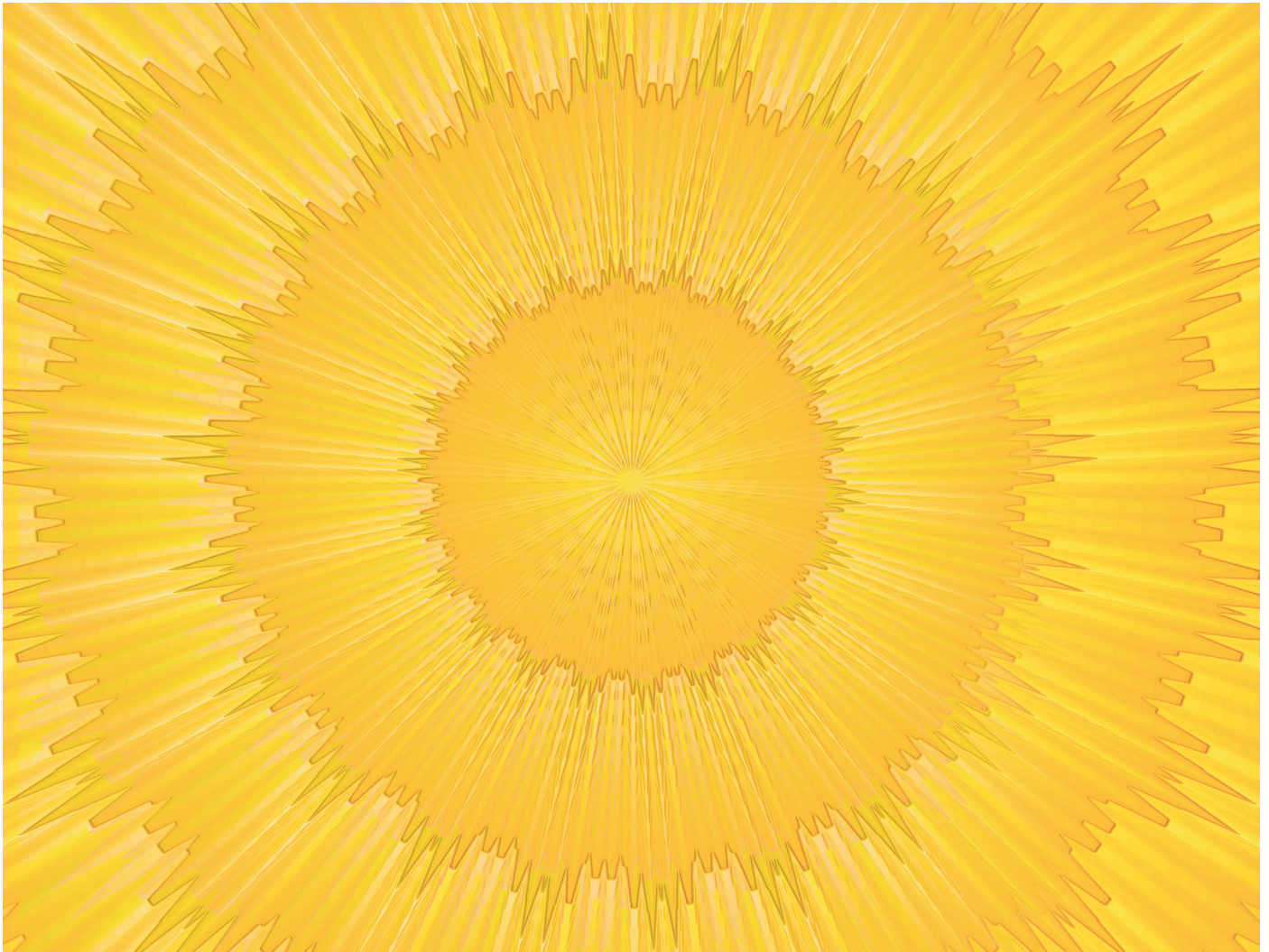


Collaboration

Fall 2019

Journal of the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother

Vol. 44, No. 2



Reflections on the individual and society by Martha Orton •

The supreme discovery by Shyam Kumari •

Rebirth and karma by Larry Seidlitz •

The superman: Intermediary between the human and the supramental being by Larry Seidlitz •

Current affairs • AV almanac • Source material • The poetry room • Apropos



About the art on the front and back cover

Front cover: Art by Michael, known as Mike-gi, posted on Pixabay. The image is evocative of the descent of the superman and the supramental consciousness. See information on the artist on the right of the next page.

Back cover: Digital art created by Gerd Altmann, known as Geralt, posted on Pixabay. The image evokes a sense of the future minds of light and oneness that will one day establish human unity on earth. See information on the artist on the right of the next page.

The authors and poets

Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806–1861) was an English poet of the Victorian era, popular in Britain and the United States during her lifetime.

Arnab Bishnu Chowdhury (www.ninad.in) is founder-composer-teacher of 'Know Your Rhythm', a training programme inspired by Integral Education which helps seekers discover their musicality and rhythm. He works with Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Auroville and other evolution-seeking groups.

Inge has been in Auroville for 20 years since the age of 10. She worked as a teacher in Future School, a writer for Auroville Today and Auroville Village Action Group, and served a term in the Working Committee. She is now engaged with the FAMC (Funds and Assets Management Committee).

Santosh Krinsky (santoshk@msn.com) is the founder of Lotus Press, publisher of U.S. editions of Sri Aurobindo's writings, and the President of the Institute for Wholistic Education, devoted to the development of spirituality in daily life.

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

Madhu (Please read his article in the AV Almanac section to learn more about Madhu.)

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

Rita Chaudhuri Pease is the eldest daughter of Haridas and Bina Chaudhuri and is currently serving as President of the Cultural Integration Fellowship (CIF). Rita has been active in the CIF Ashram in San Francisco since its inception in 1956.

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

William Bell Scott (1811–1890) was a Scottish artist, poet and art teacher.

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

Valentina is a 28-year-old professional film maker from Chile, and an amateur dancer and artist. She joined Auroville as a newcomer in 2018, and makes videos for different units and projects. She has found her home in Auroville.

Table of contents

Collaboration, Vol. 44, No. 2, Fall 2019

From the office of *Collaboration*

Notes on this issue..... 3

Current affairs

Cultural Integration Fellowship Rita Chaudhuri Pease 4
 News and updates from Sri Aurobindo Center, SE..... Radhe Pfau 4
 Sri Aurobindo Center of Honolulu Santosh Krinsky 4
 Briefs 5

AV almanac

Collective consciousness and semantics of change..... Inge 6
 Spiritual refugees in the journey back home Valentina 7
 A Tamil youth story Madhu 9
 My forest has a face Arnab Bishnu Chowdhuri 11

Salon

Reflections on the individual and society Martha Orton 12

Chronicles

The supreme discovery Shyam Kumari 14

Essays

Rebirth and karma Larry Seidlitz 18
 The superman: Intermediary between the human and
 the supramental being..... Larry Seidlitz 25

Source material

Karma and the psychic being..... Sri Aurobindo 30
 Psychic being's choice of life circumstances..... The Mother 32

The poetry room

From Savitri: The superman Sri Aurobindo 34
 From "The year of the world" William Bell Scott 34
 Human life's mystery..... Elizabeth Barrett Browning 35

Apropos 36



From the office of Collaboration

In this issue, *Current affairs* provides news and updates from several Sri Aurobindo centers in the US and UK. These include reports on the Cultural Integral Fellowship in San Francisco, the Sri Aurobindo Center, SE, and the new Sri Aurobindo Center of Honolulu which recently relocated there from Wisconsin. The Briefs section includes short reports on the Auromira Centre, UK; Matagiri in Mt. Tremper, NY; and the Foundation for World Education.

In *AV Almanac* we feature three essays by three Aurovilian youth—Inge, Valentina, and Madhu—about their experiences in Auroville, and a poem which was made into a video by a young associate of Auroville and the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Arnab Bishnu Chowdhuri. A link to the video is given at the end.

In the *Salon*, Martha Orton reflects on the relation between the individual and the society, based partly on Sri Aurobindo's views expressed in *The Human Cycle*, and partly on two classical French films, *Jean de Florette* and *Manon des Sources* (*Manon of the Spring*), that illustrate those views.

In *Chronicles*, story-teller extraordinaire Shyam Kumari recounts the fascinating but perilous spiritual journey of an unnamed Indian sadhak who eventually discovered the Mother of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, who saved him and helped him to gradually overcome his difficult hardships and gain peace.

In *Essays* we feature two articles by Larry Seidlitz. The first, "Rebirth and karma," reviews the nature of these two core principles of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy of spiritual evolution, or more accurately, the evolution of the soul in nature. Both principles are found to be much more complex than the common prevailing views of them tend to convey. The second essay is titled "The superman, intermediary between the human and the supramental being." This year marks 50 years since the descent of the superman consciousness, which was reported by the Mother to have occurred on 1 January 1969. The essay discusses Sri Aurobindo's predictions and explanations concerning this consciousness and being written in a series of essays near the end of his life, and that were later published as *The Supramental Manifestation upon Earth*, as well as the Mother's descriptions of her experiences of its first appearance and subsequent activity that were published in the Ashram journal *Bulletin of Physical Education*, and later republished in her *Collected Works* in the volume *Notes on the Way*.

In *Source material*, we provide interesting contextual material from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother that sheds further light on the issues of rebirth and karma.

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

The artists

Front cover artist: Michael lives in Winden im Elztal, Germany. You can find his web page at <https://pixabay.com/users/mikegi-506967/?tab=about>

Back cover artist: Gerd lives in Freiburg, Germany. He has provided over 20,000 images on Pixabay, including 293 Editor's Choice photos. You can find his web page at <https://pixabay.com/users/geralt-9301/>

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

Editor: Larry Seidlitz, 42 Pappammal Koil St., Anandam Apts. Ground Fl., Apt. 1A, Kuruchikuppam, Puducherry 605012; email: lseidlitz@gmail.com. The opinions expressed in *Collaboration* are not necessarily those of the editor or the SAA.

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

Copyrights: Copyright © SAA, 2019. Photos of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, passages from their works, and excerpts from the books published by the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust are © Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust unless otherwise noted, and are used here with the kind permission of the Ashram.

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

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

About SAA: The Sri Aurobindo Association distributes information about Sri Aurobindo, the Mother, and Auroville, and supports projects related to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Auroville, and Integral Yoga activities in America. Current board members: Mateo Needham, president; John Robert Cornell, secretary; Lynda Lester, director; Mira Patel, director; Kinjal Shah, director; Gloria Sayavedra, board member. SAA Associates: Margaret Astrid Phanes, Ananda, & Nick Rytlewski.

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

Cultural Integration Fellowship

by Rita Chaudhuri Pease

Inspired by the teachings of Sri Aurobindo which brought the highest values of East and West together in a creative synthesis, the Cultural Integration Fellowship (CIF) was founded in 1951 by Dr. Haridas Chaudhuri and Mrs. Bina Chaudhuri to promote a dynamic integration of the cultural and spiritual values of all people. Today, CIF continues to offer a rich array of lectures, Sunday morning services, and cultural events. We celebrate holidays of many traditions including the birth anniversaries of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, Rabindranath Tagore, and Mahatma Gandhi.

CIF offers 11:00 am Sunday morning services at its ashram located at 2650 Fulton Street, San Francisco. In commemoration of the birth anniversary of Sri Aurobindo, we feature Integral Yoga topics in the month of August. On August 4 this year, Rita Chaudhuri Pease presented a talk based on readings from Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri, a Legend and a Symbol*. Robert McDermott, President Emeritus of CIIS, gave the commemorative talk on Sri Aurobindo's Life and Teachings on August 11; Debashish Banerji spoke on 'Sankhya and the Integral Yoga' on August 18; and Kundan Singh concluded the series on August 25 with a talk on 'Integral Yoga and Dr. Haridas Chaudhuri.' On September 29 we will celebrate the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi with devotional music by Sur Laya Sangam.

We invite you to join us for our Sunday morning programs. Seeking a new synthesis of past wisdom and future aspirations, CIF's highest goal is a world in peace and harmony. Please come to our programs and become an active member! Your participation is much appreciated. Please visit our ashram and our website: www.culturalintegrationfellowship.org for more information.

News and updates from Sri Aurobindo Center, SE

by Radhe Pfau

Our Annual Sri Aurobindo Integral Yoga Retreat was held on June 26-30th at Furman University, Greenville, South Carolina. In honor of the 50th anniversary of the descent

of the Supramental Consciousness, the Retreat theme was 'Human Evolution, the next step'. Talks and discussions included various topics on the development of Consciousness and Line of Human Evolution, Awakening to the Mind of Light, New Approaches to Karma Yoga, The Role of Auroville and Matrimandir, and many other illuminating topics.

The La Grace Integral Life Center hosted an afternoon and evening session in which Retreat participants engaged in lively discussions on connecting with Spirit through Nature, walked the site of the Center's future facilities and took time to get to know one another over a leisurely dinner.

The Retreat was well received. We are grateful for those who join us each year at the Retreat as well as the many participants who attended for the first time. Next year's Retreat is tentatively planned for June 24-28, 2020.

Upcoming Events: La Grace Integral Life Center is offering the following events and workshops on a monthly basis: a new series of Integral Yoga talks given by Vladimir Yatsenko, Being Mindful workshops by Vikas Srivastava and Shamini Jain and yoga asanas classes in our newly built Yoga Studio.

Vladimir and I had a wonderful opportunity to visit Dakshina at Sri Aurobindo Sadhana Peetham Ashram in Lodi last month. We were greatly inspired to hear about the Ashram's community meetings where karma yoga activities take place monthly. In similar fashion, La Grace Integral Life Center will begin offering community karma yoga programs the third Sunday of each month.

For a listing of events, dates and times, please visit our home page www.lagracecenter.com.

Sri Aurobindo Center of Honolulu

by Santosh Krinsky

This is the new name of the Institute for Wholistic Education which was centered in Wisconsin and still maintains a PO Box given at the end of this update of our activities. Our blog posts covering *The Human Cycle: The Psychology of Social Development* are completed and the book is now available in print. There are currently 13 books in the series. Any center in the USA which has not yet requested and received their free copies for any of these volumes should contact us at santoshk@msn.com

Daily blog posts advancing the readings in Sri Aurobindo's major works continue. The current book of Sri Aurobindo's being focused on is The Upanishads with daily posts at <http://sriaurobindostudies.wordpress.com>. All



prior posts remain archived and accessible for those who want to study any of the earlier volumes in the series. Daily posts also appear on facebook at www.facebook.com/sriarobindoswritings

New Hawaii Center: The new Hawaii facility is located in Honolulu, Oahu, Hawaii, convenient for day-visitors who arrive at Honolulu International Airport, people vacationing in Oahu, as well as devotees who reside in Hawaii. We are located near the Hindu Temple of Hawaii also in Honolulu. We have a library of the writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, as well as selected other authors and subjects. We are sponsoring Darshan meditation meetings as well as meeting with visitors “one on one”, by appointment. We have begun to develop contact with other groups located in Honolulu as well.

