedication, his life of ceaseless service, his spartan surroundings and his austerity were there for all to see, and if they so chose, to follow.

From his early youth, Parichand had had a desire for a higher life. In his early youth, he came in contact with some sadhus but was wary of them since sannyasa did not attract him. For many years he could not find any ideal worth living for. Meanwhile nature took its course and he married his friend Udai Singh's sister, breaking many rigid taboos of the Jain community code.

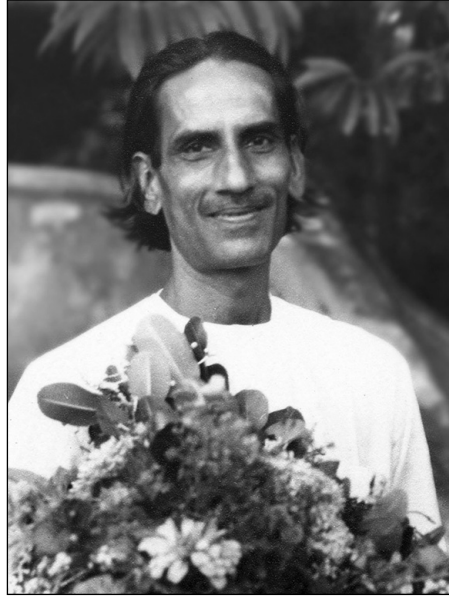
Ten days after his marriage, his close friend and business partner, Rishabhchand, a great and pure soul who would later become a luminary of the Ashram, gave him a book written by Sri Aurobindo. That book revealed to Parichand his path. He had found his Guru. But alas, he was married. He used to say that had he received that book ten days earlier he would not have married and wasted ten years living a householder life.



From the day Parichand read that book of Sri Aurobindo, he belonged no more to the world. Though, with his friend and partner Rishabhchand, he carried on a thriving business, the hearts of both men were at the feet of the Avatars of the Supermind.

Soon after reading that first book, he wrote a letter of self-surrender to Sri Aurobindo. Thus a ten-year long correspondence started. In his letters Parichand laid bare his outer and inner feelings. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother guided his sadhana through their letters. His sister-in-law, our Kiran Kumari, herself a great sadhika, told me later, how after her marriage in the twenties, one day she peeped through the window of Parichand's room to see what he was doing. She saw that he was seated cross-legged, with eyes closed and was lost in deep meditation. There was a beatific expression on his face. She was filled with awe and admiration and later entered his room and there, for the first time, saw that early photograph of the Mother, wearing a veil, taken in Algeria. Kiran Kumari was enraptured and involuntarily, her heart chose the Mother as her Aradhya Devi, her chosen deity. She would later follow in the hallowed footsteps of Parichand and her husband Umichand to take up yoga, leaving behind her three year old son. For decades she has served the Mother with all her heart and all her being and is still serving her.

At last, in 1934, Parichand came to the Ashram on his first visit. He had an interview with the Mother. He told me that when he went to see the Mother he wondered how much should he tell her about himself and whether she remembered what he had written in his letters, in the preceding ten years to Sri Aurobindo as well as the answers given by Sri Aurobindo and herself. The Mother could read thoughts like an open book and as if to reveal to him



Parichand with bouquet in 1951. Photo courtesy Sri Aurobindo Ashram Archives.

her omniscience and to clear forever all his doubts, before he could say anything, she recounted all that he had written in his first letter and Sri Aurobindo's answer to it, and then went on to describe chronologically all his letters and Sri Aurobindo's and her own answers to them, up to the last letter before his leaving Calcutta. Parichand was overwhelmed and could only lay down his head at her feet in utter adoration and humility. He joined the Ashram and never went back, leaving his three children and wife behind.

He once told me that one day Umichand, his elder brother who had also joined the Ashram, came to his office accompanied by a young man and asked, "Do you know who he is?" Parichand replied in negative. Umichand said, "He is your son". Parichand had left home when his only son was eight months old and after three decades this was to be the first and the last meeting of the father and son.

This meeting didn't cause any emotional upsurge in Parichand because his heart was so impersonal that there was no place left for family feel-

ing. This I say with a certainty because in 1980 when I was hospitalised for a long period, Parichand used to visit me twice a week. One day a fellow sadhika who had come to visit me and knew of my reverence for Parichand told me that some days back his son had passed away of a heart attack. Parichand had visited me after this untimely death of his son and yet he had been his usual smiling self and had not even mentioned the death. When I heard of the death, I was aghast and on his next visit, brought up the subject in a rather emotional way. He remarked lightly, "Oh, that was some days back." As if the whole thing was nothing. He didn't concern himself in the least with the trials and tribulations of the young widow, left to bring up three young children. For years he didn't let any of his numerous friends and admirers know about the very hard time his daughter-in-law and grand children were facing. Help would have been certainly forthcoming had he given even a small hint.

The same unconcern, yogic Samata or equality, was there when his wife died. One morning while I was going to see him, somebody at the Ashram gate asked me to deliver a telegram to him which had just arrived. I handed it to him and sat down. He opened and read it and then kept it on one side and with a smile began to discuss the point which I had come to discuss with him.

Many days later, when I came to know about his wife's death from others, I asked him about it and he replied, "The telegram you had brought that day was to inform me about her death and cremation. Had they kept the body and insisted that I should come for the last rites then there would have been some problem. Since they didn't ask me to come, I had no problem."

His was a generation of true yogis. Here I give a few examples. We in the



Ashram are given one pair of leather chappals each year. Parichand didn't take even that one new pair. On each Darshan day many pairs of chappals are found in the main Ashram building, in the Ashram Dining Hall or on the pavements of the Ashram. These are collected and kept so that the owners can claim them. Some of them remained unclaimed. Parichand always took an ordinary pair from those left over chappals so that the Ashram didn't have to buy a new pair for him. Sometimes, the chappals he found, would be a size too large or too small, but he would ignore the discomfort.

Those were days of great austerity because of the Second World War and the Ashram had to face many hardships. So total was Parichand's identification with the well-being of the Ashram that he even lessened the quantity on his food. One day he fainted due to weakness. The Mother came to know of it. She made him tell her, in detail, about his diet and food-intake at Calcutta before joining the Ashram. After listening to him she sanctioned him an extra cup of milk for each of the three meals. He never cooked and unless invited by some Ashramite, took all his three meals in the Ashram Dining Room, and for years, before the second counter was opened at the Dining Room, he stood, sometimes for half an hour, in the long queue, without any complaint, without jumping the queue, even though no body would have objected had he done so.

Very few people know that, in the beginning, the room given to him had hardly any ventilation. Once, in a reminiscent mood, he told me that for a long period, at night, his room became so unbearably stifling that he felt as if he would die. But he bore it

all stoically. A long time passed before a window was put in the southern wall to give cross ventilation. Sadhaks such as he never asked for anything for themselves. When his brother-in-law and friend Udai Singh died, his family insisted that Parichand use his friend's bed and a ceiling fan. He could not hurt their feelings and was forced to accept some comfort.

He had to handle a lot of money because of his garden work. But he never used a single paisa from the garden money for his personal use. It was very difficult to offer him anything. Once my sister Ila whom he loved, sent a woollen shawl for him. He used it rarely. He loved the simple clothes given by the Mother and always wore them.

Even if he had fever he bathed in

His devotion and dedication, his life of ceaseless service, his spartan surroundings and his austerity were there for all to see, and if they so chose, to follow.

cold water and in the last years of his life, it took some persuasion to make him accept a small electric heater and an aluminum vessel for heating water. Once I pleaded with him to accept some money for his grandchildren. Very reluctantly, only once, did he accept hundred rupees to send them some books by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

The plaster in his room kept peeling. Each year he would remove the cupboards for some patches to be replastered never minding the labour. I offered to get his room plastered but he firmly refused, as he refused offers of a motorcycle and used his bicycle to carry over-loaded baskets of flowers and fruits on the handle bar for nearly half a century, until he was taken to the Ashram nursing home after a stroke.

Throughout his Ashram life Parichand washed his own clothes, fetched his drinking water, swept his

own room. He had to employ many labourers for garden work and the Ashram would have gladly given him a servant, but he did all his personal work himself.

Parichand told me about his sadhana and his contact with the Mother. Parichand said that in his early life he was somewhat self-centered and wanted to make up for this fault by selfless service to fellow Ashramites. Once a sadhak living in the same house fell ill. Parichand nursed him. In the thirties and forties sadhaks were supposed to take the Mother's permission before deviating from their routine, even in small things. Parichand had thought that there would be nothing wrong in nursing a fellow sadhak. But after two days of nursing he felt somewhat

uneasy and wrote to the Mother in detail about the whole affair. The Mother told him words to the effect, "It was a wrong

movement. You should have informed me. I would have arranged for his nursing. Diseases come from wrong movements. You should concentrate on your own sadhana."

Parichand used to emphasise that on the path of Integral Yoga the disciple has to be totally dedicated to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. He narrated an important incident. Once, after a sadhak died, Amrita was sent to sort out his possessions. He reported to the Mother that in addition to Sri Aurobindo's and her own photographs, this sadhak had kept a photograph of another spiritual person in his room. The Mother exclaimed, "Oh! now I know why he suffered so much."

Parichand had a heavy work schedule. He worked from early morning till late at night with hardly a break. In the evening there were about two hours of exercise in the Ashram Playground.



After exercising Parichand had no energy left to study Sri Aurobindo's works. He asked the Mother whether he could give up his exercises and read Sri Aurobindo's books instead. The Mother replied that he must continue to exercise even if afterwards he had no time or energy left for study. In his later years Parichand used to say that he had realised that it was only due to half a century of regular exercises that he was fit even in his eighties and could walk and work for long hours without getting exhausted.

Before coming to the Ashram I was a keen gardener, and that is how I came to know Parichand. Over the years he told me many anecdotes about the Mother's love for flowers, plants and trees.

One day a visitor asked him for a nice rose which he wanted to offer to the Mother in the afternoon. It was about two o'clock on the first of a month. The Mother, after finishing the Prosperity Distribution, was to come via the room where Bansidhar now gives permission cards for a visit to Sri Aurobindo's room and then she was to proceed via the open terrace and Pavitra's room to her room. She was usually followed by Pavitra, Nolini and Amrita. Everyone in the Ashram knew that the Mother loved roses, but half a century back the hot climate of Pondicherry was not at all congenial for growing roses. To make them bloom they had to be coaxed with special love and care. Parichand, along with other gardeners, made every effort to grow roses. That afternoon when the visitor asked him for a rose, Parichand had kept some rose plants with a few blooms, in flower-pots, on the terrace outside Bansidhar's office, so that while returning from the distribution the Mother could enjoy their beauty. After looking appreciatively at the roses she crossed the terrace and entered Pavitra's room.

Now Parichand went up the stairs, took out a pair of garden scissors from his pocket and stretched out his hand to cut a nice rose for the visitor.

The Mother was then passing along the corridor on the northern side of the Ashram building and there was no way for her to see the terrace with the plants. Suddenly she started running and reached the open terrace above Dyuman's room and from there, just in time, called out to Parichand across the courtyard, "Don't cut. Don't cut." Nolini, Pavitra and Amrita were bewildered. Parichand was taken aback and withdrew his outstretched hand holding the scissors. Later, the Mother explained to Parichand, "The soul of that flower came to me to be saved." She said to him that flowers should be cut only in the morning or evening. If they are cut or plucked during the hot hours they suffer.