New Book Marketing Campaign: We have begun a major new investment in a social media campaign to introduce people to the work of Sri Aurobindo. This features numerous social media platforms, a video interview by a major social media presence focused on “self growth” and a “pay per click” campaign to potentially interested groups of individuals. The landing page for this program will be the website www.aurobindo.net which has recently undergone some considerable upgrades. Sri Aurobindo Center of Honolulu, 1520 Ohialoke St., Honolulu, HI 96821; Ph: 808 367 1820 or 262 497 2579; www.wholisticinstitute.org; affiliated with the Institute for Wholistic Education, PO Box 1008, Silver Lake, WI 53170.

Briefs

Activities at Auomira Centre, UK: In July, we had two talks and a workshop about the Mother. The talks were given by Shri Kirit-bhai Thakkar who resides in Baroda and is a very active member at Sri Aurobindo Nivas in Baroda. The two talks were entitled: ‘The significance of The Mother’s embodiment’ and ‘The Mother in *Savitri*’. The workshop was entitled: ‘The Mother’s influence on us’. Later in July, a few devotees travelled to the Lake District where Sri Aurobindo and his brothers went for holidays. The group of devotees that went managed to stay in a guest house next door to Eskin House (13 Ambleside Road, Keswick) where Sri Aurobindo had resided during a holiday in 1886. They also visited the places where Sri Aurobindo had walked in the Lake District. For more information, contact: Auomira Centre, 126 Whitton Avenue East, Greenford, Middlesex UB6 0PY, UK; +44 (0) 7867792369; auomiracentre@gmail.com; www.auomira.org



Eskin House, in Keswick UK where Sri Aurobindo resided during a holiday in 1886. Photo courtesy Auomira Centre, UK

Matagiri Update: The final touches on Auroville House and Julie Manna’s apartment above the garage are being completed now that Matagiri has hosted Awareness Through the Body 1 and 2 trainings with Amir and Aran from Auroville. The next phase is to complete the drainage around the house and entrances and parking for cars.

A Fall concert series of Indian Classical Music will include performances on Sitar, Sarod and Slide Guitar/Flute featuring Barun Kumar Pal and Steve Gorn.

Matagiri will host the All USA Meeting in collaboration with Verne Henshall at Trinity Conference Center July 23rd-26th, 2020 focusing on Mother’s life and legacy to honor the centenary of her final arrival in Pondicherry.

Please visit www.matagiri.org for events and links to photos.

The Foundation for World Education (FWE) invites grant applications for projects related to Integral Yoga from individuals, programs and groups who share the vision of a transformed world espoused by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. All proposals must be presented to the FWE through the auspices of a nonprofit organization and are subject to review by members of the board before a decision is taken. The next due date for main granting session is January 7th. Proposals should be emailed to the secretary: info@FoundationForWorldEducation.org



AV almanac

Editor's note: Below are three essays by Aurovilian youth published in Auroville Today (June/July 2019 issue) as well as a poem that was made into a short film by a young associate of Auroville and the Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

Collective consciousness and semantics of change

by Inge

I love Auroville. I fall in love again every day. OK, not every day, but most days. Because at the innermost delicate layer of meaning, Auroville is an immensely accelerated karmic wheel with such an ooouuumpppphhhhh of power that it shakes and tumbles you all over the place with no way out than through it. Yes, when the going gets tough, the tough get going. Although, however tough we think we are, time and time again, in Auroville and elsewhere, there is something that happens when a group of well-intentioned people get together to explore and solve triggering issues and topics. Emotions roll, we lose control and the sense of ourselves, we enter into reactionary mode, our vital being overrides the psychic, and we result in some forms of chaos, blame, fear, mistrust, frustration and division. Needless to say, this doesn't always happen, and our governance is so multi-faceted that I can't even begin to describe it. But, reactive emotions are the trend in the face of particularly challenging situations, and also in our magical Auroville. When something meaningful emerges in our exchanges, we are functioning at our best, but at times we also leave gatherings with a feeling of collective disappointment. And we lose a bit of the sense of hope and trust in each other. We grumble. It's tough. And hot. And we want better. We always want better. We are not satisfied with our quorum. We may forget how often we exercise it.

For me, the hardest part of being in a quasi-functional organisational and governance structure is that however centered I feel in the face of difficult situations and confrontations, I can sometimes feel let down by the collective consciousness, and I get triggered by the disharmony that ensues. As a result, I find myself seeking refuge inside, or with like-minded people, or horses, even to the extent of avoiding the collective, in some ways. But then, I am always reminded of just how much we care about Auroville, and how the magic takes place in everyday life, in all spheres, in the endless ocean of opportunity and in the efforts of our community.



Unequivocally, the magic that happens when we get together as a community in times of daily work, sharing, discussions, or reading the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother's transformative guidance is not the magic that happens when we discuss our organisation, mandates, selection processes, guidelines, and issues that we face as a community. I find myself wondering; why not? We are not managing to perfectly carry over our highest aspirations as individual beings into the realm of our collective.

We all feel this disappointment at one time or another, be it in general meetings, working groups, or on our communication platforms. In the context of our selection process, this is a major stumbling block and one of the things that holds people back from participating. Also, if the way we speak, give "feedback", and behave with each other is a reflection of our current state of consciousness, then I can understand why the level of participation is low. Who, exactly, wants to face this reflection?

Changing the outer world by inner means is the challenge. The step in between? Bringing forward the inner wisdom. But, engaging in opinion aggregation without extracting meaning does not lead to collaborative decision-making. Why does a group of conscious people with an inner fire that burns for Auroville and who dedicate their life to integral yoga, struggle to translate their inner wisdoms into group wisdom? We surmount indescribable challenges as individuals: from the deepest wounds, we nobly raise ourselves into the sphere of Love and Oneness. The work of dedicated friends in places such as Auroville Council, Koodam and Restorative Circles helps us tremendously with this. Can we look inwards and find an answer to how we can achieve this? And next, why do we stumble to bring it to the collective? What tools do we need here? I believe answering this question is the single-most (r-)evolutionary thing we can manifest today in Auroville, and doing this would unleash the full potential that Auroville holds, as an anchor for the accelerated evolution of mankind. We are only as strong together as we respect, learn from and with, admire, and hold each other, in all our excruciatingly wonderful differences and individualities. We have to be



nothing less than pioneers, heroes and historical figures in how we relate to and learn from the other souls with whom we share this evolutionary journey. We can only rise by raising each other.

Is there a way for the emergence of an integral, real-time and adaptive learning model, system or network that could support and connect all Aurovilians and their working groups, serve to translate each individual's inner wisdom into a meaningful lesson, and contribute to the collective growth of Auroville?

Can we retrieve the essence of the methods of our inner work for individual growth, bring it to the surface, and then apply it to the growth of the collective?

Then we learn to talk with each other in harmony and beauty, without the ego, and focus together on the task at hand, in our Yoga of Transformation. How to apply the inner dialogue with oneself, to an outer dialogue of speaking with someone, and let go of the archaic semantics of speaking to each other?

In an effort to nudge this laboratory of evolution forward, if enough people are open to this question, perhaps something will bubble to the surface of our proverbial fish bowl. Perhaps even a swimming lesson could be fashioned that can help our transformation, moving away from the auto-immune disease of obsolete patterns, and towards unison similar to the body's trillion cells that function in harmony for our body's health and growth, to yield beautifully vibrant Psychic beings before the Divine Consciousness.

Spiritual refugees in the journey back home

by Valentina

To speak about how I feel about Auroville or what makes me feel a part of Auroville is always really difficult. It is almost like a mission impossible. But since I'm playing this game I would bet on one word that I can relate to: Auroville for me is Aliveness. I've been here for little more than one year, but I feel as if I've been living many lives at once. Each day here is so charged with intensity. In one year I have lived more events, changes and realisations than in the 27 years of my past life.

Is it because of Auroville? Is it because of me? I don't know, and maybe I don't need to know. What matters to me, what I have been learning here, is daring to fully embrace the feeling. If I observe and allow the sentiment right now, I can describe it as a deep nourishing, sweet and feminine



gratitude. Gratitude to this place, to these people, to this moment, to life, to God, to Mother, to all mothers that have made my incarnation possible right here, right now.

What brought me here? Who knows? What is more important is what makes me want to stay, especially after going through what I would call the most difficult year of my life.

I came from the country furthest away from India, Chile.

It is so different in so many ways, and disturbingly similar in others. I left everything that was familiar to me behind: "my friends", "my family", "my house", "my job"—my old identity. I came with nothing else other than my backpack, my husband and my heart full of dreams. In one year all the plans changed, and my life made a big turn: I separated from my husband, moved house five times, changed my job a couple more, met totally different people, faced totally new realities, started healing deep wounds, started dreaming again... This time, my dreams are not only more grounded, but they are also held in the support of a collective. They are meeting dream-siblings. They feel, for the first time, that they belong. They have found their right place in the sky where they can play with others.

I have known since many years that crises in life are actually good: they are the way to pull you out of inertia and shake you up, to help you shift. This was not the first big crisis in my life, but this time it felt totally different. Auroville awoke something new. Being 27 years old, facing a divorce in the middle of India just a couple of months after arriving, was not necessarily a great time for me. Yet I've never been so grateful for a crisis before, and I've never lived one with so much joy and trust. I became so interested in what was happening inside, that I couldn't avoid diving



in. The deeper I went, the more truth I found. It was in the air: every quote that I read was the precise one that I needed to hear at that moment, every activity that I explored gave me a new insight, every job that I took - with its conflict and challenges—showed me what I needed to acknowledge. But maybe what has been more revealing to me is to realize that every new person that I met had a new clue to give me. Everybody was in fact helping me, not only with kindness and love, but also showing me the corrupted side, the shadows of our egos. The right Aurovilian always appears at the right time, for good and bad.

I taught myself to not have fear about losing my stability and then, a new understanding of what stability means was born. It has been growing since then and now, it is not limited anymore to any particular place. Here I have learned from experience like never before. I'm seeing my thoughts manifesting into actions, and from those manifestations I'm breaking through to some deep feelings. I started a simple, but not easy, practice of *feeling what is there until the very bottom*.

Home

I am sure I am only one of thousands with this kind of story and with these kinds of realisations. And it is precisely because of this that Auroville is so interesting: It is full of seekers. It is made out of souls that cannot stand the fake-ness of the world as it is now, souls that are not conforming. Idealist minds. Compassionate hearts. And, what is maybe more important: youthful energy. We are willing to create something new, even if we don't have a clue about how to do it sometimes.

What makes us come together for Human Unity is that in the end, we are all spiritual refugees, and Auroville is The Home that has been beautifully created for us to awake to The Truth, and then to share it with the world.

After spending some time in Auroville, I needed to go back to Chile for a visit. Trying to reconnect with family and friends was a bittersweet confirmation that even when there's so much love and history between us, familiarity has nothing to do with home. Not necessarily. I see now that the real baggage that I am unpacking is called Conditioning and Fears. To be able to see them is actually the first step, but then, what will you do to transform them? That is part of the great adventure that Auroville encourages you to live.

In my own journey here, maybe the most beautiful realization that I had is that actually serving "The Divine" is nothing different than serving your Divine Self. That one that is pure unconditional love. That one that is probably hidden between layers and layers of not-you, so the adven-

ture to unfold you cannot be more challenging, and at the same time cannot be more exciting.

Auroville is not perfect. Not at all. There are so many things that don't work yet, still being very far away from the ideal. Many times it seems to be more chaos than divine chaos... But for me that's precisely why it is so interesting! There's so much potential and still so much work to do. I see a rough diamond; I see a reflection of myself.

It is difficult to explain to someone who has not been here, to communicate why this investment of my life is worth it.

If it is measured by the yardstick of the outside world, it doesn't seem to have any logic. You come here, you work for free, you give your money, time and energy to some purpose, apparently "outside" of you. You have to find different ways to fulfill your material needs, which can be complicated. At the same time, you learn so much. Much more than any university can offer you, because you learn from deep intense experience. So it may not look like an intelligent material investment. It is not: it is a life investment.

No fear and devotion

Since I was a teenager, I've been accumulating a lot of spiritual tools and practices. In Auroville, I found a new brick that holds the wall together. I dare to call it devotion. I never truly met that quality before coming here. I was raised in a rigid Catholic society where the norm is religiosity, where people live through their minds. There was always a feeling inside that didn't find the right space to express itself. At times, I even felt embarrassed to experience and share this natural sense of gratitude to the creation. I usually felt like an outsider, so I suppressed my sentiments and adapted to the context. That's what humans do, we adapt to the environment that we are in, so in an unhealthy disconnected context, you most probably will live in that way. Here, that is not the norm. God is in the air, and I finally feel I don't have to sacrifice my authenticity anymore.

For me, devotion is not a quality learned from outside. It doesn't even have to manifest in some outer way. It may be helpful to evoke some image, some representation that carries meaning to you. You can also name that quality by different names, using many different figures, shapes and faces to manifest it. Eventually, you may light a candle to a deity; you can do your pujas or allow whatever wants to be expressed. I have many rituals, but I found none of them matter if I don't light a candle for myself first. If you don't know yourself as divine, you will never meet The Divine. And once you know yourself as God, how can you believe in your fear any longer?



I've also been observing myself the way I resonate with Mother's words. It awakes powerful things that have always been inside, as I'm the one that is being read by a much wiser someone. What do I see when I look at her eyes? Love. Compassion. But also: myself, and this realisation makes me want to keep feeding not only my connection with her, but also the connection with everyone; to joyfully accept the gift of mirroring and being mirrored. Auroville is a really good place to put that in practice, and this is the only way I see human unity possible.

Conscious cinema

I see such a big potential and so many things to do and create in Auroville that I can only be enthusiastic for the future ahead. There is so much to learn here! What I want to focus on the most is putting the skills that I have been developing through my profession as a filmmaker to use in a meaningful way. Cinema is a relatively new art, younger than any other, and yet it is the most powerful and impactful one nowadays. As quickly as the world is progressing, audio-visual has become the main communication system. It is not only an artistic expression anymore; it is a new language. I feel in Auroville this powerful tool is not yet well-developed, and I want to be a facilitator for this development to occur.

You can use a tool in many different ways. "From the point of view of a spiritual life, it is not what you do that matters most, but the way in which it is done and the consciousness that you put into it..." (The Mother, CWM Vol. 14, p. 36). There are some films that have a special quality, the power to touch what is beyond the emotional body. They can be fictions, documentaries, animations, experimental films. Many times they offer you storytelling too, but what they have in common is they touch a bigger place of awareness, offering you some truth. That quality doesn't speak to the mind, it doesn't disturb the vital, it touches a deeper sense of self.

What if we can use movies as a useful path for our karma yoga, to motivate us in our inner discovery?

A film is more plastic than anything, and it has everything inside. In that way isn't Auroville a good place to make films with originality, and to make not only the product but also the process more conscious? What does Auroville have to offer in this area of expertise to the world? I am just starting out on my path and I don't have the answer. I have so much learning to do, but what is really wonderful is to feel that I am in the right setting to start such an exploration. Not only do I want to know: I want to create it. I want to make it happen.

A Tamil youth story

by Madhu

I grew up in Sanjeevinagar village next to Auroville. My father worked as a builder in Auroville. My first impression of Auroville was from my father. Whenever I had a holiday from school, I would go with my father to his workplace and play there. One day, I met this foreign family with two kids. The father of the kids invited me to play with the children. It was a very new experience for me as I didn't even understand the language they were speaking or why they looked so different or what they were doing here.

I had many more questions and was curious to know about these 'strangers' who lived in a strange place called Auroville.

I slowly started learning and got interested more and more about the culture of Auroville.

But a few years later, my father passed away from a heart attack. I was only ten years old, and my family was facing a lot of financial difficulties, and I was also struggling with my studies. So I decided to work to earn an income to support my family. I found some short term jobs in my locality like carpentry, plumbing, cleaning and assisting with load carriers, among other odd jobs I would do on a daily basis. While I was able to financially support my family my education took a backseat and my grades started falling and I stopped going to Auroville.

Two years later, I joined Mohanam Cultural Center for weekend classes where I got the chance to re-connect with Auroville and its people. There I learnt a lot about traditional dance and music from my Tamil culture. My interest in the creative field started developing at this stage. I started enjoying my time at the workshops and slowly developed a lot of interest. My keen interest and determination towards traditional dance and music were visible throughout my days. Mohanam selected me to perform on multiple occasions. At first, I was very shy and it would take me time to open up in front of people. But each performance would help increase my self confidence and my courage to perform in front of a large audience. At the end of each performance, listening to the audience cheer and applaud gave me a lot of encouragement and motivated me to continue in this field.

Through Mohanam, I also started spending a lot of time in Auroville and met several people from the community. Auroville, with its unique model of conscious living and alternate methods of human development, attracts



people from all over the world to volunteer and work and contribute to the society. The township gave me a very wide exposure and gave me the chance to meet and interact with people from all over the world, like France, Germany, USA and several other nations. During my interactions, I realised how limitless my opportunities were if I was only willing to do my best to manifest my dreams. It inspired me to think bigger and to see the importance of being ambitious and having goals in life.

Mohanam gave me the chance to perform outside of Tamil Nadu. My first trip was to Odisha, a state in the eastern belt of India known for its tribal cultures and temples. I always had a lot of inhibitions and misconceptions about people from other states of India. But travelling to different states and getting first-hand experience with the locals made me realise that despite culture and language differences, we were very similar as people. Since then, I have had several opportunities of intercultural exchanges with other places in India, like Mumbai, Delhi, Kullu Manali, Sikkim etc.

But at this point of time, the financial situation at my home worsened and I was unable to give time to my studies, which led me to drop out of school in 10th grade. However, to continue supporting my family, I joined a unit called Svaram in Auroville. Here, I learned how to create musical instruments using materials like bamboo and clay and also got into music theory and research. I was really happy to make something with my own hands and this experience made me dive deeper into music as medium of expression. I also started learning music theory and slowly started shifting my focus towards performance arts and not towards traditional mainstream education, like most of my peers.

This was the time when I decided to move out of my family house, which made them very upset, but I was determined to live a life of my own. I realised the importance of education and its scope, and after two gap years, I enrolled in school again to complete my studies. This time, my perception towards education was different. It was no longer about scoring high grades but more about learning new things, even if it was at my own pace. I started enjoying school and became friends with my books. After completing my higher secondary school, I tried to enroll in college to study mathematics. However, my interest lay in the creative field and I knew I would be able to pursue a career in this field. Therefore, I decided to go against the traditional approach and instead I took a course that interested me more: Bachelors in Visual Communication in Acharya Arts and Science Collage, under Pondicherry University. This course was closely aligned to my interest areas and included



electives like photography, video-making and other technical topics that I was keen on pursuing.

Meanwhile, I was still working and performing with Mohanam Cultural Center and in 2010, I was selected to perform at the Yonchai Thailand International Theatre Festival. This was my first ever experience of flying to a different country and turned out to be one of the most enriching experiences of my life. There were people from over 15 countries who had come to the festival to represent their own country. This global exposure impacted me in a positive way and broadened my outlook on the world.

This opportunity, coupled with my time in a cosmopolitan world like Auroville, gave a new meaning to my life - one that was a combination of freedom and the will to bring a positive change in the world and also to live a life of consciousness and harmony with myself and others.

Mohanam helped me stay connected to my roots.

With them, I conducted multiple village tours and expeditions for those outside of India who were interested in knowing about the traditional culture of rural India. I have also been teaching dance and music to people from different countries. This was a form of cultural exchange for me and opened my mind to new opportunities. Whenever I would have a conversation with foreigners, they would express their interest about my culture and this made me realise the value of my tradition and roots. I started focusing much more on Tamil culture and traditions. I also started teaching kids from my village about our traditional dance



and music so they will not forget this gift from the past.

After my post-graduation, I wanted to use my new skills in my work in Auroville. Under Youthlink, I was one of the organisers of the international youth day festival for three consecutive years. I also worked as a media communications person with Auroville Village Action Group (AVAG). I have known this organisation from a very young age. I really wanted to work there, but I didn't know how. Later, I got the incredible opportunity to teach women traditional dance during a women's festival. When I see the women in an AVAG event, I feel deeply touched because there is a big difference in their expression compared to the way they are in their daily life. Like my mother, women take care of the family and the house in everyday life. When they come together to dance at an AVAG event, there is freedom in them and they are happy to have contact with other women from other villages. I have always felt close to the issues that rural women face, and when I got the chance to have female mentors who helped me learn many things about rural and community development, I felt incredibly honored. I am really happy to work in AVAG—there is no end for learning there.

Simultaneously, I also got another opportunity in a theatre production called Bhu. This production, led by international directors from France, has literally changed my life. For this performance, I started learning Kalaripayattu (Indian martial art) and for the past two years I have been waking up at 5 am everyday to attend Kalari class. This has brought more discipline in my life. I discovered a completely new side of me through this experience. I also got the chance to go for multiple national tours for Bhu.

My experience in India and Auroville has been enriching and fulfilling in several ways. I feel so grateful towards all the people who gave me a hand when I needed it, who showed and guided me through my own path, who trusted me to be part of their performance project, who always pushed me to become better. I don't know how I can express my gratitude to all of them. I will continue on this path and make them proud of me. And this is why I intend now to go to Europe: I want to share the treasures of my country and of this very special place which is Auroville, to the world. I also feel the need to get a global experience and learn the differences of perspectives and cultures.

Today I am applying for a master degree in Germany in the creative field of media and communication combined with traditions and cultures; a combination which aims to bridge the past and the future, the West and the East. It feels like Auroville has been spreading seeds, and I would love to be part of those who can carry its spirit throughout the world.

My forest has a face

by Arnab Bishnu Chowdhury

Trees of yore sprouting from the Earth
Reaching the skies with their finger-branches,
While we mortals walk the talk immersed in our selves
Our faces towards the ground
Building our habitats, our own jungles;
While the forest ... gazes sun-ward
Feeling a tug at its roots
Amused, bewildered, anguished.
'I am part of us, my face is as much yours
My flowers interleave your fingers
Swaying together in the lilt of the wind
My feelings, morose—polluted
I weather.
Let's grow the faces of forest
Amongst us.
Rejuvenate with time seasons.'
My Forest has a Face.

Epilogue

Many artists have been inspired during their walks; visitors and seekers have communed with the spirit of the forest. This poem emerged as a spiritual experience while taking a long walk at the Pitchandikulam forest in June 2013.

The poem transforming into the script is an instance where I, as the poet, and the forest have become one, each finding a voice through the other, first as a prose-poem and later as a short film with the same title.

This contiguous experience inspired me to direct, recite and compose a short film that 'speaks' with the forest's voice with the help of a team from Pitchandikulam, other communities of Auroville and Sri Aurobindo Ashram, a coming together of Integral Yoga seekers from various cultures and age groups.

Joss Brooks (Aurovilian) offered his deep perspective on rejuvenating the Pitchandikulam forest: "It was tired 40 years ago when we came. The dust storms blew over the barren landscape during hot summers. But the spirit of the forest, the memory of the future garden was there. We worked with the spirits, learned with them and a beautiful, edible, cultivative landscape emerged."

The short film 'My Forest has a Face' reached the United Nations Forum on Forests in late 2013 and has been shown at different national and international conferences and workshops as a medium to ignite a reflection on sustainability: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6WYZqptJKa4>



Salon

Reflections on the individual and society

by Martha Orton

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother are clear in their assertions that the practice of the integral yoga incorporates life in the world, including interaction among individuals and also between the individual and the society of which one is a part. Consequently the individual necessarily takes upon oneself the responsibility of negotiating these contacts and relationships in the light of one's understanding and inner sense of appropriateness. Writing in *The Human Cycle*, Sri Aurobindo offers two psychic truths for consideration in relation to the challenges we face in this regard. In the first he states:

A psychic self-knowledge tells us that there are in our being many formal, frontal, apparent or representative selves and only one that is entirely secret and real; to rest in the apparent and to mistake it for the real is the one general error, root of all others and cause of all our stumbling and suffering, to which man is exposed by the nature of his mentality. We may apply this truth to the attempt of man to live by the law of his subjective being whether as an individual or as a social unit one in its corporate mind and body. (*The Human Cycle*, p. 44)

Sri Aurobindo explains this further in the following statement, which clarifies the meaning he applies to the individual subjective being in this context: "Therefore we must find out that the true individual is not the ego, but the divine individuality which is through our evolution preparing to emerge in us; its emergence and satisfaction and not the satisfaction of the mere egoistic will-to-live for the sake of one's lower members is the true object at which a humanity subjectively seeking to know and fulfil its own deepest law and truth should increasingly aim" (*The Human Cycle*, p. 47).

While the first psychic truth describes the significance of recognizing and living by the law of one's own subjective being, Sri Aurobindo's description of the second assists us in understanding human interconnectedness and the mutual responsibility of the individual and society. Sri Aurobindo writes:

The second psychic truth the individual has to grasp is this, that he is not only himself, but is in solidarity with all of his kind,—let us leave aside for the moment that which seems to be not of his kind. That which we are has expressed itself through the individual, but also through the universality, and though each has to fulfil itself in its own way, neither can succeed independently of the other. The society has no right to crush or efface the individual for its own better development or self-satisfaction; the individual, so long at least as he chooses to live in the world, has no right to disregard for the sake of his own solitary satisfaction and development his fellow-beings and to live at war with them or seek a selfishly isolated good. And when we say, no right, it is from no social, moral or religious standpoint, but from the most positive and simply with a view to the law of existence itself. For neither the society nor the individual can so develop to their fulfillment. Every time the society crushes or effaces the individual, it is inflicting a wound on itself and depriving its own life of priceless sources of stimulation and growth. The individual too cannot flourish by himself; for the universal, the unity and collectivity of his fellow-beings, is his present source and stock; it is the thing whose possibilities he individually expresses, even when he transcends its immediate level, and of which in his phenomenal being he is one result. Its depression strikes eventually at his own sources of life, by its increasing he also increases. This is what a true subjectivism teaches us,—first, that we are a higher self than our ego or our members, secondly, that we are in our life and being not only ourselves but all others; for there is a secret solidarity which our egoism may kick at and strive against, but from which we cannot escape. (*The Human Cycle*, p. 47)

There is a deeply compelling story which illustrates well the problems created by egoism and the sense of separateness in human life at individual, familial and societal levels. These problems are accentuated in the story, as examples of extreme clannishness are portrayed. While it is fiction, it nevertheless vividly embodies the problems of human ego and the falsity of not recognizing the underlying inherent oneness in humanity. The story is told in the form of two classic French films, *Jean de Florette* and *Manon des Sources* (*Manon of the Spring*), both of which were directed by Claude Berri and released in 1986. The pair of films are based on novels of the same names written



by Marcel Pagnol and jointly called *L'eau des Collines* (*The Water of the Hills*). Through the course of these two films a tale unfolds which is pervaded with egoism, competitiveness, belief in family superiority, and community exclusiveness. It exemplifies very much of what is wrong with egoism and the separative perspective on life and the world.

The character Jean is an idealistic man who eagerly accepts the challenges of leaving his city life to farm the small rural property he has inherited from his mother whose name was Florette. He brings his wife Aimee and their very young daughter Manon with him and together they begin a hard life of arduous toil. They engage in this cheerfully and with much hope for their future. Their closest neighbors are an elderly man named Cesar Soubeyran and his nephew Ugolin. Jean and his family are unaware that these neighbors have wanted to secure the farm for themselves because there is an abundant spring on the property and obtaining sufficient water for farming is problematic in the region.

Cesar, Ugolin and the other residents of the area consider Jean and his family to be outsiders and regard them with hostility for this apparent reason. The fact that Jean has a hunchback makes his "otherness" complete in their view.

Without describing the plot in detail it is difficult to convey the full range of deceit and betrayal portrayed in these films. However, it is important to mention that Cesar and Ugolin try to undermine any chance of success for Jean by sealing the spring on his farm with cement. The villagers know this has been done, but are complicit in their silence, hoping to drive Jean away. Their attitudes, and the events which derive from these, can be summarized as emanating from egoism and the perspective of separateness of human beings without any understanding of the underlying unity of humanity or any sense of the commonality of the human condition. The tragedies that gradually unfold in these stories derive from such attitudes and can be seen as based on the human tendency, especially at the societal level, to objectify people from other places or with different physical characteristics as so distinctly different that harming them or their interests can be regarded as acceptable to some degree. In these stories we see tragic results from the flawed tendency to categorize individuals and groups in such a way as to conclude that some of them belong to the Us category and are worthy of special consideration and others belong to the Them category and are inferior, unworthy, or fair game for abuse or exploitation.