He also told me how one morning the Mother called a sadhak and asked him to go to a particular garden of the Ashram. She told this man that something was wrong in that garden and the souls of the trees had come to her crying for help. The sadhak found that a new labourer had been employed and he had started to cut the banana trees which had not yet flowered and fruited. Their anguished souls had rushed to the Mother. The new man was told to cut only those trees that had already borne fruit.

Flowers, birds and animals were equally dear to the Mother who is the Mother of all beings. As the head-gardener of the Ashram Parichand looked after the plants, trees and flowers in the main Ashram building. Once a small bird had made a nest in a croton bush growing there. The nest had three chicks. Mridu, a sadhika famous for her cantankerousness, asked Parichand to give her a chick to keep as a pet. Parichand didn't agree. But

Mridu kept pestering him. So, after two or three days Parichand gave her one of the chicks. Pujalal, who lived in the main Ashram building heard of the incident and reported it to the Mother. Later on he told Parichand that the Mother was displeased. Though the Mother didn't say anything to Parichand he felt very uneasy and reported to her all that had happened. The Mother scolded him saying, "They were under my protection. It was a nasty thing to do." Parichand told me that his heart and body were afire with guilt and regret and he asked the Mother, "Should I put the chick back in the nest?" The Mother replied, "It won't do. The bird will not feed the chick." Then sensing his anguish at displeasing her, she consoled him.

He told me about the Mother's love for a particular squirrel which became her pet. The Mother used to caress it. After some years the squirrel population of the Ashram increased and became a nuisance. They nibbled at carpets and overturned flower vases. The Mother asked Parichand and Jyotin to trap the squirrels and to show them first to the Mother so that she could ascertain that her pet squirrel was not amongst the trapped ones. So each time that the two gardeners trapped a squirrel they showed it to the Mother. Being all compassion, for all beings, she instructed them to take each squirrel to the Botanical Garden and release it there and observe how it reacted. Twice or thrice they reported to her that at first the squirrels were a little bewildered but later climbed the tall stately trees. Thus reassured that the squirrels would be happy in their new surroundings, the Mother allowed them to keep on trapping and releasing them. Alas, in spite of the precautions the Mother's squirrel either got trapped or escaped somewhere.



Parichand told many stories about the stately Copper Pod tree, named "Service" by the Mother. It was planted on Tuesday, January 4, 1930, in the very centre of the Ashram Courtyard. The Mother loved this tree and said many wonderful things about it. The gardeners protected it so that the Ashram cats did not disturb it. They watered it abundantly. And under the loving gaze of the Mother, who would always look at it as she passed, the tree flourished. By 1940 it was very well-grown, with its branches resting on tiled roofs of three connected rooms, then known as the "Flower Room".

The Service tree went on extending its roots and branches. Some of the boughs hung so low that people would injure their eyes when going to the Meditation hall

for the midnight meditation. When Jyotin told the Mother that people were complaining she remarked, "How gracefully the boughs came down to the earth." She told Parichand, "They protest! They must learn to bow their heads." And she herself gave a demonstration of how to do it. Some of this tree's roots grew above the surface. The Mother would not step upon those roots. She would rather take a long stride over them. Parichand proposed to cover them, but the Mother replied that it could have been done earlier, but by then the roots had thickened and become like branches and it would not have been proper to cover them.

In 1943 a cyclone uprooted many trees in the town, and a large branch of the Service tree broke too. When the Mother saw the damage she said

words to the effect, "Had a roof (in the Ashram) given way, I would not feel so deeply as at the loss of this branch of the Service tree."

When in December 1950 the Mother decided that Sri Aurobindo's Samadhi would be constructed at the foot of the Service tree, she asked Jyotin and Parichand to make sure that no thick root of the tree was damaged during the digging work. Fortunately there was no thick root at the site of the Samadhi.

Once during the sixties it was decided, with the sanction of the Mother, that the vegetable van should unload

room you could not have had the opportunity for the Lord's darshan for a long time." Parichand revealed that on Darshan days he and his brother Umichand, were granted the privilege of being on duty in the middle chamber of the Lord's room and thus both of them could have the Darshan of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo throughout the duration of the Darshan.

He once narrated an incident highlighting Sri Aurobindo's humour. In the late thirties he and other sadhaks of the Ashram observed a fellow-sadhak, while on gate duty, sitting with closed eyes for hours at a time. They were im-

pressed by his capacity for long meditations and took him for an advanced soul. They brought this fact to Sri Aurobindo's notice who remarked with wry humour,

"Yes, he meditates, but upon his wife".

Parichand told me of an incident of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's Grace. The old family silk shop was still being run in Calcutta by the son of Rishabhchand. The sari-shop had become famous. They had put the Mother's symbol on the shop-front. Once terrible communal riots engulfed the metropolis. The mayhem was so horrible that the army had to be called out. Entire localities were burnt down and shops looted. The family could not go to visit their shop for one whole week without grave risk to life. From the reports they had heard Rishabhchand's family had expected to find their shop in ruins, looted and gutted. When the situation was brought under control they went to the shop. All the shops on one side of their shop were destroyed.

The Service tree went on extending its roots and branches. Some of the boughs hung so low that people would injure their eyes when going to the Meditation hall for the midnight meditation. When Jyotin told the Mother that people were complaining she remarked, "How gracefully the boughs came down to the earth." She told Parichand, "They protest! They must learn to bow their heads."

at the south-facing "Catonnier" gate, and from there the vegetables and fruits would be taken upstairs via the Samadhi courtyard. One day workmen started digging near the tree to widen the passage. As Parichand saw that there was danger of damage to the thick roots of the tree, he at once informed the Mother through Amrita. The Mother immediately came out on the terrace of Pavitra's room and asked that the work should be stopped. After an hour she came down and scolded the workers for damaging the roots. Then she stopped the work altogether, declaring, "It is absurd." A new arrangement was made for the vegetables and fruits.

From the Mother to the Master. Once I said to Parichand, "Parichand since you came to the Ashram after Sri Aurobindo had retired to his



But the destruction had stopped at their shop which stood untouched and undamaged with all the goods safe.

Because I neither had the privilege of Sri Aurobindo's darshan, nor possessed anything written by the Lord, Parichand gave me a priceless gift; a letter which he had written to Sri Aurobindo and Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's answers to it. While I was reading Sri Aurobindo's famous poem "Rose of God" with him, he showed me another letter in which he had put some questions to Sri Aurobindo regarding this poem and Sri Aurobindo's answer. I reproduce both these letters:

Mother, I am herewith sending the photograph of a friend. He is well known to us but still enigmatical.

What he says of himself, suggesting the heights of spiritual realisation he has attained,

seems preposterous to me. A true statement of his present position which I took down almost verbatim a few days before my departure for Pondicherry will give you an exact idea of what he thinks of himself. He refuses to be shaken in the least from this belief. Yet he has given ample evidence to us of a sincere aspiration, profound devotion, a steadfast dedication to the cause. Will you please let me know your opinion about him and permit me to inform him about it? He may then be certain of his real position as it is only in Sri Aurobindo that he has the truest confidence. He, of course, does not hold himself to belong to this path though he admits that his yoga started with Sri Auro-

bindo's guidance but now he gets direct guidance from the Divine.
4.2.1935

The Mother replied: "The man is suffering from an incurable disease—vanity." Sri Aurobindo replied:

So it is no use sending him my opinion as the disease is incurable. It is possible that he has experiences for he has probably some mental force and through that can build up mental realisations of what he reads, but he lives in the vital and whatever he experiences or receives the vital takes it and makes it a 100 times bigger in its own estimation than it really is. His claims are prepos-

To some people one can never be grateful enough. Parichand was like a father to me and gave me constant moral support in the intense struggle I underwent in my early years in the Ashram.

terous. It is evident that like most people he has no idea what the supramental is or he would never talk like that. People who live in the vital and have much vanity (there have been several examples here too) easily get the idea that they have attained everything, are without ego, all they receive is from the Divine (even when a magnified ego is driving them) etc., etc., for the vital ego is eager to assert, to be big, to be siddha, and it persuades itself very easily that it is all these things. Let him however go on his own way; it is no use disturbing his self-content, as probably it is the only kind of self-expansion he can do.

The second letter:

Mother, two questions have arisen in the mind in connection with Sri Aurobindo's poem "Rose of God," which please answer.

1: Does the rose of all flowers most perfectly and aptly express the divine ecstasies or has it got any symbolic allusion in the Veda or the Upanishad?

Sri Aurobindo answered: "There were no roses in those times in India—roses come in with the Mohomedans from Persia. The rose is usually taken by us as the symbol of surrender, love etc. But here it is not used in that sense, but as the most intense of all flowers it is used in as symbolic of the divine intensities — Bliss, Light, Love etc."

2: Are the seven ecstasies referred to there the following?: — Bliss, Light, Power, Immortality, Life, Love and Grace.

"No, it is not seven kinds, but seven levels of Ananda that are meant by the seven ecstasies."

2.1.1935 Sri Aurobindo

To some people one can never be grateful enough. Parichand was like a father to me and gave me constant moral support in the intense struggle I underwent in my early years in the Ashram. Also he gave me so many flowers, that some people began to call me "The lady with flowers."

Parichand enjoyed writing letters and many of us, who were close to him, have letters written in his beautiful handwriting and impeccable English. If they can be collected and published as a book which will surely be of interest and help not only to those who were near to him but also to others on the path of the Integral Yoga.



Essays

Love: The Truth that saves

by Larry Seidlitz

Presented for the Ninth M.V. Nadkarni Memorial Lecture at Savitri Bhavan in Auroville on 19 February 2019

The title for the talk comes from Sri Aurobindo's epic poem *Savitri*, Book 10, Canto 3, "The Debate of Love and Death." There Savitri replies to Death's arguments with this couplet:

O Death, thou speakest truth but
truth that slays,
I answer to thee with the Truth
that saves. (p. 621)

Let me first give a little context to the run up to these lines in the poem, as they come towards the end near its climax. The god Death has taken Savitri's husband Satyavan and is leading him towards the "Black Void." Savitri has gone into trance and is following in pursuit. Sri Aurobindo beautifully explained the situation near the beginning of the poem in a canto called "The Issue." He says:

On the bare peak where Self is
alone with Nought
And life has no sense and love no
place to stand,
She must plead her case upon
extinction's verge,
In the world's death-cave uphold
life's helpless claim
And vindicate her right to be and
love. (p. 12)



Savitri's debate with Death extends over five cantos, approximately 100 pages, and the couplet that was mentioned comes about in the middle. In the remainder of this talk, I would like to elaborate on the deeper nature of love, on the love which is eternal and can stand up to death, as it is explained in *Savitri*, in Sri Aurobindo's *Letters on Yoga*, and in some of the Mother's talks to the children of the Ashram school.

In his debate with Savitri, Death has been arguing that he is the beginning and end of all things. He has said,

I Death, am He; there is no other
God.
All from my depths are born,
they live by death;
All to my depths return and are
no more. (p. 593)

In his arguments, Death often voices views on the nature of Truth which mankind itself has taken, views which see life as ephemeral, meaningless, and headed inevitably towards death and nothingness. As Savitri says in the couplet, there is a certain truth in it. In our life experience, we are continually witness to death, and it is often difficult to see the point of all the struggle and suffering of life when it appears to end so abruptly.

Savitri, however, by this point in the poem, has become conscious of

her divine Origin, of her eternal existence, and her oneness with all. She has argued:

When I have loved for ever, I
shall know.
Love in me knows the truth all
changings mask.
I know that knowledge is a vast
embrace:
I know that every being is myself,
In every heart is hidden the
myriad One.
I know the calm Transcendent
bears the world,
The veiled Inhabitant, the silent
Lord:
I feel his secret act, his intimate
fire;
I hear the murmur of the cosmic
Voice.
I know my coming was a wave
from God.
For all his suns were conscient in
my birth,
And one who loves in us came
veiled by death.
Then was man born among the
monstrous stars
Dowered with a mind and heart
to conquer thee. (p. 594)

Savitri, in her answer to Death, follows the couplet mentioned earlier by recounting the long process of evolution, starting from inert matter and culminating in human thought turned towards spiritual experience. She says, "O Death, thou lookst on an unfinished world..." and explains that the Divine is immanent in the world and is gradually manifesting its greater and greater powers. Yes, death is there, long suffering is there, and it may seem meaningless in the short term, but in the long term there is progress; consciousness is growing on earth, and eventually the Divine will shine through and transform the



suffering of life on earth into delight.
In the same canto, Savitri says:

At last the soul turns to eternal
things,
In every shrine it cries for the
clasp of God.
Then is there played the crowning
Mystery,
Then is achieved the longed-for
miracle. (p. 631)

Then on the next page, she says,

A mystic slow transfiguration
works.
All our earth starts from mud
and ends in sky,
And Love that was once an ani-
mal's desire,
Then a sweet madness in the
rapturous heart,
An ardent comradeship in the
happy mind,
Becomes a wide spiritual yearn-
ing's space.
A lonely soul passions for the
Alone,
The heart that loved man thrills
to the love of God,
A body is his chamber and his
shrine. (p. 632)

Sri Aurobindo in this short pas-
sage shows us the evolutionary pro-
cess through which love emerges
gradually in the human being, first as
an animal desire, then as the emotion-
al heart's love for another human be-
ing, then as a refined mental love and
comradeship between human beings,
and finally as the soul's passion for the
Alone, the One and only Divine. And
then he adds this interesting clause
to the end of the sentence: "A body is
his chamber and his shrine." The love
of which he speaks is not simply love
for an abstract, Transcendent God be-
yond the world; the body, an earthly

form, is his chamber and shrine. It
may be a particular body, a particular
human being whom with our trans-
formed senses we may see as an em-
bodiment of the Divine, or it may be
all bodies, all forms, the whole world
that we see as an embodiment of the
Divine, a universal shrine or temple
in which the immanent Divine lives,
no longer hidden, but clearly visible to
our inner senses.

And then in the continuation of
this passage, Sri Aurobindo shows us
the culminating result of this evolu-
tion of love:

Then is our being rescued from
separateness;
All is itself, all is new-felt in God:
A Lover leaning from his clois-
ter's door
Gathers the whole world into his
single breast.
Then shall the business fail of
Night and Death:
When unity is won, when strife
is lost
And all is known and all is
clasped by Love
Who would turn back to igno-
rance and pain? (pp. 632-33)

One side of the love that saves is
the love of the human being, the hu-
man soul, for the Divine. But the other
side of the love that saves is the love of
the Divine for the human being and
for the whole world: "A Lover lean-
ing from his cloister's door / Gathers
the whole world into his single breast."
As our love for the Divine grows, we
also feel the love of the Divine for us,
helping and fulfilling us in a rapture of
conscious delight.

The Mother clearly describes the
relation of these two sides of Love in
one of her talks at the school. She says,

...through the action of the forces

of separation, Consciousness
became inconscience and mat-
ter was created such as it is, on
a basis of inconscience so total
that no contact seemed pos-
sible between the Origin and
what was created. And this total
inconscience made a direct de-
scent necessary, without passing
through the intermediate regions,
a direct descent of the Divine
Consciousness in its form of
Love. And it is this descent of Di-
vine Love into matter, penetrat-
ing it and adding a new element
to its composition, which has
made possible the ascent, slow for
us, but an uninterrupted ascent,
from inconscience to conscious-
ness and from darkness to light.
(31 October 1956, CWM, Vol. 8,
pp. 339-40).

She explains that it is because of
this descent of the Divine Love into the
creation that the creation can evolve,
can progress towards reunification
with the Divine. But in a continuation
of the same conversation, she also says
that human beings cannot really toler-
ate the Divine Love in its purity; it is
too powerful, too intense for human
beings to bear. We can only tolerate,
only accept, a very diminished and ob-
scure form of this love. She explains
that nevertheless the Divine Love in
its form of Grace does its work and
gradually raises us up toward its Di-
vine Nature.

In one of the *Letters on Yoga* (LY
II, p. 334), Sri Aurobindo explains that
the human consciousness must first be
transformed in order to bear and con-
tain the Divine Love in its intensity. He
says that the human being must first
have "the strength to love the Divine
alone and turn away from all other
ties." But in addition, a new conscious-
ness must be created in the individual,



first based on a Divine Peace established all the way down to the physical, then on that basis, a pure, unegoistic inner strength. After this, the Divine Light and Knowledge must transform all the consciousness and movements. This last condition implies the need for supramental transformation, as he stated explicitly in another letter (*LY II*, p. 333). Only then can the human consciousness contain the Divine Love and Ananda. Until then, they can only come in touches and brief experiences, they cannot remain.

As human love gradually becomes more purified, it turns to the Divine where it can find its true nature and fulfillment. There is a very interesting talk of the Mother in which she describes the meeting of the love of the human for the Divine with the answering love of the Divine. She says,

The creation moves upward through love towards the Divine and in answer there leans downward to meet the creation the Divine Love and Grace. Love cannot exist in its pure beauty, love cannot put on its native power and intense joy of fullness until there is this interchange, this fusion between the earth and the Supreme, this movement of Love from the Divine to the creation and from the creation to the Divine... This human movement of love is secretly seeking for something else than what it has yet found; but it does not know where to find it, it does not even know what it is. The moment man's consciousness awakens to the Divine love, pure, independent of all manifestation in human forms, he knows for what his heart has all the time been truly longing. This is the beginning of the Soul's aspiration, that brings the awakening of the

consciousness and its yearning for union with the Divine. All the forms that are of the ignorance, all the deformations it has imposed must from that moment fade and disappear and give place to one single movement of the creation answering to the Divine love by its love for the Divine. Once the creation is conscious, awakened, opened to love for the Divine, the Divine love pours itself without limit back into the creation. The circle of the movement turns back upon itself and the ends meet; there is the joining of the extremes, supreme Spirit and manifesting Matter, and their divine union becomes constant and complete.

And then she adds something very interesting about the work of the Avatar. She says:

Great beings have taken birth in this world who came to bring down here something of the sovereign purity and power of Divine love. The Divine love has thrown itself into a personal form in them that its realisation upon earth may be at once more easy and more perfect. Divine Love, when manifested in a personal being, is easier to realise; it is more difficult when it is unmanifested or impersonal in its movement. A human being, awakened by this personal touch, with this personal intensity, to the consciousness of the Divine love, will find his work and change made more easy; the union for which he seeks becomes more natural and close. And the union, the realisation will become for him, too, more full, more perfect; for the wide uniformity of

a universal and impersonal Love will be lit up and vivified with the colour and beauty of all possible relations with the Divine. (2 June 1929, *CWM*, Vol. 3, pp. 74-75)

If it were simply that the creation was gradually evolving from darkness towards Light, from impure forms of love toward divine Love, while being aided in this process by the Divine Grace, it would not be so difficult. Unfortunately for us, there has cut across this natural progression towards the Light, towards divinity, a sinister anti-divine Force, which is largely symbolized in the poem by the god Death himself. Sri Aurobindo refers to this deviating Power in many places in the poem. It is vividly described in Book 2, Canto 7, "The Descent into Night." I will read just a portion of this description:

Then from the sombre mystery of
the gulfs
And from the hollow bosom of
the Mask
Something crept forth that
seemed a shapeless Thought.
A fatal Influence upon creatures
stole
Whose lethal touch pursued the
immortal spirit,
On life was laid the haunting
finger of death
And overcast with error, grief and
pain
The soul's native will for truth
and joy and light...

And skipping down a few lines:

Even Light and Love by that
cloaked danger's spell
Turned from the brilliant nature
of the gods
To fallen angels and misleading
suns,



Became themselves a danger and
a charm,
A perverse sweetness, heaven-
born malefice:
Its power could deform divinest
things.
A wind of sorrow breathed upon
the world;
All thought with falsehood was
besieged, all act
Stamped with defect or with frus-
tration's sign,
All high attempt with failure or
vain success,
But none could know the reason
of his fall.
The grey Mask whispered and,
though no sound was heard,
Yet in the ignorant heart a seed
was sown
That bore black fruit of suffering,
death and bale. (p. 203)

It is from *this* that we must be saved. After reading this, we cannot say that Sri Aurobindo had his head in the clouds and didn't know or care about the problems faced by human beings in life and in the world. Indeed, as he says of the protagonist Aswapati in the lead-up to this passage, "He turned to find that wide world-failure's cause." Sri Aurobindo had turned his gaze into the heart of the darkness in order to find the cause of the problem of life and fix it. Similarly, we who turn to Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's teachings should not have our heads in the clouds, but must be aware of the dangers and difficulties through which we move in our path to the Divine. We do not need to focus on the dangers and difficulties, but we must be vigilant, we must be aware that they are there lurking waiting to trip us up or to subtly mislead and influence us. We must not welcome these undivine influences into our mind and life and acts, but firmly shut them out and

keep ourselves opened to the Light and Love towards which we aspire and move.

One of the very important letters on Yoga that Sri Aurobindo wrote has been titled by the editors of the *Complete Works* the "The Decisive Ordeal of This Yoga." It is in the fourth volume of the *Letters on Yoga* on pages 150-156. In it, Sri Aurobindo explains, there is a part of the being that resists the Divine and the Yoga. He says,

I mean that part of the vital-physical nature with its petty and obstinate egoism which actuates the external human personality,—that which supports its surface thoughts and dominates its habitual ways of feeling, character and action. (*LY IV*, p. 150)

He says that whatever there may be in the higher parts of the nature...

aspiration to the Truth, devotion or will to conquer the obstacles and the hostile forces, it cannot become integral, it cannot remain unmixed or unspoilt or continue to be effective so long as the lower vital and the external personality have not accepted the Light and consented to change. (*LY IV*, p. 150)

He continues,

It was inevitable that in the course of the sadhana these inferior parts of the nature should be brought forward in order that like the rest of the being they may make the crucial choice and either accept or refuse transformation. My whole work depends upon this movement; it is the decisive ordeal of this Yoga. For the physical consciousness and the

material life cannot change if this does not change. (*LY IV*, p. 150)

In the remainder of the letter, Sri Aurobindo explains the false attitudes of this part of the being which are several of the major challenges of the Yoga. These passages help us to see the difficulty of life and of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga in their deeper dimensions. The lower vital and physical nature obstinately refuse to change and accept the higher Light and the Divine into themselves. They obstinately insist on their right to continue in their same egoistic, ignorant, and false attitudes and behaviors. These vital-physical parts of the being are influenced and supported in this obstinacy by dark, anti-divine and hostile forces.