The story of Jean de Florette and his family is a vivid example of the harm done by the false sense of separateness which is so common in life. An "us and them" mentality is common and may have its practical uses in some ways,

perhaps, but it is actually false, limiting and can even be destructive. In fact, although the villagers believe Jean to be an outsider and unrelated to their own village and history, he is ultimately revealed to have been the child of two of the villagers and so actually one of their own. This final revelation helps to highlight the fact that humanity is all one. When we believe we perceive separateness, it is merely because of our own limited capacity for perception. There is no real separateness.

While we can see human unity as a goal and world brotherhood/sisterhood as an ideal, attempts to realize these also can be superficial in nature in that the changes advocated to accomplish them can be based primarily at the intellectual level and limited to structural or organizational efforts. These are nevertheless very worthy and can accomplish a great deal of good in society, especially to the extent that they recognize and highlight the interconnectedness of humanity. Such efforts also can aid in avoiding conflict among nations and developing cultural awareness and understanding. Increasing the strength, vision, and reach of humanitarian and international political organizations can go a long way towards developing harmony in the world. But it is not enough to do this at the intellectual, political and cultural levels. Unless the inner realization of Oneness manifests, until humanity realizes that there is no Other, any apparent unity and harmony attained will continue to have a precarious basis.

Real change is integral and pervasive, going beyond thought and idea, even beyond material action in life. As Sri Aurobindo explains to us, it is only through a transformation of consciousness that lasting change can be attained. In aspiration for truth we can discover a path suited to our individual nature, which can lead us on our way. We may find this through a search for knowledge, eventually discovering that real knowledge is discoverable only beyond the level of the intellect, since it is spiritual knowledge, the knowledge of spiritual realization, which includes the realization of Oneness with the Divine and with All. We may find our way through devotion to the Divine, which will lead us eventually to union with the Divine and with All, which is in itself the true knowledge. We may find our way in our work, through striving to do the best we can in our endeavors in life and offering this to the Divine, discovering a developing bond of love and devotion, which lead to knowledge and Oneness with the Divine and with All. Whichever way we chose, if we aspire to know truth, if we seek a higher ideal in other terms, we have the hope of finding our way to the Divine, to the true union in Oneness.



Chronicles

The supreme discovery

by Shyam Kumari

Reprinted from How They Came to Sri Aurobindo and The Mother, Vol. 3

Twas the youngest of three brothers and sisters. A sickly child, he was prone to severe fits almost daily. This continued for a whole year. One day he had six fits. After the last one, when his father who had some knowledge of Ayurveda felt for his pulse, there was none. He told his wife, "He is no more, cover him with a cloth." It was night. The grief-stricken parents sat silently near the body. At 4 a.m. T's father touched his body again and it felt warm. He called T by his name and the child responded.

The overjoyed parents offered their son to the Goddess Vimila saying, "If he stays alive this boy will be yours." From that night those terrible fits stopped tormenting the child. But a great blow awaited the family. T's mother died when he was barely four years old and for some years his father brought him up alone.

Because he was a sickly child, T's education started late. When he was seven a tutor remarked to him, "God sends us upon earth, each with a definite aim and purpose." This sentence struck T. He was stunned though he did not know who God was or what it meant. T liked the stories of the Ramayana and Mahabharata. But he had no faith in God or Avatars and refused to worship them. By the time the boy was eight his father was feeling disturbed by his son's atheistic tendencies. Theirs was a Brahmin village and for six or



seven generations their family had worshipped a particular goddess.

T's father told him when he was eight that he should pray morning and night to God—to Jagadishwar—the Lord of the universe. T asked him, "Who is God?" Have you seen him?" His father rebuked him, "Rishis say that there is a God and he created this world. Are you greater than the rishis? Pray to Him." T demanded, "What should I pray?" "Don't ask for anything. He has given you everything. Just say, 'It matters little what happens to me, only let my thoughts be always concentrated on Thy lotus feet,'" his father answered. T thought, "What father is saying is not bad." He said to the Lord, "I am praying to Thee because my father asked me to." To this day he still repeats the prayer which his father taught him then. He prayed every morning and night except on the days when he was too sick, but the more he prayed the more sceptical he became.

Then he contracted malaria and for eight years he suffered from high fever for several days each month. Meanwhile, his elder brother married a woman who was ten or eleven years older than T and who became like a little mother for him.

From time to time, T witnessed some occult phenomenon. One day T's friend called him to accompany him while he went to the fields to answer nature's call, for in those days there were no toilets in houses in the Indian villages. On the way there was a betel field and near it a tank. T saw a strange white old man with a stick sitting on the steps of the tank. The man stared at T with fiery eyes and T looked back without fear. Then the old man disappeared. T understood he was a ghost. He narrated the tale to his father who recited mantras for propitiation of the evil spirit. Even so T became seriously ill after this encounter and recovered with difficulty. But as if to counterbalance such dark encounters angels sang to him. During his frequent illness he used to hear soothing, happy vocal and instrumental music from invisible sources which sometimes cured him.

One afternoon while he was studying in the 9th standard T went to attend a fair. Nearby was a betel-field (betel-fields are enclosed and covered). The sun was setting on the horizon when he heard somebody singing beautifully a poignant song of Radha. T had never heard such singing. He stopped outside, fearing that if he entered the field the singer might stop. After the song had ended he went to the enclosure and found it locked. He enquired in the village but was told that nobody had gone into that field that day.

At the age of 14 or 15 T started discussing God with his father. As his father desired he had continued his prayers all these years, but now he wanted to stop since he did not believe in the existence of God. His father rebuked him, "Who are you to disbelieve?" T asked, must I be compelled?" "No," his father answered. "But the rishis have seen Him. Do you think you are greater than the rishis?"



T asked, "Are there such rishis still in existence who have seen God?" His father said, "Some of them still live in the Himalayas." T then and there decided that when he grew up he would run away to the Himalayas and ask the rishis if they had seen God.

The question became so acute for him that in November 1954 he took Rs. 40 and a small bedding and left for the Himalayas without anyone's knowledge, to search for rishis. Of course this money would not take him very far. A little distance from his home town his mind started to waver, "Suppose I don't meet a rishi?" Thus discouraged he returned home. His father was alarmed

at this escapade and married him off quickly to anchor him securely to worldly life. He told him, "Listen, if you want to

contact the Lord, you have to find a sadguru. You may have to go to the jungles in search of him, but you cannot realise God in the ordinary life." "Then why has the Lord created the world if, in order to find him, you have to leave it behind and go into the jungles?" T demanded. His father was impressed by T's inquisitive mind.

By this time T had passed his Intermediate examination and secured a job. One day he fell asleep after his work. During his sleep he saw Bal Krishna with his peacock feather and flute. Four times T tried to catch him and four times he escaped. Even so the experience gave him an intense joy.

For the time being his sceptical mind decided to give up the search for rishis or for the Divine but the idea never really left him. Something from deep within him said, "I will not be happy till I find God." As he grew older he found himself full of defects. He

discovered that he was absolutely devoid of talent, that he was an average, common, ordinary man with nothing to boast of. This perception plunged him into depths of despair. From the age of 16 to 20 he lived in a state of depression. Then he had a terrible attack of rheumatoid arthritis which continued for five years. He had to take long leaves from work, but since he was sincere, honest and hard working his department did not want to lose him and kept him in service.

While in school he had heard of and written to Sivananda and remained in touch with him for some years. The Saint sent him a *tulsi-mala*,

freshments. The drawing-room was full of the photographs of saints and sages. The owner showed T all the pictures, extolling the virtues of each spiritual personality—Christ, Guru Nanak, Sri Ramakrishna, one by one. In the northwest corner of the room hung a photograph of the Mother, her face wreathed in a heavenly smile, her arm outstretched. She was holding a card. T felt his whole being go out to this radiant personality and demanded eagerly, "Who is this gentle Iranian lady?" "She is the Divine Mother of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram," answered his host. Thus T heard the twin names for the first time. His host added, "While

The owner showed T all the pictures, extolling the virtues of each spiritual personality—Christ, Guru Nanak, Sri Ramakrishna, one by one. In the northwest corner of the room hung a photograph of the Mother, her face wreathed in a heavenly smile, her arm outstretched.

we are talking about her here, in Pondicherry she knows about it; such is her power."

Something in T was deeply moved. Five

days later he was again invited to that house. There his host and two other guests were talking about the Mother. One of these two narrated his story. He had been an extremely poor man with seven children. At one time his family was in such dire straits that he wanted to commit suicide. His friend persuaded him to write to the Mother. Like a drowning man clutching at a straw he wrote his pathetic tale to the Mother and received a blessings-packet. Within two months a new business opportunity came his way and soon he was earning Rs. 3000 per month.

Four problems concerned T—fate, death, suffering (including his own) and the incapacities of man. He used to wonder, "Why are human beings born?" He questioned the purpose of creation and existence. People called him a heretic. His only solace in life lay in reading literature and listening to classical music.

In January 1958 a wealthy person called him for some work. After the business was over the man invited him into his drawing-room for some re-

freshments. The drawing-room was full of the photographs of saints and sages. The owner showed T all the pictures, extolling the virtues of each spiritual personality—Christ, Guru Nanak, Sri Ramakrishna, one by one. In the northwest corner of the room hung a photograph of the Mother, her face wreathed in a heavenly smile, her arm outstretched. She was holding a card. T felt his whole being go out to this radiant personality and demanded eagerly, "Who is this gentle Iranian lady?" "She is the Divine Mother of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram," answered his host. Thus T heard the twin names for the first time. His host added, "While

we are talking about her here, in Pondicherry she knows about it; such is her power."

Something in T was deeply moved. Five days later he was again invited to that house. There his host and two other guests were talking about the Mother. One of these two narrated his story. He had been an extremely poor man with seven children. At one time his family was in such dire straits that he wanted to commit suicide. His friend persuaded him to write to the Mother. Like a drowning man clutching at a straw he wrote his pathetic tale to the Mother and received a blessings-packet. Within two months a new business opportunity came his way and soon he was earning Rs. 3000 per month.

T was strangely stirred. He felt that the Mother would surely fulfil his aspiration. He sent a registered letter and addressed it to "Divine Mother, Pondicherry." After some days he received a blessings-packet. As soon as he got it his whole house was filled with perfume. He was a puny and sickly person. After he received the



blessings he felt as if the strength of 100 lions coursed through his veins.

A week later he wrote another registered letter to the Mother stating his difficulties thus:

“I have heard that Incarnations and saints and sages come on earth and save a few souls. Their Grace liberates a few souls but the entire human race still lingers and lives in poverty, misery, suffering and incapacity. It is also believed that only a few great souls realise the Divine but the ordinary souls are not meant for the divine life. In the world today I find my country India among the weakest nations and my state is considered the poorest and most backward. Of all the persons of my state I consider myself the most worthless and weak—a person who is really a void, a person who does not have any capacity for concentration or love or devotion. What has the Divine decided about and what does he do for such supremely weak persons?”

In response to his passionate appeal the Mother sent her blessings. And, to his utter surprise, two days later he received the booklet, *The Supreme Discovery*. The skeptic and the pessimist in him did not let him open the book for two more days. After that he thought, “Let me read the book.” It was afternoon when he opened it, or rather took it in his hands. The book opened as if by itself to a page and the first line he read was, “Indeed it is in supreme weakness that it pleases the Divine to manifest.”

T was staggered and stunned. He had received his reply and within his heart he offered his gratitude to the Mother saying, “I have never heard or read such a reply in any of the scriptures. You are indeed my Mother.”

During his youth, though T had always had a passion for ideals, he had never been willing to do sadhana. He had come to the conclusion that illu-

mination comes by Grace only, that years of sadhana are futile, and that man cannot achieve anything by his own unaided effort. The ideals put forward in the scriptures did not satisfy him nor did those of the known paths of knowledge or devotion. Then what was he to look forward to? Whom to strive for?

He had finally arrived at the conclusion that to do what the Divine wants one to do is perhaps the greatest ideal. He decided that it was better to be a poor man if the Divine had willed it rather than to become a king or emperor with the help of inferior gods or lesser powers. But this bright thought remained only a vague point in his mind because his vital and mental natures were full of ambitions. Wealth and power had no attraction for him, but he wanted to do something no one had ever done, to have a creative genius and urge. There he started praying, “Let either Thy Will happen to me or grant me my prayers.”

When he received the booklet from the Mother he knew he had at last found someone he could turn to for guidance about his confusions and conflicts. He wrote to the Mother about all these inner battles, his uncertainties, and sent his letter by registered post with the instruction, “To be opened by the Mother only.” He wrote at least three or four letters per month to the Mother, opening himself totally to her, hiding nothing, shrinking from nothing. He felt an inner joy in opening to the Mother. In answer to his letters he received a printed message to the effect that the aim of mind and life and body was to become what the soul wanted and is. This response came to him with a force and power which set at rest all his ambitions and desires.

T had noticed that misfortunes constantly stalked his family. Two or three children of his loving sister-in-

law died before they were even a month old. Then his elder brother died and a few days later his father also died. The father of his sister-in-law was a Sanskrit scholar. He went to a famous sadhu and prayed to him to reveal the cause of the misfortunes of his daughter’s family. After some concentration the sadhu said it was the bad influence of their family deity. That sadhu had also asked T’s sister-in-law’s father whether the family had any guru. He was told that the family turned towards Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. The sadhu explained, “The family has survived by their Grace alone otherwise it would have perished long ago due to the evil influence of the deity.” This deity had been in T’s family for seven generations. It was a 200 year old image of brass weighing about ten kilos. T had once seen this deity in a subtle form and he had also felt that its influence was not beneficial. Now having come in contact with the Mother and upon hearing the sadhu’s verdict, which confirmed his own apprehensions, he decided to remove the deity. But all the villagers turned out to protest and refused to allow the removal of the image.

T wrote a letter to the Mother about this problem. He received an answer from Nolini, “Dear T, I have read out your letter to the Mother. The Mother sends you her blessings.” When the letter reached T he was in his office. He held the blessings-packet in his palm and at once became calm. He knew the Mother would do whatever was to be done. After ten days his niece, with the help of another relative, stealthily removed the statue and took it to a nearby city and gave it to someone who installed and worshipped it.

One year after the removal of the statue the sadhu who had advised them to remove the idol came to their house and declared that the atmosphere was



radically changed. The sudden deaths stopped. Later T read somewhere that the Mother had said such deities should be thrown into the Ganges.