There is another important letter two pages later which explains the way out of the lower vital difficulty. It is fairly short so I will read the complete letter as it appears.

The lower vital in most human beings is full of grave defects and of movements that respond to hostile forces. A constant psychic opening, a persistent rejection of these influences, a separation of oneself from all hostile suggestions and the inflow of the calm, light, peace, purity of the Mother's power would eventually free the system from the siege.

What is needed is to be quiet and more and more quiet, to look on these influences as something not yourself which has intruded, to separate yourself from it and deny it and to abide in a quiet confidence in the Divine Power. If your psychic being asks for the Divine and your mind is sincere and calls for liberation from the lower nature and from all hostile forces and if you can call the



Mother's power into your heart and rely upon it more than on your own strength, this siege will in the end be driven away from you and strength and peace take its place. (*LY IV*, p. 158)

There is another letter in the same section that adds another crucial point for getting free of the hostile suggestions in the lower vital and physical consciousness. I will read just the crucial point:

Inner experiences are helpful to the mind and higher vital for change, but for the lower vital and the outer being a sadhana of self-discipline is indispensable. The external actions and the spirit in them must change – your external thoughts and actions must be for the Divine only. There must be self-restraint, entire truthfulness, a constant thought of the Divine in all you do. This is the way for the change of the lower vital. By your constant self-dedication and self-discipline the Force will be brought down into the external being and the change made. (*LY IV*, p. 159)

It is only the Divine Power, the Mother's Force that can free the human being from the siege of the hostile Forces which influence and hold sway over the lower vital being and physical nature. However, our constant cooperation with the Divine Power is required, is absolutely essential; it is the decisive ordeal of the Yoga.

The difficult work of the Avatar, of the Divine born into a human body in order to raise the human race towards the Divine, is poignantly described in Book 6, Canto 2, "The Way of Fate and the Problem of Pain." Sri Aurobindo says,

Hard is the world-redeemer's heavy task;
The world itself becomes his adversary,
Those he would save are his antagonists:
This world is in love with its own ignorance,
Its darkness turns away from the saviour light,

The lower vital and physical nature obstinately refuse to change and accept the higher Light and the Divine into themselves. They obstinately insist on their right to continue in their same egoistic, ignorant, and false attitudes and behaviors. These vital-physical parts of the being are influenced and supported in this obstinacy by dark, anti-divine and hostile forces.

It gives the cross in payment for the crown.
...
He must call light into its dark abysses,
Else never can Truth conquer Matter's sleep
And all earth look into the eyes of God.
All things obscure his knowledge must relume,
All things perverse his power must unknot:
He must pass to the other shore of falsehood's sea,
He must enter the world's dark to bring there light.
The heart of evil must be bared to his eyes,
He must learn its cosmic dark

necessity,
Its right and its dire roots in Nature's soil.
He must know the thought that moves the demon act
And justifies the Titan's erring pride
And the falsehood lurking in earth's crooked dreams:
He must enter the eternity of Night
And know God's darkness as he knows his Sun.
For this he must go down into the pit,
For this he must invade the dolorous Vasts.
Imperishable and wise and infinite,

He still must travel Hell the world to save. (pp. 448, 450)

We don't usually think of the suffering that, out of their love, Sri Aurobindo and

the Mother bore for us. Still, it is probably good to be reminded of it from time to time so that some glimmer of that awareness might melt our hearts a little and enable us to return some measure of true love in return. Sri Aurobindo wrote about this suffering poignantly in *Savitri* and in some of his other poems such as "A god's labour." The Mother helped us to remember it when she wrote that message which is on the samadhi in the Ashram. I think it is useful, from time to time, when we go to the samadhi, to read it. Those who have read *Mother's Agenda* also may remember some of the very heart-rending passages that spoke of the terrible suffering that the Mother bore in her work for the transformation of the body.



Sometimes people would question Sri Aurobindo whether it was really possible for an Avatar to experience suffering, as the Divine consciousness is in them. He explained,

There are two sides of the phenomenon of Avatarhood, the Divine Consciousness behind and the instrumental personality. The Divine Consciousness is omnipotent but it has put forth the instrumental personality in Nature, under the conditions of Nature, and it uses it according to the rules of the game—though also sometimes to change the rules of the game. (*LY I*, 472-73)

In another letter, he writes:

The Divine does not need to suffer or struggle for himself; if he takes on these things it is in order to bear the world-burden and help the world and men; and if the sufferings and struggles are to be of any help, they must be real. A sham or falsehood cannot help. They must be as real as the struggles and sufferings of men themselves—the Divine bears them and at the same time shows the way out of them. Otherwise his assumption of human nature has no meaning and no utility and no value. (*LY I*, p. 472).

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, out of their love for us, bore a great struggle and suffering for humanity, but for what purpose? What inner work did their struggle accomplish for us?

In Book 2, Canto 8, Sri Aurobindo describes Aswapati going down into the deepest recesses of the subconscious.

There in the slumber of the cosmic Will

He saw the secret key of Nature's change.
A light was with him, an invisible hand
Was laid upon the error and the pain
Till it became a quivering ecstasy,
The shock of sweetness of an arm's embrace. (p. 231)

And at the end of the canto:

Hell split across its huge abrupt façade
As if a magic building were undone,
Night opened and vanished like a gulf of dream.
Into being's gap scooped out as empty Space
In which she had filled the place of absent God,
There poured a wide intimate and blissful Dawn;
Healed were all things that Time's torn heart had made
And sorrow could live no more in Nature's breast:
Division ceased to be, for God was there.
The soul lit the conscious body with its ray,
Matter and spirit mingled and were one. (p. 232)

The main work for which Sri Aurobindo and the Mother came was to bring down the supramental consciousness, the Truth Consciousness, into the evolving consciousness on earth. For this they had themselves to go down into the lowest, most obscure levels of consciousness to bring that supramental consciousness there. The Mother explained that on 29 February 1956 the supramental descended into the earth consciousness, effectively fulfilling Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's primary work. In Book

11 of *Savitri*, we perhaps have the best description of what the supramental world is like both in its own plane and what it will make of life on earth. Regarding what will happen on earth Sri Aurobindo writes:

The incarnate dual Power shall open God's door,
Eternal supermind shall wake in mortal man
And manifest the hidden demi-god
Or grow into the God-Light and God-Force
Revealing the secret deity in the cave.
Then shall the earth be touched by the Supreme,
His bright unveiled Transcendence shall illumine
The mind and heart and force the life and act
To interpret his inexpressible mystery
In a heavenly alphabet of Divinity's signs.

And a little further down on the next page:

The supermind shall be his nature's fount,
The Eternal's truth shall mould his thoughts and acts,
The Eternal's truth shall be his light and guide.
All then shall change, a magic order come
Overtopping this mechanical universe.
A mightier race shall inhabit the mortal's world.
On Nature's luminous tops, on the Spirit's ground,
The superman shall reign as king of life,
Make earth almost the mate and peer of heaven,



And lead towards God and truth
man's ignorant heart
And lift towards godhead his
mortality. (pp. 705-06)

The supermind has the power of immortality, and in the poem, after Savitri ascends into the supramental consciousness in Book 11, she rescues Satyavan from death and brings him back to life. But after the descent of the Supermind into the earth atmosphere in 1956 there was no obviously visible change for humanity, though the Mother herself was aware of changes that were taking place within her own physical consciousness and in the world, which she described in some of her talks in the school and in many of her conversations with Satprem in *Mother's Agenda*. Sri Aurobindo had already written much earlier in his *Letters on Yoga*:

What we are doing, if and when we succeed, will be a beginning, not a completion. It is the foundation of a new consciousness on earth—a consciousness with infinite possibilities of manifestation. The eternal progression is in the manifestation and beyond there is no progression...

It is not intended to supramentalise humanity at large, but to establish the principle of the supramental consciousness in the earth-evolution. If that is done, all that is needed will be evolved by the supramental Power itself. It is not therefore important that the mission should be widespread. What is important is that the thing

should be done at all in however small a number; that is the only difficulty. (*LY I*, pp. 288-89)

And in another letter, he further elaborates:

The descent of the supramental means only that the Power will be there in the earth consciousness as a living force just as the thinking mental and the higher mental are already there. But an animal cannot take advantage of the presence of the thinking mental Power or an undeveloped man of the presence of the higher mental

The main work for which Sri Aurobindo and the Mother came was to bring down the supramental consciousness, the Truth Consciousness, into the evolving consciousness on earth. For this they had themselves to go down into the lowest, most obscure levels of consciousness to bring that supramental consciousness there.

Power—so too everybody will not be able to take advantage of the presence of the supramental Power. I have also often enough said that it will be at first for the few,—only there will be a growing influence of it on the earth life. (*LY I*, p. 290)

In 1957, the Mother explained that it would take time for the effects of the supramental descent to be plainly visible, and what sadhaks and humanity in general must do to prepare themselves to see and experience it. Although I will read just a small portion, it is still a bit long, but is worthwhile listening to because it is very important and powerful and will bring us to our conclusion.

How long it will take is difficult to foresee. It will depend a great deal on the goodwill and the receptivity of a certain number of people, for the individual always advances faster than the collectivity, and by its very nature, humanity is destined to manifest the Supermind before the rest of creation...

What is indispensable in every case is the ardent will for progress, the willing and joyful renunciation of all that hampers the advance: to throw far away from oneself all that prevents one from going forward, and to

set out into the unknown with the ardent faith that this is the truth of tomorrow, inevitable, which must necessarily come, which nothing, nobody, no

bad will, even that of Nature, can prevent from becoming a reality—perhaps of a not too distant future—a reality which is being worked out now and which those who know how to change, how not to be weighed down by old habits, will surely have the good fortune not only to see but to realise.

People sleep, they forget, they take life easy—they forget, forget all the time.... But if we could remember... that we are at an exceptional hour, a unique time, that we have this immense good fortune, this invaluable privilege of being present at the birth of a new world, we could easily get rid of everything that impedes and hinders our progress.



So, the most important thing, it seems, is to remember this fact; even when one doesn't have the tangible experience, to have the certainty of it and faith in it; to remember always, to recall it constantly, to go to sleep with this idea, to wake up with this perception; to do all that one does with this great truth as the background, as a constant support, this great truth that we are witnessing the birth of a new world.

We can participate in it, we can become this new world. And truly, when one has such a marvellous opportunity, one should be ready to give up everything for its sake. (24 July 1957, CWM, Vol. 9, pp. 159-60)

To conclude, out of their divine Love for humanity and the earth, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother descended in the lowest depths of the subconscious, battled with the hostile forces and suffered their attacks, in order to bring down the supramental consciousness into the earth consciousness and into the physical body. However, in order for us to individually experience that supramental consciousness and feel its effects, we must first become ready. One of the most important signs of that readiness, and one of the most effective means towards it, is a deep, intense, integral, and constant love for the Divine, for Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, and for their work in establishing a pure and outwardly visible manifestation of the Divine Consciousness, Love and Ananda on the earth, and in us.

The M.V. Nadkarni lectures are held annually at Savitri Bhavan in memory of Dr. Nadkarni, who was an exceptional scholar and speaker on *Savitri*. Videos are available at: <http://savitribhavan.org/the-talks/>

The Mother as Savitri

by Kailas Jhaveri

Talk given at the Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced Research for its "Celebration of Savitri," 17 February, 2002

The subject chosen for our talk—"The Mother as Savitri"—may be misleading. For obviously the Mother, as Aditi, the Divine Mother and Mother of all godheads, was more than Savitri, who is, as her name indicates, the daughter of the Sun, though incarnating the Will and Force of the Divine Mother. As such, the Mother can very well be seen in Savitri.

The legend of *Savitri* is taken from the Mahabharata and the outline of the story is kept intact in *Savitri* by Sri Aurobindo. So, one cannot say that *Savitri* is exactly the biography of the Mother. But there are indeed many similar characteristics and qualities since both are the incarnations of the Divine Mother.

And that is what we shall try to focus our attention on in this presentation in spite of certain differences in the external incidents of their lives. Here are some glimpses—by no way exhaustive—just glimpses.

Certainly the world as it is, is not the ideal place to live in and is full of chaos, pain and suffering, with terrorism rampant everywhere. Peace, in which one can freely live and progress, is hard to find. So, the world's aspiration for a saviour to be born is as intense.

A world's desire compelled her mortal birth.¹

Sri Aurobindo says in his book, *The Mother*: "She has stooped to descend here into the Darkness that she may lead it to the Light, into the False-



Kailas Jhaveri in her younger years.

hood and Error that she may convert it to the Truth, into this Death that she may turn it to godlike Life, into this world-pain and its obstinate sorrow and suffering that she may end it in the transforming ecstasy of her sublime Ananda."²

Savitri too comes as an incarnation of the Divine Mother in answer to the cry of Aswapati—the forerunner of humanity's aspiration:

How long shall our spirits battle
with the Night
And bear defeat and the brute
yoke of Death?³

O Wisdom-splendour, Mother of
the universe,
Creatrix, the Eternal's artist Bride,
Linger not long with thy trans-
muting hand
Pressed vainly on one golden bar
of Time,
As if Time dare not open its heart
to God.

...
Incarnate the white passion of thy
force,
Mission to earth some living
form of thee,



One moment fill with thy eternity,
Let thy infinity in one body live,
All-Knowledge wrap one mind in
seas of light,
All-Love throb single in one hu-
man heart.
...
Let a great Word be spoken from
the heights
And one great act unlock the
doors of Fate. ⁴

We can very well see in this a
prayer of the earth, tired of its end-
lessly fruitless rounds of birth and
death, for the incarnation of the Di-
vine Mother to save and fulfill the hu-
man race. It is a cry for the Eternal and
the True to incarnate upon earth.

The Mother was as beautiful in
form and spirit as Savitri. Sri Auro-
bindo's description of Savitri equally
applies to the Mother. The whole of
the second canto of the first Book of
Savitri describes so vividly the Moth-
er. We will take a few lines only.

Near to earth's wideness, intimate
with heaven,
Exalted and swift her young
large-visioned spirit
Voyaging through worlds of
splendour and of calm
Overflowed the ways of Thought to
unborn things.
Ardent was her self-poised un-
stumbling will;
Her mind, a sea of white sincerity,
Passionate in flow, had not one
turbid wave.
...
A heart of silence in the hands
of joy
...
Immortal rhythms swayed in her
time-born steps;
Her look, her smile awoke celes-
tial sense
...

In a haven of safety and splendid
soft repose
One could drink life back in
streams of honey-fire.
...
Love in her was wider than the
universe,
The whole world could take ref-
uge in her single heart. ⁵

The strength, the silence of the
gods were hers.
...
Her walk kept still the measure of
the gods. ⁶

A conscious frame was here, a
self-born Force. ⁷

In her the superhuman cast its
seed.
Inapt to fold its mighty wings of
dream
Her spirit refused to hug the
common soil,
...
Accustomed to the eternal and
the true,
Her being conscious of its divine
founts
Asked not from mortal frailty
pain's relief,
Patched not with failure, bargain
or compromise.
A work she had to do, a word to
speak: ⁸

A flaming warrior from the eter-
nal peaks
Empowered to force the door
denied and closed
Smote from Death's visage its
dumb absolute
And burst the bounds of con-
sciousness and Time. ⁹

Well, everyone who has seen the
Mother in action knows that she never
compromised her will for anything.

She was aware of some higher Force
above always guiding her steps even
at the age of five. At the age of thirteen
she had a vision of people coming to
her for solace and guidance. She saw
various teachers guiding her spiritu-
al journey. Before coming to Pondi-
cherry, she took training in occultism,
and gained control over the universal
forces of Nature.

But when she saw Sri Aurobin-
do, she recognised him as one of the
teachers who guided Her. She pros-
trated herself before him, surrender-
ing all that she had achieved, all that
she was. Sri Aurobindo said about her
that he had never known so complete
a surrender to be possible. He said that
with the Mother's help he covered ten
years of sadhana in one year. ¹⁰

Like Savitri, before she met Sri
Aurobindo "who was made with her,
like God and Nature one," the Mother
could not find a collaborator equal to
her in stature, in consciousness and
in the goal to achieve, though she too
stooped down to lift man to her divine
heights. Before that...

No equal heart came close to join
her heart,
No transient earthly love assailed
her calm,
No hero passion had the strength
to seize;
No eyes demanded her replying
eyes. ¹¹

She was:

Too vast for souls not born to
mate with heaven.
...
Her heart was a crowded temple
of delight. ¹²

In Sri Aurobindo she too recog-
nised her destined partner for the
Work to be done:



...that thou art he my spirit has
sought
Amidst earth's thronging visages
and forms
Across the golden spaces of my
life. ¹³

I know that thou and only thou
art he. ¹⁴

She wrote on 30 March 1914, in
Her diary of Prayers and Meditations,
on the day after meeting Sri Aurobindo:

It matters little that there are
thousands of beings plunged in
the densest ignorance, He whom
we saw yesterday is on earth; his
presence is
enough to
prove that
a day will
come when
darkness
shall be
transformed
into light,
and Thy reign shall be indeed
established upon earth.

O Lord, Divine Builder of this
marvel, my heart overflows with
joy and gratitude when I think of
it, and my hope is boundless.
My adoration is beyond all words
and my reverence is silent. ¹⁵

She later wrote about a similar
meeting seen in a vision as early as
1906-07:

In silence, they exchanged the
depths of their souls and thoughts.

In silence, they spoke of the
greatness of the work to be done,
and of the splendour of the vic-
tory to come,

Of which the dazzling radi-
ance about him seemed a glori-
ous pledge. ¹⁶

It was a moment that held Eter-
nity in its clasp.
A moment which all murmurs
shall recall
And every bird remember in its
cry. ¹⁷

After launching the *Arya*, which
serially published all the major works
of Sri Aurobindo, she left Pondicher-
ry due to the First World War and
returned to France. But on 24 April
1920, she returned to Pondicherry
after spending four years in Japan.
Then, after six years of her sadhana
with Sri Aurobindo, on 24 November
1926, on the Siddhi Day, as it became
known, she was given the charge of

*In Savitri we are given a beautiful insight into the
Mother's vast understanding of human nature, her patience
with its slow growth, her compassion for its weakness and
short-comings, her loving care and concern to uplift and
her tireless self-giving in order 'to plant a seed divine.'*

the material and spiritual needs of the
members who had gathered around
Sri Aurobindo.

Nothing was alien or inanimate,
Nothing without its meaning or
its call.
For with greater Nature she was
one. ¹⁸

The Mother saw life in inanimate
objects, consciousness secretly work-
ing behind what seems unconscious.
She said:

Nature is not unconscious. But
she has an appearance of uncon-
sciousness... Even in the mineral
kingdom there are phenomena
which reveal a hidden conscious-
ness, like certain crystals, for
instance. If you see with what

precision, what exactitude and
harmony they are formed, if you
are in the least open, you are
bound to feel that behind there is
a consciousness at work, that this
cannot be a result of unconscious
chance.

...
And in the movements of the sea,
the movements of the air, of the
wind, one cannot help feeling that
behind there is a consciousness...
at work... Only the most superfi-
cial appearance is inconscient. ¹⁹

She communed with the secret
life of plants and found their natural
aspiration towards Light more intense
than that of hu-
man beings.

To hear the
unheard and
glimpse the
invisible. ²⁰

She said:

The movement of love is not lim-
ited to human beings... Look at
the flowers and trees. When the
sun sets and all becomes silent,
sit down for a moment and put
yourself into communion with
Nature: you will find rising from
the earth, from below the roots of
the trees and mounting upward
and coursing through their fibres
up to the highest outstretching
branches, the aspiration of an
intense love and longing a long-
ing for something that brings
light and gives happiness, for the
light that is gone and they wish
to have back again. There is a
yearning so pure and intense that
if you can feel the movement in
the trees, your own being too will
go up in an ardent prayer for the



peace and light and love that are unmanifested here.²¹

Light is, of course, the material symbol of the Divine.²² She used flowers as a medium of communion on the path of Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga.

And who could be alien to the one who is united with all? People from all over the world flocked to her to receive her solace, her light, her love and her help. Whatever language they spoke, she understood them and filled them with her Light and Love.

She was:

A mind of Light, a life of rhythmic force,
A body instinct with hidden divinity
Prepared an image of the coming god;²³

So the Ashram community was a spontaneous creation that grew around the Mother under her direct guidance. In Savitri we are given a beautiful insight into the Mother's vast understanding of human nature, her patience with its slow growth, her compassion for its weakness and shortcomings, her loving care and concern to uplift and her tireless self-giving in order 'to plant a seed divine.'

She was:

A scout of victory in a vigil tower,
...
A silent warrior paced in her city of strength
Inviolat, guarding Truth's diamond throne.²⁴

It was the Mother's battle with the universal adverse forces to win God's victory for a divine life on earth. The Mother worked with each disciple individually as well as with his role in the whole. She was always available,

ever ready with her unfailing help so as to instill a ray of light, to transform weaknesses and shortcomings into opportunities for a truer life.

One can feel in the following lines, describing Savitri's fate when Satyavan was to die, the Mother's greatness when, after the passing of Sri Aurobindo, she was left alone with the work of the Ashram, the school and above all the world's destiny.

As a star, uncompanied, moves in heaven
Unastonished by the immensities of space,
Travelling infinity by its own light,
The great are strongest when they stand alone.²⁵

A day may come when she must stand unhelped
On a dangerous brink of the world's doom and hers,
Carrying the world's future on her lonely breast,
Carrying the human hope in a heart left sole
To conquer or fail on a last desperate verge.
Alone with death and close to extinction's edge,
Her single greatness in that last dire scene,
She must cross alone a perilous bridge in Time
And reach an apex of world's destiny
Where all is won or all is lost for man.