On 6 July 1961 T came to the Ashram for the first time. The sun was just rising when the Mother came out onto the Balcony for Darshan. T was overwhelmed by her beauty. He says the Mother came to him in her aspect of Beauty. She was more than 80 then but to T her face seemed completely smooth, without a wrinkle. T was full of tensions due to his prolonged illnesses but in Pondicherry he slept, as if in heaven, hour after hour of peaceful sleep while all tensions seeped out of his body. To him everything seemed wonderful. He appreciated and admired all the activities and was so full of joy that he never asked for a special Darshan.

He was a post-graduate student then. In September he came again to the Ashram after the completion of his studies. At that time the Mother used to give Darshan sitting at the foot of the stairs in the Meditation Hall. If anybody wanted to do Pranam he had to get prior permission. T was granted permission and had the privilege of his first Pranam. On Mahanavami Day Champaklal suddenly approached him and told him he could do Pranam the next day on Vijaya Dashami. T protested that there must be some misunderstanding since he had already done Pranam on the previous day. Champaklal showed him the diary where the Mother had noted his name for the next day's Pranam. T was filled with joy and gratitude at this unexpected Grace.

On his return home T had a very severe attack of rheumatoid arthri-

tis. Every joint was locked. It was not possible even to write a letter to the Mother. A month passed. His condition deteriorated and the doctors said, "It is the last stage." Meanwhile an Ashramite wrote to him, "Why are you not writing?" At this T dictated a letter to a friend who even signed for him and informed the Mother about his suffering and peril. He received blessings and a message from her: "If the Lord wills a hardship for you, do not protest, take it as a blessing and indeed it will become so."

Meanwhile, after the allopaths had given up hope, T turned to homeopathy. A young homeopath, a new doctor with neither much knowledge nor

It was so cool and peaceful that T did not want to come out.

During that visit T wrote about his mental and financial difficulties to the Mother. Amrita read the letter to the Mother and told T, "The Mother knows everything about you in detail. You need not worry." T demanded, "But what about my difficulties?" Amrita at once replied, "You have to face them." When he heard these words T felt that he simultaneously received the strength to face every ordeal.

On his return home the difficulties increased a hundred-fold. T had noted a strange phenomenon. Most people found their difficulties diminished, their problems solved after they

T wrote about his mental and financial difficulties to the Mother. Amrita read the letter to the Mother and told T, "The Mother knows everything about you in detail. You need not worry." T demanded, "But what about my difficulties?" Amrita at once replied, "You have to face them."

came back from Pondicherry. Some found a job, others a good match for their daughters; but every time T returned, his

good medicines, treated T. Within two months he had fully recovered. The doctor himself admitted that this recovery was not due to his medicines.

T had left his job and was studying for his M.A. He was passing through great hardships, eating only one simple meal a day, living by tutoring students and doing odd jobs, but by the Mother's Grace, something always happened to make his visits to Pondicherry possible.

In 1962 when T came to Pondicherry he prayed for a visit to Sri Aurobindo's room. The prayer was granted and Champaklal took him in. It was so cool that he asked Champaklal if there was an air-cooler there. Champaklal replied, "No, it is the Lord's room." And then, as a Grace, for 15 minutes Champaklal described to T how Sri Aurobindo used to live there.

difficulties attacked him with redoubled force. In 1959 he had left his old job and attended college in the morning and then worked during the rest of the day. In July 1961 he left that job and joined college for his M.A. These were the days of great hardship. When he could not appear for the final examination he took up a new job instead.

In 1964 he had a sudden attack of galloping T.B. One lung was fully affected, another was half affected. His heart was greatly enlarged. For nine days he kept vomiting blood. He did not take any medicine. The Mother was informed and she sent blessings by telegram. After two or three days he stopped throwing up blood. He was taken to a hospital where his sputum-test showed four positives which is extremely bad. He was in utter despair, death seemed very close. On the way



to the hospital they stopped at a place where there was a particular photograph of the Mother. T had bought this same photograph earlier and had sent it to be autographed. Before signing it the Mother had asked for whom the photograph was meant. Now T suddenly saw the Mother herself standing in place of the photograph. He at once felt calm and free of all fear. In a flash he was granted *samata*—equanimity, which continues in him to this day.

The next day he was sent to a big hospital where his sputum-test was found to be completely negative. The doctors could not believe that a four-positive could turn to a completely negative in one day but further tests confirmed it. Actually the earlier test had been wrong. Now the doctors said that since the tests showed he was not seriously ill it was not good for him to be in the same ward with seriously ill patients. T wrote to the Mother. The Mother's answer was conveyed to him by an intermediary, "Ask T to go home and continue treatment if the doctors are reluctant to keep him there." T went home. Throughout the illness he had been sending all his X-rays, medical reports, etc., to the Mother to see. Amrita wrote that the Mother had said, "T should lie on his bed and make his body like a sheet—totally relaxed." T obeyed.

The Mother poured her Grace on him. He could not read a great deal. While he was ill he dreamt thrice that his health had improved and he was reading Chandi before the photograph of the Mother. He wrote to the Mother, "Mother, what does this signify? For I do not know what is Chandi." The Mother asked Amrita to write to T, "He may recite Chandi." So after that for two years T used to recite Chandi daily before the photograph of the Mother. The doctor attended on him changed his medicines; T was com-

plete cured after a year and, for the first time in his illness-prone life, he began to put on weight.

Then the Grace manifested itself in his life in a different way. He could now read and grasp Sri Aurobindo's writings. He was as if led from sentence to sentence, paragraph to paragraph, book to book, where he found the answers to all his questions. Also he met a great devotee who helped him and encouraged his faith, trust, love and reliance during periods of trial. Thus the Mother's Grace helped increase his capacity to understand and grasp the teachings of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. At this time, after four years, his services at work were suddenly terminated and he had to fight for his rights. Finally, after five years he was reinstated and received his back pay.

Later he stood second in an essay competition on Sri Aurobindo's Action and, as a prize, received *Savitri* from the Mother's own hands on 19 November 1971. In 1981 when he was in great difficulty, Nolini, who loved him, appeared before him in a dream and asked him to cut his ties with a particular friend whom Nolini did not even know physically. In the dream T pleaded with Nolini that this friend was not a bad chap. The relation snapped after some time and then T realised how harmful this person had been for him.

T comes to the Ashram many times a year. His son, a former student of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, has now become a sadhak. T works for the Mother in his state and his days open to vistas of experience. He laughs easily and his smooth face shows no trace of his many ordeals.

Essays

Rebirth and karma

by Larry Seidlitz

Rebirth and karma are two inter-related concepts and processes that are inextricably interconnected with Sri Aurobindo's conception of spiritual evolution. One can take almost any important spiritual concept in Sri Aurobindo's vision and it will be intertwined with the whole vision, but here we have two central processes that go to its heart. Spiritual evolution, or more accurately, soul evolution, is perhaps the single most defining feature of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy. Evolution, of course, is also a defining feature of the scientific explanation of our existence, but in that explanation the emphasis is on the external mechanisms of the evolution of living forms and species. The scientific view of evolution by itself does not help us in understanding why we are here or what we are to do with our brief ephemeral lives, nor does it even satisfactorily explain the process of evolution, because it leaves unanswered the difficult questions of how or why living beings could emerge from inconscient matter, and how the highly complex human mind could emerge from the inconscient wriggings of living matter. In general, the materialistic explanation has difficulty in credibly explaining the vast, complex, and intricately ordered development of both the physical universe and of complex life and mental beings within it. However, Sri Aurobindo's conception of soul evolution satisfactorily answers these questions, and with the twin processes of rebirth and karma as core features, helps us also



to understand the confusing nature of our often difficult lives and points the way to our deliverance and fulfilment.

The evolution of the soul in nature is the central defining feature of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy. From inconscient matter, first very simple microorganisms emerged, evolved to increasingly complex plants and animals, and eventually to human beings. Human beings range across a wide spectrum of evolutionary development, some are basically intelligent animals, others live primarily in their minds and sophisticated mental pursuits, and still others have gone beyond the mind and live primarily in a wide, contented, blissful spiritual consciousness. Sri Aurobindo argues that a higher, essentially divine humanity will establish itself at the forefront of humanity, and out of this transitional being a new divine species in a new divine body will supersede humanity and take the lead of the evolutionary progression on earth.

So far this describes only a collective evolution of new and more complex species embodying the emergence of new principles of existence, for example, the reasoning, reflecting, creative human mind evolving out of the limited, instinct-driven mind of animals. However, Sri Aurobindo also maintains that the evolution, especially the higher evolution at the human and spiritual levels, proceeds

primarily through individuals. It is always particular individuals who lead the evolutionary progression, while the mass follows more slowly behind in their wake. Sri Aurobindo maintains that the individual is not merely a portion or instance of the collective nature of which it is part, the individual has an autonomous soul and spirit that is greater than nature and in effect creates its own nature. The individual soul evolves through a long succession of earthly lives, from the stone, to the plant, to the animal, and through many human lives in various forms suited to its evolutionary progress. It carries the essence of its progress from previous lives into new births in new bodies. Thus, while the individual is in some measure limited by its standing as a member of a species and a collective existence, it also has a measure of autonomy that enables it to lead and even overpass that collective existence and thus carry the evolution forward to higher developments.

Involution and evolution

In Sri Aurobindo's view of the evolution of a spiritual being on earth out of inconscient matter, the reverse process of involution is its necessary reflection. A portion of the Absolute, the Divine, the Infinite Existence-Consciousness-Bliss or Sachchidananda as it is known in the ancient Indian tradition, has descended through many grades of increasingly dense and obscure consciousness to become pure material energy and substance. Pure spirit has *involved* to become inconscient matter and matter is gradually *evolving* to become a conscious, living form of spirit. This double process helps to explain many difficult philosophical issues. For instance, it explains how consciousness has emerged from and within a field of in-

conscient matter and energy, because in this view material energy is just another form of consciousness, one in which infinite consciousness of spirit has transformed itself or thrown itself into the energy of matter, and thus is able to gradually transform back to its original nature of infinite conscious existence. It also explains how the process of evolution is able to proceed in an intelligent, or let us say, lawful and orderly manner towards the release of increasingly complex and highly organized types of conscious beings, because in this view material processes still operate based on the infinite consciousness that is involved within them and of which they are an expression and outcome, and that also contains and upholds and surrounds them on every side. It is for this reason that the world does not disintegrate into a disordered chaos of inconscient energy but rather inexorably marches towards greater and more complex organization and consciousness. It helps explain the marvellous beauty and intricate harmonious perfection of nature of which we are a part. It also gives tremendous meaning and significance to life and particularly our own lives, because it means that we are all an integral part and expression of the one divine Existence which is the source of all things and all value, and also that we are evolving towards higher, perhaps infinitely higher, possibilities of conscious existence.

In Sri Aurobindo's philosophy, infinite, conscious and delightful spirit and inconscient infinitesimally disaggregated matter and energy are two ends of a continuum and display two different aspects of the one Reality: oneness and multiplicity. Spirit is oneness, it is a single unified conscious Delight underlying and constituting and transcending all that is: it is pure conscious Being which is undivided by



walls of form or living being or mental concept. Matter on the other hand is the basis of form and delimitation of the Infinite as well as the source of effective limitation, apparent incapacity, insensibility and ignorance which constitute the nature of our material existence. Between the two extremes there exists an infinite series of grades of consciousness ranging from inconscience to absolute consciousness. These grades of conscious existence are ordered and expressed in a series of planes of existence, in which the various levels of consciousness are each dominant in its corresponding plane. While there is an unbroken chain of these levels connecting pure spirit and pure matter, there are in Sri Aurobindo's view a small number of distinct principal planes each consisting of many subplanes and domains. In his view these planes were created in the descent of spirit towards matter, and thus are anterior to the creation of inconscient matter.

The world in which we live has as its basis inconscient matter, the lowest rung of this ladder of planes of existence, but also has as its unique feature evolution and the development of individual evolving souls within this dense material substance. The evolving souls, we could say as an introduction to the concept, are individual sparks of the one Divine Consciousness. They are each gradually growing through successive earthly lives within the evolving living forms of the world to become conscious, embodied, divine beings each expressing particular qualities and aspects of the one Divine Being, while at the same time becoming conscious of their essential unity with the one Divine. Through the evolution of these souls the oneness of spirit and the multiplicity of matter are to become integrated in a divine life upon earth.

Jiva, soul spark, psychic being

Let us next elaborate on Sri Aurobindo's conception of these souls, these individual sparks of the one Divine Consciousness that are here evolving in the midst of the material world. Sri Aurobindo distinguishes three different but related entities pertaining to the soul: the Jiva, the psychic essence or soul-spark, and the psychic being. The Jiva is an individual aspect or portion of the Divine, an individualized Spirit that transcends the material world and its evolution, but from above presides over the evolution of a psychic essence which it has projected into the material world. Thus, Sri Aurobindo posits that even though the Divine Being is one, it projects from this oneness innumerable individual Jivas that are particular facets of itself while yet consciously united in their core with the one Divine Being. The psychic essence is a projection of an individualized Jiva into the world, a kind of divine nucleus of spirit that is within and supports each material form and living thing on earth. In the course of time and evolution it gradually develops a soul personality, a psychic being, that expresses the Jiva's individual character more and more as it evolves in the forms of earthly life.

This soul personality is called a psychic being because it gradually becomes an individualized spiritual being, a conscious living representative of the Jiva descended into the material world, informing, guiding, and eventually directing and controlling the external nature of the earthly living being's body, life, and mind. The evolving psychic being ordinarily becomes clearly individualized and organized only as it approaches the human stage of evolution—before that there is a more generalized psychic influence pressing for growth and evolu-

tion, as well as the guiding influence of the Jiva from above. Even during the human stage the psychic being remains for many lives hidden deep within and veiled from the outer consciousness of the person by the activities of the mind, life and body, while a mental center of action called the ego occupies the frontal outer consciousness. The psychic being influences the evolution of the human being occultly from behind this veil, and in fact is largely responsible for choosing the circumstances of the person's life, for it survives the death of the body and after sojourning through other planes of consciousness after the body's death returns to birth in a new physical body of its own choosing to resume its evolution through various human life experiences which it helps to arrange. The psychic being is in its nature divine, and while accepting to inhabit living beings who are subject to ignorance, error, perversion, suffering and death, it remains pure and unsullied, and as it develops gradually over the course of many lives it organizes an outer nature of mind, life and body that eventually will be able to perfectly reflect and express its unique, individualized, and divine character in a divine life on earth.