...
For this the silent Force came missioned down.
In her the conscious Will took human shape:
She only can save herself and save the world.²⁶
Even though all falters and fails and sees an end

And the heart fails and only are death and night,
God-given her strength can battle against doom²⁷

Like Savitri, She did not accept the supremacy of death or Fate. But in the case of Sri Aurobindo, he had left his body consciously. All that he had realised came to the Mother.

The Mother fought her own battle with death in 1962 when her body had become extremely feeble and she could not even lift her finger to sign the cheques. I was told by Doctor Sanjal that she had informed him and her attendants also that even if her heart stopped and the pulse could not be felt, even if there was all the appearance of having left her body, not to declare her to be dead. And all these signs of physical death were there, and medically one could say that she was no more. She did come back to life and slowly recovered her normal strength to continue the work.

Not to submit and suffer was she born,
To lead, to deliver was her glorious part.²⁸

After Sri Aurobindo's passing, she carried on the work of the Ashram and directed the Centre of Education with her calm strength.

Regarding the aim of education, she said:

It is a question of pulling all those who are capable to do so out of the general human routine of thought, feeling and action; it is to give all opportunities to those who are here to cast off from them the slavery to the human way of thinking and doing; it is to teach all those who want to listen that there is another and truer



way of living, that Sri Aurobindo has taught us how to live and become a true being — and that the aim of education here is to prepare the children and make them fit for that life.²⁹

We are here to open the way of the Future to children who belong to the Future.³⁰

And for her, the Future meant the Supramental World.

It is not brilliant students that we want, but living souls.³¹

In education it was not the information gained from the books, but the training of the faculties of knowledge that she aimed at. She inspired the students to gain knowledge from within by identity with the object of knowledge.

Earth is the chosen place of mightiest souls;
Earth is the heroic spirit's battlefield,
The Forge where the Arch-mason shapes his works.
Thy servitudes on earth are greater, King
Than all the glorious liberties of heaven.³²

On 6 January 1952, she gave a prayer for the students of the Centre of Education:

Make of us the hero warriors we aspire to become. May we fight successfully the great battle of the future that is to be born, against the past that seeks to endure; so that the new things may manifest

and we be ready to receive them.³

The Mother Herself fearlessly goes down to the very bottom of the abyss as described in Her message of 1959:

At the very bottom of the Inconscience, most hard and rigid and narrow and stifling I struck upon an almighty spring that cast me up forthwith into a formless limitless vast vibrating with the seeds of a new world.³⁴

There is an interesting letter from Barin, the younger brother of Sri Aurobindo, 'who felt he could not remain caged under the Ashram's vigorous discipline,' and left the Ashram. He writes:

She broke all known bounds limiting the growth of the soul. In every field of life's activity, she gave a new vision based on the principle of Truth, Love, Harmony and Joy.

Today is the Mother's birthday. On this blessed day, this is a tribute at her feet from her erring child. Whatever my deviations into wrong paths, however grave my errors, my labyrinthine movements will at length lead me into the Temple of the Mother's Consciousness, for, where else except in the Mother's lap can her son find the end of his journey?³⁵

The Mother always took her station on the highest level of consciousness, whence one could see the place of each idea, each feeling and movement, and guided each being infallibly. However contradictory or opposite were the ideas, she showed how they could be reconciled in the whole without any error.

Many high gods dwelt in one

beautiful home;
Yet was her nature's orb a perfect whole,
Harmonious like a chant with many tones,
Immense and various like a universe.³⁶

Once she said: "The solution is to go deep in oneself, and find the place where all the differences combine to constitute the essential and eternal unity."³⁷

She was vast and universal. Everyone and everything found a special place in her heart:

Inspiring life to greatness and break its bounds.³⁸

In physical education, for example, she inspired women to discard their inhibi-

tions and wear shirts and shorts and compete with men in every activity of physical education.

On the subject of relationship between man and woman she wrote: '... of course the whole idea of marriage is amusing because I consider the thing childish.' If people loved each other, they would naturally stay together. But if they did not, why bind them and create complications? And in a letter to X for her marriage, she wrote: To be one in aspiration and ascension, to advance with the same steps on the spiritual path: this is the secret of a durable union.³⁹

A bliss lived in her heart too large for heaven;
Light too intense for thought and love too boundless⁴⁰
A friend and yet too great wholly to know,
...



One close to their bosoms, yet
divine and far. ⁴¹

She said:

There are people who love adventure. It is these I call, and I tell them this: "I invite you to the great adventure."

It is not a question of repeating spiritually what others have done before us, for our adventure begins beyond that. It is a question of a new creation, entirely new, with all the unforeseen events, the risks, the hazards it entails—a real adventure, whose goal is certain victory, but the road to which is unknown and must be traced out step by step in the unexplored. Something that has never been in this present universe and that will never be in the same way. ⁴²

She broke all known bounds limiting the growth of the soul. In every field of life's activity, she gave a new vision based on the principle of Truth, Love, Harmony and Joy.

With the indomitable courage of her conscious will, she carried out not only the work she had taken charge of, but plunged in the most difficult task to build an international township, Auroville. One is amazed and stands in awe when one reads the brief charter of Auroville, giving its vision and work, succinctly but powerfully. With a generous gesture she opened the doors to all men of goodwill and sincerity in the world who aspired to join in her experiment of the consciousness of Truth, on condition that they would be ... the willing servitors of the Divine Consciousness. ⁴³

Even here, she went beyond the bounds of social, moral, religious, political and national conventions. She

said: "Earth needs a place where human beings, freed from all slavery to the past, can devote themselves wholly to the discovery and practice of the Divine consciousness seeking to manifest." ⁴⁴

And taught the soul to soar beyond things known. ⁴⁵

Well, the reign of Truth was her main concern. On 29 February 1956, the descent of the Supramental Light and Force and Consciousness upon earth took place. It is also known as the Truth-Consciousness. This is what she said about the meditation in the Playground:

This evening, the Divine Presence, concrete and material was there present amongst you. I had a form of living gold, bigger than the universe, and I was facing a huge and massive golden door which separated the world from the Divine.

As I looked at the door, I knew and willed, in a single movement of consciousness that "the time has come," and lifting with both hands a mighty golden hammer I struck one blow, one single blow on the door and the door was shattered to pieces.

Then the supramental Light and Force and Consciousness rushed down upon earth in an uninterrupted flow. ⁴⁶

The constant refrain of her advice was: "Cling to Truth," which She invoked once again in a message: "Supreme Lord, Eternal Truth, Let us obey Thee alone, and live according to Truth." ⁴⁷

Marvellous and indefatigable was her attempt to establish the reign of Truth on earth.

To bring God down to the world
on earth...
To change the earthly life to life
divine. ⁴⁸

Then, there is a long and most beautiful passage towards the end when Savitri has won over Death and his body is eaten by the light of Truth. A voice unheard by ears cries:

Choose, spirit, thy supreme
choice not given again... ⁴⁹

Savitri asks first for Peace:

"Thy peace, O Lord, a boon
within to keep
Amid the roar and ruin of wild
Time
For the magnificent soul of man
on earth.
Thy calm, O Lord, that bears thy
hands of joy."

Then she asks for unity:

"Thy oneness, Lord, in many approaching hearts,
My sweet infinity of thy numberless souls."

After that she implores for force:

"Thy energy, Lord, to seize on
woman and man,
To take all creatures in their grief
And gather them into a mother's
arms."

Finally she beseeches the Lord to give her love:

"Thy embrace which rends the
living knot of pain,
Thy joy, O Lord, in which all
creatures breathe,
Thy magic flowing waters of deep
love,



Thy sweetness give to me for
earth and men.”⁵⁰

Then, a still blissful cry arises
from the Infinite, blessing Savitri and
describing her future work which we
can see in the Mother’s life. Let us take
only a few lines:

O beautiful body of the incarnate
Word,⁵¹
O Sun-Word, thou shalt raise the
earth-soul to Light
And bring down God into the
lives of men;⁵²

Thou shalt be hunted through the
world by love,⁵³

I will possess
in thee
my uni-
verse,
The universe
find all
I am in
thee.

Thou shalt bear all things that all
things may change,
Thou shalt fill all with my splen-
dour and my bliss,

...

A swimmer lost between two
leaping seas
By my outer pains and inner
sweetnesses
Finding my joy in my opposite
mysteries
Thou shalt respond to me from
every nerve.

...

Thy heart shall drive thee on the
wheel of works,
Thy mind shall urge thee through
the flames of thought,
To meet me in the abyss and on
the heights,
To feel me in the tempest and the
calm,

And love me in the noble and the
vile, ...

Even my disasters’ clutch shall be
to thee

The ordeal of my rapture’s con-
trary shape: ...

My creatures shall demand me
from thy heart.

Thou shalt not shrink from any
brother soul.

Thou shalt be attracted helplessly
to all.

...

For ever love, O beautiful slave of
God!

O lasso of my rapture’s widening
noose,

Become my cord of universal love.
...

vine omniscient Will and omnipotent
Knowledge. It is a world of Truth.

From there she descends into our
world of Ignorance to lead it to the
Light of Truth and her sublime Anan-
da. She works through the four aspects
of her personalities: Maheshwari, Ma-
hakali, Mahalakshmi and Mahasar-
aswati. Maheshwari represents her
aspect of Knowledge, opening us to
“the supramental infinities.” Mahaka-
li represents “the victorious force of
the Divine.” Mahalakshmi represents
“the miracle of eternal beauty, an un-
seizable secret of divine harmonies,”
leading us to “an entrancing Ananda.”
Mahasaraswati is the Mother’s patient
and laborious “Power of Work and
spirit of perfection and order.”⁵⁶

*The Mother embodied in herself all these powers of
Knowledge, Strength, Beauty and Harmony and Perfec-
tion. And this is beautifully described by Sri Aurobindo in
Book III, Canto Two: “The Adoration of the Divine Mother.”*

The Moth-
er embodied
in herself all
these powers
of Knowledge,
Strength, Beau-
ty, Harmony
and Perfection.

O Word, cry out the immortal
litany:
Built is the golden tower, the
flame-child born.⁵⁴

And this is beautifully described by Sri
Aurobindo in Book III, Canto Two:
“The Adoration of the Divine Mother”:

She is the golden bridge, the won-
derful fire.

The luminous heart of the Un-
known is she,

A power of silence in the depths
of God;

She is the Force, the inevitable
Word,

The magnet of our difficult
ascent,

The Sun from which we kindle all
our suns,

The Light that leans from the
unrealised Vasts,

The joy that beckons from the
impossible,

The Might of all that never yet
came down.