Two related evolutions

In Sri Aurobindo's conception, there are then two parallel but inter-related lines of evolution taking place, one of the psychic being, and one of the outer nature of bodily life and mind. The psychic being, starting from an undifferentiated nucleus of spirit, a psychic essence, gradually over the course of many lives in many species, develops into a well-formed individualized spiritual being and personality that is unique and expresses a particular facet of the Divine that is embodied



in the earth-nature. This psychic being evolves and grows through the life experiences of the earthly beings that it inhabits and ensouls. As it grows, its influence on the outer life of the beings that it inhabits also grows, and increasingly it influences the outer being towards those experiences through which it can develop various spiritual qualities such as love, compassion, self-giving, strength, courage, intelligence, wisdom, harmony, goodness, sincerity, humility, purity, beauty, and detailed perfection. It is primarily such qualities that it strives to garner in its earthly lives to build up its being and carry with it into future lives, while focusing on the development of those qualities consistent with its individual character, the unique facet of the divine that it is meant to express.

There is secondarily an evolution of living forms on earth that can serve as suitable beings in which the psychic beings can inhabit and grow in experience. Here Sri Aurobindo partly accedes to the scientific theories of the process, though with the important proviso that he views it as a process essentially subservient and responsive to the evolution of the soul. Whereas it is a process that develops out of matter and thus largely proceeds through physical and subconscious micro-processes, he argues that even material and subconscious processes are working out, albeit unknowingly and instinctively, a divine intention with a divine wisdom and guidance that is inherent within them and that also influences them from above the physical plane of existence. The evolution of physical species provides a

chain of living beings within which the psychic being can evolve from an undifferentiated essence to a well-developed and formed living entity expressing itself in and through the outer nature of the being that it inhabits.

The multiple lines of karma

Karma is an important process that ties together these two lines of evolution, particularly at the human level in which there is a growing psychic being inhabiting a succession of earthly human lives and natures at varying stages of physical, emotional, moral, mental, and spiritual development and refinement. In its essence, karma is simply

Any energy that is put forth by a being—whether that energy is physical, emotional, moral, mental, or spiritual—will have consequences for that being, primarily, but not necessarily only, in the same mode or type of energy that is expended, and these consequences may come either immediately or at some time in the future, possibly in future lives.

an energy that is put forth by a being that necessarily has consequences for that being. Any energy that is put forth by a being—whether that energy is physical, emotional, moral, mental, or spiritual—will have corresponding consequences for that being, primarily, but not necessarily only, in the same mode or type of energy that is expended, and these consequences may come either immediately or at some time in the future, possibly in future lives. Thus if we expend much physical energy it will primarily affect us physically. For example, if we exercise we will develop our physical muscles and become stronger. If we develop practical skills, say skill in working with mechanical things, or cultivating plants, we will develop greater mastery over those practical domains of life. At the

emotional level, if we get angry we are likely to experience emotional consequences, possibly feelings of remorse, and the anger energy may return to us from others. If we are loving and compassionate to others, we are more likely to experience love and compassion from others, but also and more importantly, we will tend to grow in our ability and tendency to love and be compassionate. At the moral level, if we are dishonest and cheat others, we are more likely to suffer dishonesty and cheating from others, but also and more importantly, we will tend to grow in dishonesty. If we study hard, we are likely to grow intellectually and experience greater understanding and

mastery of our own lives and environment. We may earn more and thus benefit materially, but that is a secondary benefit that may derive

from the greater mastery that intelligence can bring. These examples are meant to emphasize that the consequences of our expenditures of energy tend to follow in the same modality, but may spill over to other modalities. It is a popular misconception that we are likely to be punished physically or financially for our moral misdeeds. Sri Aurobindo repeatedly disparages the view that karma is a system of rewards and punishments for our moral behavior.

Sri Aurobindo indicates that the laws, or patterns, for they are more flexible than laws, that govern the returns for the different types of energies that we expend—physical, vital, moral, mental—differ according to the different types of energy. He describes these as different lines of karma, and in hu-



man beings these different lines or strands are interwoven in our lives and all of them operative at some level. We all have physical bodies and our physical actions have physical consequences. If we put our hand in fire we will get burnt, it does not matter whether we are good or bad. If we eat healthy foods in moderation and exercise we will tend to gain in bodily health. If we attend to the material practicalities of life we are likely to benefit materially for that attention, if we ignore them we are likely to materially suffer or be materially limited. In physical matters the consequences tend to be relatively direct and proportionate to the actions, but even here other factors may intervene and change the balance. It is not a moral balance, it is a give and take of physical energies.

Human beings must respect the physical basis of our existence and give it its proper regard, but we are mental beings in a physical world and able to go beyond the natural physical relations of energy. We can learn the secrets of physical energies and processes and master and utilize them for our own purposes. As we delve mentally into the secrets of physical nature, nature returns fruits for that attention and search. It offers its energies to our control, and we see this in the many material benefits which have been accrued by physical science and technology. On the other hand, as we are also witnessing on a global scale, our neglect and abuse of the physical environment also leads to a return in kind, a return of polluted air and water, a depletion of natural resources, global warming and an increasingly inhospitable environment in which to live. Again it is not a moral law of return: the polluters, the corporate executives and corrupt politicians who profit by this exploitation may not personally suffer from these physical effects, and

the innocent poor tend to suffer the brunt of the environmental burden. It is possible that the guilty will suffer morally for their moral transgressions, for their greed and callousness and destructiveness, in this life or another, due to the karmic consequences of their moral behaviour, but this is separate from the physical consequences of their actions. For example, they may grow more greedy and callous, and thus retard their evolutionary progress.

The vital level is concerned with survival, growth, reproduction, possession and enjoyment, the enlargement of life's field of action and pleasure. Whatever expenditures of energy contribute to these ends are rewarded by life, though a proper balance with the physical level must be maintained for life to thrive. We can see this expenditure of vital energy and its consequences most purely at the animal level of existence, but it is also one important strain in the makeup of the human animal. Here again morality plays little or no role in the return that the life energies give. Life feeds off the lives of those around, death and destruction are means for growth and expansion. Expansion of life often means the restriction of life for others. Strength, courage, initiative, struggle, and power over others count more and are rewarded more highly by life than humility or moral virtue. These qualities too are part of the economy of nature and at this level of existence receive their just rewards.

Still, in human beings the vital nature is just one strand of our complex makeup, and for our higher growth it must be harmonized with and eventually subdued by our mental nature. A sole preoccupation with its satisfaction and growth occurs at the expense of the development of our higher possibilities of mental and spiritual evolu-

tion. In the interactions with our fellow human beings, strength and force are effective instruments, but they are not necessarily the most effective instruments—intelligence, knowledge, skill, effective communication and negotiation are usually more effective.

As human beings begin to rise in the evolutionary scale out of animality, they develop the capacities of the mind: of thought, memory, reflection, imagination, concern for order, concentration of the thought and mental will to achieve objectives. At first, the mind is used to further the still primary vital interests. The mind at first is enmeshed with the vital and used by the vital to secure its own aims. We can see this also at the animal level in the use of strategy, ruse, and cunning to seize prey. In humans this takes an ampler sweep and grows increasingly sophisticated, but the turn of the mind toward material success and prosperity, toward the accumulation of material things, toward the expansion of power and prestige share the same fundamental character. And life rewards the use of the mind for these ends and gives these as rewards, for this is on the upward evolutionary trajectory. Again, morality is not the main concern in the karmic response, rather, the skilful handling of the life energies is a more primary concern and leads to returns in the form of the expansion of life at the material and vital levels.

Sri Aurobindo discusses two types of karmic backlash that do happen in response to a certain overreaching or exaggeration of mental-vital egoistic expansion. These are not really moral punishments, but rather the return of unbridled vital energies upon their instigator. They may be simply due to an egoistic overreaching that meets resistance from the collective or from other individuals. But Sri Aurobindo also



suggests that there are cosmic forces associated with a higher Intelligence at work in the universe that respond to the balance of the mental and vital order. He suggests that there is a cosmic force or power which counters excessive egoistic enlargement, possession and enjoyment. It may continually resist the individual's egoistic efforts, or it may give a long rope and allow success for a shorter or longer time, inducing a feeling of security and overconfidence, and then suddenly exploit a weakness and bring the individual to ruin. This suggests there is a kind of higher consciousness that oversees the human evolution and puts curbs on the excesses of the mental-vital ego to maintain and guard the evolution progression.

Sri Aurobindo also notes another phenomenon that sometimes occurs, though not inevitably and not necessarily according our moral sensibilities, but which gives us the sense of a moral law at work in the universe. He refers to this as the law of the talion, and more vividly, as a boomerang movement of energies returning upon their transmitter. Sometimes there is a startling similarity in the mode and measure in the returning force, and we cannot but be struck by the apparent justice done, but at other times it is more subtle and unobtrusive. Sri Aurobindo argues that such returns of equal force are occasional and intermittent rather than regular and automatic. It does not in itself constitute a law of karma, but serves as one strand in a more complex process. He characterizes its action as a "first line of transitional Karma intended to

prevent the success of the vital egoism of man and serves as an interim compression and compulsion until he can discover and succeed in spite of his vital self in obeying a higher law of his being and a purer dynamism of motive in his directing mind and governing spirit" (*Essays in Philosophy and Yoga*, p. 409).

Sri Aurobindo emphasizes that in spite of such correspondences in such a vital backlash against what may be considered moral transgressions, they are at most an inconsistent strand in a far more complex process that is ultimately aimed at the evolutionary progress of the soul. He argues that a

As the human being grows in the seeking and finding of these higher experiences, it receives a return for its expansion into these domains of the higher mentality, not a vital return, but primarily in the form of a progression of the soul and the being towards knowledge, good, beauty, love and joy, a progression which leads ultimately to spiritual fulfilment and perfection.

careful observation of the world reveals that good actions often lead to negative or evil outcomes and that evil actions often lead to good or positive outcomes. As he says, "Attila and Jenghiz on the throne to the end, Christ on the cross and Socrates drinking his portion of hemlock are no very clear evidence for any optimistic notion of a law of moral return in the world of human nature" (*Essays in Philosophy and Yoga*, p. 411). We might also note that it is a common observation in our everyday lives that what appear as adversities may lead to the growth of our nature, and that what appear as boons or blessings may lead to the slackening or degradation of our nature. Still, Sri Aurobindo argues that in general whatever good is done "tends to increase the sum and total power of

good in the world" and whatever evil is done "tends to increase the sum and total power of evil in the world" and that eventually, the person or nation doing evil "has in some way to pay for it, but not often in any intelligibly graded or apportioned measure and not always in clearly translating terms of vital good fortune and ill fortune" (*Essays in Philosophy and Yoga*, pp. 411-412).

As the mind grows upwards and away from its subjection to the demands and claims of the vital and physical nature, it seeks for its own native mental experiences. As Sri Aurobindo describes them, these include

"the demand of the intellect for truth and knowledge, the demand of the ethical mind for right and good, the demand of the aesthetic mind for beauty and delight of beauty, the demand of the emotional mind for love and the joy of relation with our fellow-beings, the demand of the will for self-mastery and mastery of things and the world and our existence" (*Essays in Philosophy and Yoga*, p. 413). As the human being grows in the seeking and finding of these higher experiences, it receives a return for its expansion into these domains of the higher mentality, not a vital return, but primarily in the form of a progression of the soul and the being towards knowledge, good, beauty, love and joy, a progression which leads ultimately to spiritual fulfilment and perfection. As the person grows in these qualities, they are sought more and more not for the material or vital returns that they may bring, but for their own sake. Right action and goodness, the



seeking and enjoyment of beauty, love, and joy, the seeking and enjoyment of self-mastery and the mastery of things and the world, carry in themselves their own reward, no other reward is needed. As the being grows out of the need and search for external, utilitarian rewards for such mental pursuits—for example, the rewards of riches or fame or influence—the higher and purer become the experiences of these qualities. And on the negative side, the more the individual neglects or deviates from the development of these qualities, indulges in their opposites, the only real punishment, if we can use that term, is the clouding and veiling of these qualities and the strengthening of their opposite tendencies in the nature. It means a slowing or a deviation in the being's evolutionary trajectory, a lengthening of the road through the vicissitudes of life, a delay in the soul's deliverance from the ignorance and suffering of life.

Rebirth and karma

As we grow or as we regress due to the expenditure of our energies in these different domains of our being, these growths and regressions are carried forward into our next life by our psychic being. When the psychic being leaves the physical body at the time of death, in most cases it passes into the vital worlds for a time where it may exhaust some of its vital energies and tendencies before it discards its vital sheath, and then into the mental worlds where it may exhaust some of its mental energies before it discards its mental sheath, and finally goes to the psychic world where it goes into a kind of sleep or trance and assim-

lates its previous life experiences and prepares for its next life. Sri Aurobindo indicates that the psychic being carries only the essence of its previous life experiences, the essential qualities that it had sought through those experiences. Sri Aurobindo describes the character of these essential qualities in one of his letters:

The psychic when it departs from the body, shedding even the mental and vital on its way to its resting place, carries with it the heart of its experiences,—not the physical events, not the vital movements, not the mental buildings, not the capacities or

As we grow or as we regress due to the expenditure of our energies in these different domains of our being, these growths and regressions are carried forward into our next life by our psychic being.

characters, but something essential that it gathered from them, what might be called the divine element for the sake of which the rest existed... What was the divine element in the magnanimity of the warrior, that which expressed itself in his loyalty, nobility, high courage, what was the divine element behind the harmonious mentality and generous vitality of the poet and expressed itself in them, that remains and in a new harmony of character may find a new expression or, if the life is turned towards the Divine, be taken up as powers for the realisation or for the work that has to be done for the Divine. (*Letters on Yoga I*, p. 544)

This divine element or essence of the past experiences, however, does

not seem to encompass all that is retained and carried forward into future lives. In particular, this divine essence by itself would not account for the carryover of negative karmic consequences. Sri Aurobindo explains that there is a continuation of particular formations and personalities from the previous life that the psychic being can either draw on or hold in reserve and can combine these formations with other materials when it designs the new personality and circumstances for its future life and lives. Each human being is composed of numerous personalities and tendencies and habitual formations which carry certain karmic influences. These personalities

and tendencies, if they are well formed, may not disintegrate in the transition after the death of the body and may continue to

survive in their own domains. The psychic being selects from these past formations those that are useful for its continued evolution and combines them with other materials to make the personality composite for the future life. What seems to happen is that after the death of the body these formations separate from the psychic being in the sojourn to the psychic world and remain in their corresponding vital or mental realms, but they appear to keep some kind of relation with the psychic being to which they were associated and which knows and has assimilated their essential qualities. In any case, Sri Aurobindo indicates that when the psychic being is preparing for its next birth it may choose to take up some of these personalities and tendencies and their karmic consequences and combine them with other materials to build the composite personality



and circumstances for the future life to continue its evolutionary growth. Sri Aurobindo stresses that this is not a mechanical process of punishment but something chosen by the psychic being for the purposes of its own growth of experience and its further evolution.

The soul gathers the essential element of its experiences in life and makes that its basis of growth in the evolution; when it returns to birth it takes up with its mental, vital, physical sheaths so much of its Karma as is useful to it in the new life for farther experience. (*Letters on Yoga I*, p. 535)

It is a little difficult to explain. When one gets a new body, the nature which inhabits it, nature of mind, nature of vital, nature of physical, is made up of many personalities, not one simple personality as is supposed—although there is one central being. This complex personality is formed partly by bringing together personalities of past lives, but also by gathering experiences, tendencies, influences from the earth atmosphere—which are taken up by one of the constituent personalities as suitable to his own nature. (*Letters on Yoga I*, p. 542)

The essential form of the past personality may remain as one element among many, one personality among many personalities of the same Person, but in the background, in the subliminal behind the veil of the surface mind and life and body, contributing from there whatever is needed of itself to the new formation; but it will not itself be the whole formation or build anew the old unchanged

type of nature... All the past is indeed there, with its accelerated impetus and potentialities for the formation of the future, but all of it is not ostensibly present and active. (*The Life Divine*, pp. 848-849)

We see then that there is a dynamic reciprocal connection between the evolving soul or psychic being and the evolving nature and forms consisting of material, vital, moral, mental, and spiritual energies of various specific kinds. The evolving psychic being is the central being, a representative of the Jiva, the divine individual who presides over the evolution, and in each of the psychic being's successive human lives, it gathers together and combines various personalities and tendencies of physical, vital, and mental nature, and expresses itself and evolves through their activities and experiences. At the end of each earthly human life, it assimilates the essential qualities of the experiences of these personalities and their actions, which it carries forward into its future evolution. The personalities and tendencies themselves, which may carry positive or negative karma or consequences from past actions, are cast off after death, but may be picked up again by the evolving soul in future births as part of the constitution of its new composite nature to continue its evolution along certain lines that may have been left incomplete, or may be taken to greater heights or into new combinations. As the psychic being evolves through its successive earthly lives, it progressively organizes around itself these aspects of physical, vital, and mental nature, gains more and more control over them, and through them is able to express more and more clearly and powerfully in the world the unique divine individuality of the Jiva of which it is a representative on earth.

The superman: Intermediary between the human and the supramental being

*Reprinted from the SABDA newsletter,
July 2019*

by Larry Seidlitz

For the further evolution of consciousness on earth, Sri Aurobindo described a number of levels above the ordinary human level of mental consciousness that needed to be scaled and their powers and transforming effects brought down and integrated with the existing human consciousness. He described a succession of intervening planes of the higher mind, the illumined mind, the intuition, and the overmind that led upwards towards the supramental consciousness, the last described as the truth-consciousness, beyond the limiting effects of mind. The establishment of the supramental consciousness in the earth consciousness would be the next major step in the evolutionary progression and was Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's primary aim, achieved in 1956. This only meant that it would be there in the earth consciousness as a principle, like mind and life are already there, not that it would be available to everyone. Individual souls would still need to evolve to its level, though its establishment and presence would have a general uplifting effect. Sri Aurobindo made clear that the intervening levels leading towards the supramental consciousness, supermind for short, were not merely higher forms of cognition, but "domains of being, grades of the substance and energy of the spiritual being, fields of existence



which are each a level of the universal Consciousness-Force constituting and organising itself into a higher status” (*The Life Divine*, CWSA 21–22, p. 973). The ascent of the consciousness into these domains and their descent into the lower nature progressively transforms the entire consciousness into a subtler, more powerful, luminous, and ecstatic energy and substance, and prepares it for the realisation of the supermind.

This ascent and descent and integration and transformation of the consciousness is not a linear, clearly demarcated progression; there are mixtures of influences which gradually become purified and heightened. The higher levels in their descent become obscured by the lower levels all the way down to the subconscious and inconscient foundations, and the obstacles of the lower consciousness cannot be entirely swept away by anything less than the descent of the supramental consciousness and force into matter. In their descent, the transforming action of the various levels of spiritual consciousness work more effectively on the higher and inner parts of the nature, their effects on the lower and outer parts take longer to manifest. The higher levels of the spiritual consciousness do not necessarily wait to descend until the lower intermediate levels are fully established; there is an order, but a flexible, overlapping order. In addition, the individual’s consciousness is continually in interaction with the consciousness of others and the world around; there is a circumconscient part of the consciousness which receives these outside influences that also must be spiritualised to nullify the lowering outside effects or else to transmit a transforming power on the world around.

Sri Aurobindo indicated that in November 1926 there was a descent

of Krishna, the Overmind Godhead, into his physical being, and through him, into matter (for his comments on this and the following, see (*Letters on Himself and the Ashram*, CWSA 35). Through much of the 1930s, Sri Aurobindo wrote in his letters that his efforts were directed at bringing the supramental consciousness and force into matter and into the earth consciousness. He noted that the intermediate levels of spiritual consciousness leading up to overmind had already descended and, while not available to everyone, could be attained through tapasya. He mentioned that the overmind, which had been the support of the present earth-nature, was undergoing a change under the pressure of the supramental force, and was gradually becoming supramentalised. He also explained that supramentalisation of the physical consciousness and of matter were necessary for the full supramentalisation of the mind and life principles, as they also have a physical component in them. In the latter 1930s and 1940s, he noted there was a focus on bringing the supramental light and force into the subconscious and inconscient, the latter being the “fundamental basis of all resistance in the individual and in the world to the victory of the Spirit and the Divine Work” (CWSA 35, p. 367).

Sri Aurobindo’s last prose writings, eight essays which appeared in the Ashram quarterly *Bulletin of Physical Education* in 1949 and 1950, and which were published as a book in 1952 under the title *The Supramental Manifestation upon Earth*, provided a detailed consideration of the transition from the human to the supramental being. He reserved the term supramental being for a new type of divine being that in the future would live on earth alongside human beings. The third chapter introduces the idea

of intermediary beings between the human and the supramental being:

It might be also that the transformation might take place in stages; there are powers of the nature still belonging to the mental region which are yet potentialities of a growing gnosis lifted beyond our human mentality and partaking of the light and power of the Divine and an ascent through these planes, a descent of them into the mental being might seem to be the natural evolutionary course.... Still these levels might become stages of the ascent which some would reach and pause there while others went higher and could reach and live on superior strata of a semi-divine existence.... The large mass of human beings might still remain for long content with a normal or only a partially illumined and uplifted human nature (CWSA 13, pp. 537–38).

The fourth and fifth chapters describe the nature of the supramental consciousness and the likely effects of its descent on the mind, life, and body, transforming them, ameliorating or removing their limitations and defects. The sixth chapter begins with a clear statement regarding the transitional being, the superman:

A new humanity would then be a race of mental beings on the earth and in the earthly body, but delivered from its present conditions in the reign of the cosmic Ignorance so far as to be possessed of a perfected mind, a mind of light which could even be a subordinate action of the supermind or Truth-consciousness, and in any case capable of the full possibili-



ties of mind acting as a recipient of that truth and at least a secondary action of it in thought and life. It could even be a part of what could be described as a divine life upon earth and at least the beginnings of an evolution in the Knowledge and no longer entirely or predominantly in the Ignorance (CWSA 13, p. 578).

In the seventh essay, writing of this new humanity, Sri Aurobindo notes that

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 (CWSA 13, p. 585).

He further indicates:

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 embody more and more the turn towards spirituality, capacity for Light, a climb towards a divinised manhood and the divine life (CWSA 13, p. 587).

The final chapter of *The Supramental Manifestation upon Earth* was published in November 1950, shortly before Sri Aurobindo left his body on

5 December. It appears that the series of essays was left incomplete, and the last paragraph suggests that he may have intended to further explain the nature of the Mind of Light and its powers and its possibilities.

We now turn to the Mother's account of the transitional being. In a conversation in 1972, she described that when Sri Aurobindo left his body, "all this supramental force which was in him passed from his body into mine. And I felt the friction of the passage" (CWM 11, p. 328). In another place she noted that "[a]s soon as Sri Aurobindo withdrew from his body, what he has called the Mind of Light got realised in me" (CWM 13, p. 63).

Soon after Sri Aurobindo left his body, the Mother's inner work seemed to be focused on the transformation of the consciousness of the body, its penetration and transformation by the supramental Light and Force. For example, in April 1951, she said:

Now it has become the very movement of the cellular consciousness. All weaknesses, all responses to adverse suggestions (I mean the smallest things of every minute in the cells), are taken in the same movement of offering (and these come sometimes in waves, to such an extent that the body feels it will swoon before this assault), and then comes a light, so warm, so deep, so powerful, which puts everything back in order, in its place, and opens the way to transformation (CWM 4, p. 338).

She continued working on this level in the years that followed, occasionally commenting on her progress. In 1954 she wrote, "In this intensity the aspiration grows formidable, and in answer to it Thy Presence becomes evident in the cells themselves, giving

to the body the appearance of a multicoloured kaleidoscope in which innumerable luminous particles in constant motion are sovereignly reorganised by an invisible and all-powerful Hand" (CWM 15, p. 282). Her formidable work in the cells of the body was tenably a factor leading to the descent of the supramental consciousness into the earth atmosphere on 29 February 1956. Following that descent, she indicated that the transformative process had accelerated and there was a change in the earth atmosphere. Some of her own experiences were discussed in her classes with disciples and the students of the Ashram school, and others were recorded by a disciple and published in *Notes on the Way* (CWM 11).

On 16 April 1958, she indicated that there was already the beginning of the realisation of the superman consciousness and that this realisation was attainable by others:

Anyway, 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....

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....

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 9, pp. 313-315).

Then on 1 January 1969, there was the descent of a powerful new consciousness, which the Mother later identified as the superman con-

sciousness. On 4 January the Mother explained:

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 into delight and light. [...] [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 (CWM 11, pp. 149-50).

At first the Mother wondered if it might be the supramental personality. She then talked about how concrete it was, that it did not pass through an inner being, through the psychic being, but came directly on the body. After making this observation, she reaches the conclusion that this was perhaps the superman personality, not the supramental.

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 11, p. 151).

A few days later she confirmed: “Yes, it is that. It is the descent of the superman consciousness. I had the assurance later on” (CWM 11, p. 153). Two weeks later she commented:

There is within it a consciousness—a *very* precious thing—which gives lessons to the body, teaching it what it must do, that is to say, the attitude it must have, the reaction it must have... I have already told you many a time that it is very difficult to find the process of transformation when there is no one to give you any indications; well, it was as though the reply; it came to tell the body: “Take this attitude, do this in this way, do that in that way”, and so the body is satisfied, it is completely reassured, it can no longer be mistaken (CWM 11, p. 154).

The Mother indicated that this consciousness was acting on a large scale, and that it was also working in others, only that they, not being accustomed to observing themselves, would notice it less, though its action would essentially be the same. She indicated that there had been marked changes in those individuals who had been touched by its descent on the first of January: “it is particularly . . . indeed a precision and a certitude that has entered into their way of thinking,” and she felt that she had been “given the charge of putting it into contact with



all those who come near me” (CWM 11, p. 156). On 12 March she told a disciple that it has come to materialise and that it was looking for instruments, and then she added that she had great hope in little children. She had already noted two years earlier, in answer to a question about whether the date 4.5.67 would mark the beginning of the new race of supermen, that “since a few months the children born, amongst our people mostly, are of a very special kind” (CWM 15, p. 105). Later, in 1971, she mentioned, “I believe really that it is among the children that will be found those who can begin the new race. Men are . . . crusted over” (CWM 11, p. 252).

On 15 February 1969, she said that superman consciousness was very active and acted as a mentor to her, something she often repeated, and then described a powerful experience she had that morning:

During these few hours (three or four), I understood absolutely what it was to have the divine consciousness in the body. And then this body here, that body there, that body there (*gestures to this side and that side and all around Mother’s body*), it did not matter; it went about from one body to another, altogether free and independent, knowing the limitations and possibilities of each body [...]

It is . . . yes, I believe the only word that describes the sensation one has, is: it is an Absolute: absolute Knowledge, absolute Will, absolute Power.... Nothing, nothing can resist it. And then, it is an Absolute which is (one has this kind of sensation, concrete) of compassion! [...] And it is That, everywhere. That is everywhere. And it is the experience of the

body; and to That, the body gives itself entirely, totally, asking for nothing, nothing at all. Only one aspiration (*same gesture, palms opened upward*): to be able to be That, what That wants—to serve That; not even so: to *be* That.

But that state, which lasted for several hours, nothing similar to that happiness has this body ever felt during the ninety-one years it has been here upon earth: freedom, absolute power, and no limits (*gesture here and there, everywhere*), no limits, no impossibilities, nothing. It was . . . all other bodies were itself. There was no difference, it was only a play of consciousness (*gesture as of a great Rhythm*) going about (CWM 11, pp. 157-58).

The superman consciousness continued to guide the Mother. A year and half later, on 5 August 1970, she said “it is an excellent mentor for this body, it is giving it lessons continually....” (CWM 11, 240). Also, her body consciousness was changing: “I have the feeling that even the consciousness of the body has a minimum of the personal in it. At times I no longer have the feeling of the limits of my body.... I do not know how to say it.... Yes, it is that, it is almost as though it had become fluid. [...] It is a force, a consciousness which is *spread* over everything. I do not feel any limit, I feel it is a thing spread out, even physically...” (CWM 11, p. 242). Yet this state would oscillate with states of resistance in the body. For example, in October 1971 she said, “The body is in a state in which it sees that everything depends simply on how it is linked with the Divine—upon the state of its receptive surrender. [...] The same thing which is the cause of a—more than a discomfort—a suffering, an almost unbear-

able ailment, with just a change in the receptivity of the body towards the Divine disappears all of a sudden—and can even move to a blissful state. [...] I might say: the cells of the body must learn to seek their support only in the Divine, until the moment when they are able to feel that they are the expression of the Divine” (CWM 11, p. 273).

Up until the end, as the various cells and the functioning of her body and organs were being transformed and learning this attitude of surrender, the Mother continued to oscillate between experiences of suffering and bliss. One of the important things she kept mentioning during this time was the need for complete surrender. For example, on 17 May 1969, she said: “The body is not concerned at all with itself; it is like this (*Mother opens out her hands*), it is all the time: ‘What Thou willest, Lord, what Thou willest’ ... and with a smile and a perfect joy” (CWM 11, p. 168).