As Sri Aurobindo has explained
in his book *The Mother*, the Mother
was the Divine Mother, Aditi, who
combined in herself the triple sta-
tus: the Transcendent, the Universal
and the Individual. He writes: “The
Mother is the consciousness and force
of the Supreme and far above all she
creates.... The Supreme is manifest
in her for ever.... All is her play with
the Supreme.”⁵⁵ She is also the univer-
sal Mother who creates and supports
what is transmitted to her from the
Transcendent consciousness. Nature
or Prakriti is her most outward execu-
tive aspect. Then, as the Supramen-
tal Mahashakti, she is a Power of di-



All Nature dumbly calls to her
alone
To heal with her feet the aching
throb of life
And break the seals on the dumb
soul of man
And kindle her fire in the closed
heart of things.
All here shall be one day her
sweetness' home,
All contraries prepare her har-
mony;
Towards her our knowledge
climbs, our passion gropes;
In her miraculous rapture we
shall dwell,
Her clasp shall turn to ecstasy our
pain.
Our self shall be one self with all
through her.
In her confirmed because trans-
formed in her,
Our life shall find in its fulfilled
response
Above, the boundless hushed
beatitudes,
Below, the wonder of the embrace
divine.⁵⁷

The Mother as the Divine Mother showed by her example the work of the transformation of the physical body by her experiments evoking the consciousness of the cells of her own body. There were moments when the cells of Her body themselves revealed the conscious union with the Divine, expressing peace, lightness, plasticity, light and bliss.

As Sri Aurobindo says:

The Power that mediates between the sanction and the call is the presence and power of the Divine Mother. The Mother's power and not any human endeavour and tapasya can alone rend the lid and tear the covering and shape the vessel and bring down into this

world of obscurity and falsehood and death and suffering, Truth and Light and Life divine and the immortal's Ananda.⁵⁸

Just as Savitri transcends the manifestation of her triple soul-forces—Love, Force and Light—and comes to fulfill her promise of the manifestation of a greater being, the Mother too transcends all that Savitri represents and comes down as the embodiment of the Consciousness-Force of the Supreme. Thus the Mother is the individual expression of Paraprakriti, the Divine Shakti—Mahashakti—incarnated upon earth in a human body, but still united with the universal consciousness, acting in the world and yet one with the Transcendent consciousness above Time and Space: Aditi.

I shall end this talk with the Mother's message:

This wonderful world of delight waiting at our gates for our call, to come down upon earth.⁵⁹

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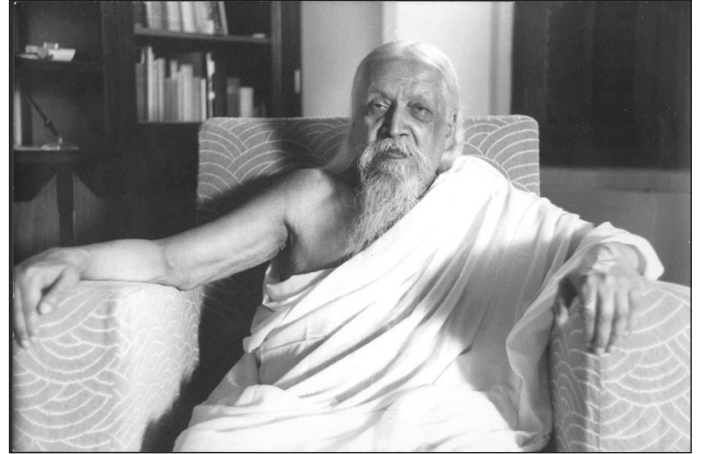
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Mind of Light

by Sri Aurobindo

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

For throughout the story of evolution there are two complementary aspects which constitute its action and are necessary to its totality; there is hidden in the involution of Nature the secret power and principle of being which lies



concealed under the veil cast on it by material Nature and there is carried in that Nature itself the inevitable force of the principle compelling the process of emergence of its inherent powers and characters, the essential features which constitute its reality. As the evolutionary principle emerges, there are also two constant features of the process of the emergence: there are the gradations by which it climbs out of the involution and manifests more and more of its power, its possibilities, the force of the Godhead within it, and there is a constant manifestation of all types and forms of its being which are the visible, indicative and efficient embodiments of its essential nature. There appear in the evolutionary process organised forms and activities of Matter, the types of life and the living beings, the types of mind and the thinking beings, the luminosities and greatnesses of the spiritual principle and the spiritual beings whose nature, character, personality, mark the stages of the ascent towards the highest heights of the evolution and the ultimate largest manifestation of what it is in itself and must become by the force of time and the all-revealing Spirit. This is the real sense and drive of what we see as evolution: the multiplication and variation of forms is only the means of its process. Each gradation contains the possibility and the certainty of the grades beyond it: the emergence of more and more developed forms and powers points to more perfected forms and greater powers beyond them, and each emergence of consciousness and the conscious beings proper to it enables the rise to a greater consciousness beyond and the greater order of beings up to the ultimate god-heads of which Nature is striving and is destined to show herself capable. Matter developed its organised forms until it became capable of embodying living organisms; then life rose from the subconsciousness of the plant into conscious animal formations and through them to the thinking life of man. Mind founded in life developed intellect, developed



its types of knowledge and ignorance, truth and error till it reached the spiritual perception and illumination and now can see as in a glass dimly the possibility of supermind and a truth-conscious existence. In this inevitable ascent the mind of Light is a gradation, an inevitable stage. As an evolving principle it will mark a stage in the human ascent and evolve a new type of human being; this development must carry in it an ascending gradation of its own powers and types of an ascending humanity which will embody more and more the turn towards spirituality, capacity for Light, a climb towards a divinised manhood and the divine life.

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

The Truth-consciousness is not only a power of knowledge; it is a being of consciousness and knowledge, a luminous many-sided dynamis and play of the omniscient Spirit; in it there can be a spiritual feeling, a spiritual sensation, a spiritual essentiality of substance that knows and reveals, that acts and manifests in an omniscience which is one with omnipotence. In Mind this Truth-consciousness and these workings of the Truth-consciousness can be there and even though it limits itself in Mind and has a subordinate or an indirect working, its action can be essentially the same. There can even be a hidden immediacy which hints at the presence of something absolute and is evidence of the same omnipotence and omniscience. In the Mind of Light when it becomes full-orbed this character of the Truth reveals itself, though in a garb that is transparent even when it seems to cover: for this too is a truth-consciousness.... (CWSA, Vol. 13, pp. 584-89)

Descent of the Superman Consciousness

by the Mother

We have now reached a certitude since there is already a beginning of realisation. We have the proof that in certain conditions the ordinary state of humanity can be exceeded and a new state of consciousness worked out which enables at least a conscious relation between mental and supramental man.

It can be asserted with certainty that there will be an intermediate specimen between the mental and the supramental being, a kind of superman who will still have the qualities and in part the nature of man, that is, who will still belong in his most external form to the human being with its animal origin, but will transform his consciousness sufficiently to belong in his realisation and activity to a new race, a race of supermen.

This species may be considered a transitional species, for one can foresee that it will discover the means of producing new beings without going through the old animal method, and these beings—who will have a truly spiritual birth—will constitute the elements of the new race, the supramental race.

So we could call supermen those who, in their origin, still belong to the old method of generation but in their achievement are in conscious and active contact with the new world of supramental realisation.

It seems—it is even certain—that the very substance which will constitute this intermediate world that is already being built up, is richer, more powerful, more luminous, more resistant, with certain subtler, more penetrating new qualities, and a kind of innate capacity of universality, as if its degree of subtlety and refinement allowed the perception of vibrations in a much wider, if not altogether total way, and it removes the sensation of division one has with the old substance, the ordinary mental substance. There is a subtlety of vibration which makes global, universal perception a spontaneous and natural thing.

The sense of division, of separation, disappears quite naturally and spontaneously with that substance. And that substance is at present almost universally diffused in the earth atmosphere. It is perceptible in the waking state, simply with a little concentration and a kind of absorption of consciousness, if this is retracted, withdrawn from the ordinary externalisation which seems more and more artificial and false. This externalisation, this perception which



formerly was natural, now seems false, unreal and completely artificial; it does not at all answer to things as they are, it belongs to a movement which does not correspond to anything really true.

This new perception is asserting itself more and more, becoming more and more natural, and it is even sometimes difficult to recapture the old way of being, as though it were vanishing into a misty past—something which is on the point of ceasing to exist.

One may conclude from this that the moment a body, which was of course formed by the old animal method, is capable of living this consciousness naturally and spontaneously, without effort, without going out of itself, it proves that this is not one single exceptional case but simply the forerunner of a realisation which, even if it is not altogether general, can at least be shared by a certain number of individuals who, besides, as soon as they share it, will lose the perception of being separate individuals and become a living collectivity. (*CWM, Vol. 9, Questions and Answers, 1957-1958, 16 April 1958, pp. 313-315*)

On the first [1 January 1969], something truly strange happened.... And I was not the only one to feel it, some others also have felt it. It was just after midnight, but I felt it at two o'clock and the others at four o'clock in the morning. It was... last time I spoke to you a few words about it, but what is surprising is that it had absolutely no correspondence at all to anything I was expecting (I was expecting nothing), to other things which I had felt. It was something very material, I mean it was very external—very external—and it was luminous, with a golden light. It was very strong, very powerful; but even so, its character was a smiling benevolence, a peaceful delight and a kind of opening out into delight and light. And it was like a “*Bonne ann'ee*”, like a greeting. It took me by surprise. It lasted, for at least three hours I felt it. Afterwards I was no longer busy with it, I do not know what happened. But I told you a word or two about it and I spoke of it also to two or three persons: they all had felt it.

That is to say, it was very material. They all had felt it, like this, a kind of joy, but a joy friendly, powerful and... oh! very, very gentle, very smiling, very benevolent.... I do not know what it is. I do not know what it is, but it is a kind of benevolence, therefore it was something very close to the human. And it was so concrete, so concrete! as though it had a savour, so concrete it was. Afterwards I did not occupy myself with it any more, except that I spoke to two or three persons about it: all had felt it. Now, I do not know if it is mixed or if... It has not departed; one does not feel as though the thing came in order to go back.



...[M]y own impression was that of an immense personality—immense, that is to say, for it the earth was small, small like this (gesture, as though holding a small ball in her palm), like a ball—an immense personality, very, very benevolent, which came for... (Mother seems to lift this ball gently from the hollow of her hands). It gave the impression of a personal divinity (and yet it was... I do not know) who comes to help, and so strong, so strong and at the same time so gentle, so all-embracing...

It was luminous, smiling, and so benevolent through powerfulness; that is to say, generally in the human being benevolence is something a little weak, in this sense that it does not like battle, it does not like fight; but this is nothing of the kind! A benevolence that imposes itself (Mother brings her fists down upon the arms of her chair).

It has interested me because it is altogether new. And so concrete! Concrete like this (Mother touches the arms of her chair), like what the physical consciousness usually considers as “others”, concrete like that. That is to say, it did not pass through an inner being, through the psychic being, it came directly upon the body...

Is it something that will suffuse the bodies that are ready?

Yes, I believe so, yes. I have the feeling that it is the formation which is going to enter, going to express itself—to enter and express itself—in the bodies... that will be the bodies of the supramental.

Or perhaps... perhaps the superman, I do not know.

The intermediary between the two. Perhaps the superman: it was very human, but a human in divine proportions, I must say.

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

Yes, perhaps the superman. (*CWM Vol. 11, Notes on the Way, 4 January 1969, pp. 149-52*)



The poetry room

From “The supreme consummation”

O Sun-Word, thou shalt raise the earth-soul to Light
And bring down God into the lives of men;
Earth shall be my work-chamber and my house,
My garden of life to plant a seed divine.
When all thy work in human time is done
The mind of earth shall be a home of light,
The life of earth a tree growing towards heaven,
The body of earth a tabernacle of God.
Awakened from the mortal's ignorance
Men shall be lit with the Eternal's ray
And the glory of my sun-lift in their thoughts
And feel in their hearts the sweetness of my love
And in their acts my Power's miraculous drive.
My will shall be the meaning of their days;
Living for me, by me, in me they shall live.
In the heart of my creation's mystery
I will enact the drama of thy soul,
Inscribe the long romance of Thee and Me.
I will pursue thee across the centuries;
Thou shalt be hunted through the world by love,
Naked of ignorance' protecting veil
And without covert from my radiant gods.
No shape shall screen thee from my divine desire,
Nowhere shalt thou escape my living eyes.
In the nudity of thy discovered self,
In a bare identity with all that is,
Disrobed of thy covering of humanity,
Divested of the dense veil of human thought,
Made one with every mind and body and heart,
Made one with all Nature and with Self and God,
Summing in thy single soul my mystic world
I will possess in thee my universe,
The universe find all I am in thee.
Thou shalt bear all things that all things may change,
Thou shalt fill all with my splendour and my bliss,
Thou shalt meet all with thy transmuting soul.

—Sri Aurobindo
(From *Savitri*, p. 699)

From “Religious musings”

Lovely was the death
Of Him whose life was Love ! Holy with power
He on the thought-benighted Sceptic beamed
Manifest Godhead, melting into day
What floating mists of dark idolatry
Broke and misshaped the omnipresent Sire :
And first by Fear uncharmed the drowséd Soul
Till of its nobler nature it 'gan feel
Dim recollections; and thence soared to Hope.
Strong to believe whate'er of mystic good
The Eternal dooms for His immortal sons.
From Hope and firmer Faith to perfect Love
Attracted and absorbed : and centered there
God only to behold, and know, and feel,
Till by exclusive consciousness of God
All self-annihilated it shall make
God its Identity: God all in all!
We and our Father one!

And blest are they,
Who in this fleshly World, the elect of Heaven,
Their strong eye darting through the deeds of me
Adore with steadfast unassuming gaze
Him Nature's essence, mind, and energy!
And gazing, trembling, patiently ascend
Treading beneath their feet all visible things
As steps, that upward to their Father's throne
Lead gradual—else nor glorified nor loved.
They nor contempt embosom nor revenge :
For they dare know of what may seem deform
The Supreme Fair sole operant : in whose sight
All things are pure, his strong controlling love
Alike from all educating perfect good.
Their's too celestial courage, inly armed—
Dwarfing Earth's giant brood, what time they muse
On their great Father, great beyond compare!
And marching onwards view high o'er their heads
His waving banners of Omnipotence.

—Samuel Coleridge

From “The buried life”

How frivolous a baby man would be—
By what distractions he would be possess'd,
How he would pour himself in every strife,
And well-nigh change his own identity—



That it might keep from his capricious play
His genuine self, and force him to obey
Even in his own despite his being's law,
Bade through the deep recesses of our breast
The unregarded river of our life
Pursue with indiscernible flow its way;
And that we should not see
The buried stream, and seem to be
Eddying at large in blind uncertainty,
Though driving on with it eternally.

But often, in the world's most crowded streets,
But often, in the din of strife,
There rises an unspeakable desire
After the knowledge of our buried life;
A thirst to spend our fire and restless force
In tracking out our true, original course;
A longing to inquire
Into the mystery of this heart which beats
So wild, so deep in us—to know
Whence our lives come and where they go.
And many a man in his own breast then delves,
But deep enough, alas! none ever mines.
And we have been on many thousand lines,
And we have shown, on each, spirit and power;
But hardly have we, for one little hour,
Been on our own line, have we been ourselves—
Hardly had skill to utter one of all
The nameless feelings that course through our breast,
But they course on for ever unexpress'd.
And long we try in vain to speak and act
Our hidden self, and what we say and do
Is eloquent, is well—but 't is not true!
And then we will no more be rack'd
With inward striving, and demand
Of all the thousand nothings of the hour
Their stupefying power;
Ah yes, and they benumb us at our call!
Yet still, from time to time, vague and forlorn,
From the soul's subterranean depth upborne
As from an infinitely distant land,
Come airs, and floating echoes, and convey
A melancholy into all our day.
Only—but this is rare—
When a beloved hand is laid in ours,
When, jaded with the rush and glare
Of the interminable hours,
Our eyes can in another's eyes read clear,
When our world-deafen'd ear

Is by the tones of a loved voice caress'd—
A bolt is shot back somewhere in our breast,
And a lost pulse of feeling stirs again.
The eye sinks inward, and the heart lies plain,
And what we mean, we say, and what we would, we know.
A man becomes aware of his life's flow,
And hears its winding murmur; and he sees
The meadows where it glides, the sun, the breeze.

And there arrives a lull in the hot race
Wherein he doth for ever chase
That flying and elusive shadow, rest.
An air of coolness plays upon his face,
And an unwonted calm pervades his breast.
And then he thinks he knows
The hills where his life rose,
And the sea where it goes.

—Matthew Arnold

A deep desire¹

Thy service is my life-work, Lord Divine!
My births and deaths to Thee are dedicated;
Let nothing be in me I may call mine,
By being wholly to Thy light translated.

My busy dreaming days in Thee must end,
My waking nights be bright with Thy sun-smile,
My rosy morns in song Thy name befriend,
And eves in peace profound my toils beguile.

Let me be up each moment of my life,
My strength fulfilling but Thy will that knows;
I'll take as play all sorrow and all strife,
And meet Thy glance of grace in the murk of woes.

What difficulties dare beset Thy child?
Obstacles play for me a friendly part;
They reinforce a nature weak and wild,
Build up a heaven-conquering hero's heart.

Relentless fervour for Thy work shall drive
My energies with never a thought of rest;
My soul in self-effacement's climate thrive,
While all that happens shall be for my best.

Thy name upon my lips shall murmur on,
Thy presence in my heart my movements guide



And carry me from dawn to brighter dawn
Triumphantly to the sun-world's vision wide.

By Thee I live, in Thee I dwell for ever,
In tune with Thee forgetting me and mine;
Time with his sword our union cannot sever.
My soul of love shall be Thy sacred shrine.

—Punjalal

Myth of Formlessness and Form: A fragment

Before I entered Time,
I was mostly Form-less.
Held close and dear was one Form only:
crystalline Salt—sign and symbol
of a potentiality incorruptibly shared.
When I longed to realize what was hidden in this sign,
and knew I was up for an adventure,
an experiment, an experience of new relation,
I agreed to enter into Time.
I accepted a reversal of my condition.
I would be mostly Form
and Formlessness would be the salt.

I thought going through the reversal
would be a simple task,
something like water off a duck's back.
Didn't Formlessness and Form
go well and easily together?
I even imagined that Formlessness
would bring out something in Form
as Symbolic Form had done with Formlessness.

But when an angel praised my audacity and courage
in agreeing to the reversal,
and another said: *You will need more than a pinch of those,*
I suspected there was much I didn't and couldn't know.
Then a whole cohort of angels cried:
So much ignorance and forgetting will be involved,
made worse because they're great, but not entire.
From a little ember of memory infernally grows
confusion's painful fire,
and the seed of doubt and fear was sown in me.

Still, I could never have comprehended what awaited me
when I plunged into Form—until I did.
I opened my eyes in the midnight blue
of a wild, lonely and fathomless sea.

I had to learn to swim up and up and out
relying on growing arms and legs and a separate will to
move,
learning what these were and how to work with them as I
went
eventually feeling a new need to breathe.

Finally breaking through a surface, small
and lifting up my head
I saw and felt a star —
a golden, shining star.
It did not make anything clear,
and the air could not bear me up.
Yet, I was lifted up
by hands larger, though in Form like mine.
Two new, smaller stars
appeared above me—
I know them now as eyes.
They too explained nothing.
But there was a power in those eyes and hands
and a warm breast,
which soothed my pain,
the pain of Form as solitary confinement
as a home that creates strangers.
Under those twin stars,
under those two eyes,
quiet grew within.
Under those twin stars,
under those two eyes
remembrance came of another world
where All was home and nothing was alien.
I settled, though not wholly,
into my new Form,
sucking on a woman's breast
and a fading bliss
without distinction.

—Karen Mitchell

How tenderly you smile, soul...

How tenderly you smile, soul, whatever may befall.
With such a honeyed irony
To call it bliss, and bear it all.

—Rick Lipschutz

1. *Devotion*, Lloyd Hofman & Vignan Agni (eds.). Auroville: Integral Enterprise, 2007.



Apropos

The spiritual path is one of falling on your face, getting up, brushing yourself off, turning and looking sheepishly at God and then taking the next step. —Sri Aurobindo

I could not say I believe. I know! I have had the experience of being gripped by something that is stronger than myself, something that people call God. —Carl Jung

Do not despise the world, for the world too is God. —Mohammad

All things proclaim the existence of God. —Napoleon Bonaparte

Without a belief in personal immortality, religion is like an arch resting on one pillar, or like a bridge ending in an abyss. —Max Muller

Our goal and purpose is to bring our lives into harmony with God's will. —Peace Pilgrim

All human beings, though they may seem to be walking on divergent paths, are all marching to one goal, and that goal is Self-realization. —Bhagavad Gita

Holiness consists in doing God's will joyfully. —Mother Teresa

There is not in the world a kind of life more sweet and delightful than that of a continual walk with God. Those only can comprehend it who practice and experience it. —Brother Lawrence

When you arise in the morning, think of what a precious privilege it is to be alive—to breathe, to think, to enjoy, to love. —Marcus Aurelius

Do nothing by self-will but rather conform to heaven's will, and everything will be done for you. —Lao-tzu

If you do not know the way, seek where His footprints are. —Rumi

The Grace is always there for the asking, always in abundance, but is the seeker capable of receiving it? —Nisargadatta

There is nothing but God's grace. We walk upon it; we breathe it; we live and die by it. —Robert L. Stevenson

I thank God for my handicaps, for through them, I have found myself, my work and my God. —Helen Keller

The person who has stopped being thankful has fallen asleep in life. —Robert L. Stevenson

The life of man is a journey that must be traveled, however bad the roads or the accommodations. —Oliver Goldsmith

He who has a why to live can bear with almost any how. —Friedrich Nietzsche

The world stands aside to let anyone pass who knows where he is going. —David S. Jordan

Only a life lived for others is a life worthwhile. —Albert Einstein

I have found that if you love life, life will love you back. —Arthur Rubinstein

The great tragedy of life is not that men perish, but that they cease to love. —Somerset Maugham

One word frees us from the weight and pain of life; that word is love. —Sophocles

Thoughtfulness, the kindly regard for others, is the beginning of holiness. —Mother Teresa

Kindness is a golden chain by which society is bound together. —Johann W. Goethe

He who is kind and courteous to strangers thereby shows himself a citizen of the world. —Anonymous