Similarly, a few months later, speaking about the world situation, she said, “Finally, I am fully convinced that the confusion is there to teach us how to live from day to day, that is to say, not to be preoccupied with what may happen, what will happen, just to occupy oneself day by day with doing what one has to do... and then to let the All-Consciousness decide.... [...] By giving great importance to things dangerous and harmful, you only add strength to them” (CWM 11, pp. 184–85). In the same conversation, she said that when we are assailed by disorder and confusion, we should enter into the consciousness where there is only a single Unity and everything is taking place within this Unity. “More and more,” the Mother confirmed, “more and more, the certitude is there: this is the *only* solution.”

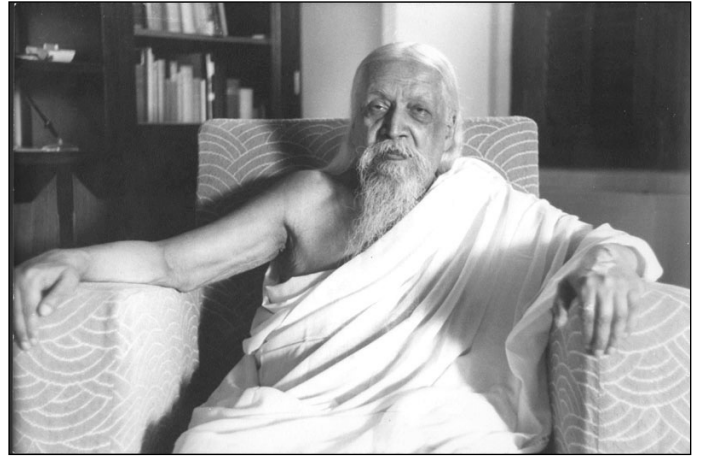


Source material

Karma and the psychic being

by Sri Aurobindo

It is not conceivable that the spirit within is an automaton in the hands of Karma, a slave in this life of its past actions; the truth must be less rigid and more plastic. If a certain amount of results of past Karma is formulated in the present life, it must be with the consent of the psychic being which presides over the new formation of its earth-experience and assents not merely to an outward compulsory process, but to a secret Will and Guidance. That secret Will is not mechanical, but spiritual; the guidance comes from an Intelligence which may use mechanical processes but is not their subject. Self-expression and experience are what the soul seeks by its birth into the body; whatever is necessary for the self-expression and experience of this life, whether it intervenes as an automatic outcome of past lives or as a free selection of results and a continuity or as a new development, whatever is a means of creation of the future, that will be formulated: for the principle is not the working out of a mechanism of Law, but the development of the nature through cosmic experience so that eventually it may grow out of the Ignorance. There must therefore be two elements, Karma as an instrument, but also the secret Consciousness and Will within working through the mind, life and body as the user. Fate, whether purely mechanical or created by ourselves, a chain of our own manufacture, is only one factor of existence; Being and its consciousness and its will are a still more important factor. In Indian astrology which considers all life circumstances to be Karma, mostly predetermined or indicated in the graph of the stars, there is still provision made for the energy and force of the being which can change or cancel part or much of what is so written or even all but the most imperative and powerful bindings of Karma. This is a reasonable account of the balance: but there is also to be added to the computation the fact that destiny is not simple but complex; the destiny which binds our physical being, binds it so long or in so far as a greater law does not intervene. Action belongs to the physical part of us, it is the physical outcome of our being; but behind our surface is a freer life power, a freer mind power which has another energy and can create another destiny and bring it in to modify the primary plan, and when the soul and self emerges, when we become con-



sciously spiritual beings, that change can cancel or wholly remodel the graph of our physical fate. Karma, then,—or at least any mechanical law of Karma,—cannot be accepted as the sole determinant of circumstances and the whole machinery of rebirth and of our future evolution.

But this is not all; for the statement of the Law errs by an over-simplification and the arbitrary selection of a limited principle. Action is a resultant of the energy of the being, but this energy is not of one sole kind; the consciousness-force of the spirit manifests itself in many kinds of energies: there are inner activities of mind, activities of life, of desire, passion, impulse, character, activities of the senses and the body, a pursuit of truth and knowledge, a pursuit of beauty, a pursuit of ethical good or evil, a pursuit of power, love, joy, happiness, fortune, success, pleasure, life satisfactions of all kinds, life enlargement, a pursuit of individual or collective objects, a pursuit of the health, strength, capacity, satisfaction of the body. All this makes an exceedingly complex sum of the manifold experience and many-sided action of the spirit in life, and its variety cannot be set aside in favour of a single principle, neither can it be hammered into so many sections of the single duality of ethical good and evil; ethics, the maintenance of human standards of morality, cannot, therefore, be the sole preoccupation of the cosmic Law or the sole principle of determination of the working of Karma. If it is true that the nature of the energy put forth must determine the nature of the result or outcome, all these differences in the nature of the energy have to be taken into account and each must have its appropriate consequence. An energy of seeking for truth and knowledge must have as its natural outcome,—its reward or recompense, if you will,—a growth into truth, an increase in knowledge; an energy used for falsehood should result in an increase of falsehood in the nature and a deeper immersion in the Ignorance. An energy of pur-



suit of beauty should have as its outcome an increase in the sense of beauty, the enjoyment of beauty or, if so directed, in the beauty and harmony of the life and the nature. A pursuit of physical health, strength and capacity should create the strong man or the successful athlete. An energy put out in the pursuit of ethical good must have as its outcome or reward or recompense an increase in virtue, the happiness of ethical growth or the sunny felicity and poise and purity of a simple and natural goodness, while the punishment of opposite energies would be a deeper plunge into evil, a greater disharmony and perversion of the nature and, in case of excess, a great spiritual perdition, *mahat vinastih*. An energy put forward for power or other vital ends must lead to an increase of the capacity for commanding these results or to the development of a vital strength and plenitude. This is the ordinary disposition of things in Nature and, if justice be demanded of her, this surely is justice that the energy and capacity put forward should have in its own kind its fitting response from her. The prize of the race is assigned by her to the swift, the victory in battle to the brave and strong and skilful, the rewards of knowledge to the capable intellect and the earnest seeker: these things she will not give to the good man who is sluggish or weak or skillless or stupid merely because he is righteous or respectable; if he covets these other powers of life, he must qualify for them and put forward the right kind of energy. If Nature did otherwise, she could well be accused of injustice; there is no reason to accuse her of injustice for this perfectly right and normal arrangement or to demand from her a rectification of the balance in a future life so that the good man may be given as a natural reward for his virtue a high post or a large bank balance or a happy, easy and well-appointed life. That cannot be the significance of rebirth or a sufficient basis for a cosmic law of Karma.

[...]

In any case the reactions of Nature are not in essence meant as reward or punishment; that is not their fundamental value, which is rather an inherent value of natural relations and, in so far as it affects the spiritual evolution, a value of the lessons of experience in the soul's cosmic training. If we touch fire, it burns, but there is no principle of punishment in this relation of cause and effect, it is a lesson of relation and a lesson of experience; so in all Nature's dealings with us there is a relation of things and there is a corresponding lesson of experience. The action of the cosmic Energy is complex and the same Forces may act in different ways according to circumstances, to the need of the being, to the intention of the Cosmic Power in its action; our life is affected not only by its own energies but by the

energies of others and by universal Forces, and all this vast interplay cannot be determined in its results solely by the one factor of an all-governing moral law and its exclusive attention to the merits and demerits, the sins and virtues of individual human beings. Nor can good fortune and evil fortune, pleasure and pain, happiness and misery and suffering be taken as if they existed merely as incentives and deterrents to the natural being in its choice of good and evil. It is for experience, for growth of the individual being that the soul enters into rebirth; joy and grief, pain and suffering, fortune and misfortune are parts of that experience, means of that growth: even, the soul may of itself accept or choose poverty, misfortune and suffering as helpful to its growth, stimulants of a rapid development, and reject riches and prosperity and success as dangerous and conducive to a relaxation of its spiritual effort. Happiness and success bringing happiness are, no doubt, a legitimate demand of humanity; it is an attempt of life and matter to catch a pale reflection or a gross image of felicity: but a superficial happiness and material success, however desirable to our vital nature, are not the main object of our existence; if that had been the intention, life would have been otherwise arranged in the cosmic ordinance of things. All the secret of the circumstances of rebirth centres around the one capital need of the soul, the need of growth, the need of experience; that governs the line of its evolution and all the rest is accessory. Cosmic existence is not a vast administrative system of universal justice with a cosmic Law of recompense and retribution as its machinery or a divine Legislator and Judge at its centre. It is seen by us first as a great automatic movement of energy of Nature, and in it emerges a self-developing movement of consciousness, a movement therefore of Spirit working out its own being in the motion of energy of Nature. In this motion takes place the cycle of rebirth, and in that cycle the soul, the psychic being, prepares for itself,—or the Divine Wisdom or the cosmic Consciousness-Force prepares for it and through its action,—whatever is needed for the next step in its evolution, the next formation of personality, the coming nexus of necessary experiences constantly provided and organised out of the continuous flux of past, present and future energies for each new birth, for each new step of the spirit backward or forward or else still in a circle, but always a step in the growth of the being towards its destined self-unfolding in Nature. (*The Life Divine*, pp. 840-847)

When there is a new birth one brings all that is necessary from past lives but also one gathers what is necessary from the earth consciousness and so too brings in new elements as one develops.
(*Letters on Yoga I*, pp. 541-542)



Psychic being's choice of life circumstances

by the Mother

When the psychic is about to enter into the world, does it choose in advance the form it is going to take?

It is an interesting question. That depends. As I have just told you, there are psychic beings who are in the making, progressing; these generally, right at the outset, cannot choose much, but when they have arrived at a certain degree of growth and of consciousness (generally while they are still in a physical body and have had a certain amount of experience), they decide at that time what their next field of experience will be like.

I can give you some rather external examples. For instance, a psychic being needed to have the experience of mastery, of power in order to know the reactions and how it is possible to turn all these movements towards the Divine: to learn what a life of power may teach you. It took birth in a king or a queen. These enjoyed some power and during that time they had their experiences; they reached the end of the field of experience. Now, they know what they wanted to know, they are about to go, they are going to leave their body that's now become useless, and they are going to prepare for the next experience. Well, at that time, when the psychic being is still in the body and has noted what it has learnt, it decides for the next occasion. And sometimes it is a movement of action and reaction: because it has studied one entire field, it needs to study the opposite field. And very often it chooses a very different life from the one it had. So before leaving, it says: "Next time, it is in this domain that I shall take birth...." Suppose, for example, the psychic has reached a stage of growth when it would like to have the chance of working on the physical body to make it capable of coming consciously into contact with the Divine and of transforming it. Now, it is about to leave the body in which it had authority, power, activity, the body it has used for its growth; it says: "Next time I shall take birth in a neutral environment, neither low nor high, where it will not be necessary (how to put it?) to have a highly external life, where one will have neither great power nor great misery—altogether neutral, as you know, the life in between." It chooses that. It returns to its own psychic world for the necessary rest, for assimilation of the experience gained, for preparation of the future experience. It naturally remembers its choice and, before coming down once more, when it has finished its



assimilation, when it is time to return, to come down upon earth, it cannot, from that domain, see material things as we see them, you know: they appear to it in another form. But still the differences can be foreseen: the differences of environment, differences of activity in the environment are clearly seen, quite perceptible. It can have a vision that is total or global. It can choose. At times it chooses the country; when it wants a certain kind of education, civilisation, influence, it can choose its country beforehand. Sometimes it can't, sometimes it chooses only its environment and the kind of life it will lead. And then from up there, before it comes down, it looks for the kind of vibrations it wants; it sees them very clearly. It is as though it was aiming at the place where it is going to drop. But it is an approximation because of the fact that another condition is necessary: not only its choice but also a receptivity from below and an aspiration. There must be someone in the environment it has chosen, generally the mother (sometimes both the parents, but the most indispensable is the mother), she must have an aspiration or a receptivity, something sufficiently passive and open or a conscious aspiration towards something higher. And that kindles for the psychic being a little light. In the mass representing for it the environment in which it wants to be born, if under the influence of its own projected will a small light is kindled, then it knows that it is there it must go.

It is necessary, it is this that makes the difference in months or days, perhaps, not so much perhaps in years; however, this creates an uncertainty, and that is why it cannot foretell the exact date: "On that date, that day, at that hour I shall take birth." It needs to find someone receptive. When it sees that, it rushes down. But what happens is something like an image: it is not exactly that, but something very similar. It throws itself down into an unconsciousness, because the physical world, even human consciousness whatever it may be, is very unconscious in



comparison with the psychic consciousness. So it rushes into an unconsciousness. It is as though it fell on its head. That stuns it. And so generally, apart from some very very rare exceptions, for a long time it does not know. It does not know any longer where it is nor what it is doing nor why it is there, nothing at all. It finds a great difficulty in expressing itself, especially through a baby that has no brain, naturally; it is only the embryo of a brain which is hardly formed and it does not have the elements for manifesting itself. So it is very rare for a child to manifest immediately the exceptional being it contains.... That happens. We have heard about such things. It happens, but generally some time is needed. Only slowly it awakens from its stupor and becomes aware that it is there for some reason and by choice. And usually this coincides with the intensive mental education which shuts you completely from the psychic consciousness. So a mass of circumstances, happenings of all kinds, emotions, all sorts of things are necessary to open the inner doors so that one might begin to remember that after all one has come from another world and one has come for a particular reason.

Otherwise, if all went normally, it could very quickly have a connection, very quickly. If it had the luck to find someone possessing a little knowledge, and instead of falling into a world of ignorance, it fell upon a little bit of knowledge, everything would be done quite quickly.

But the psychic will and psychic growth escape completely all common notions of justice, of reward and punishment as men understand them. There are religions, there are philosophies that tell you all kinds of stories, which are simply the application of notions of human justice to the invisible world, and so these are stupidities. For it is not at all like that truly; the notion of reward and punishment as man understands it is an absurdity. That does not apply at all, not at all to the inner realities. So once you enter the true spiritual world, all that becomes really stupidities. For things are not at all like that.

A large number of people come and tell me: "What then have I done in my previous life to be now in such difficult conditions, with such misfortunes happening to me?" And most often I am obliged to tell them: "But don't you see that it is a blessing upon you, a grace! And perhaps in your previous life you have asked for it so that you could make a greater progress..." These ideas are quite current: "Oh! I am ill. Oh! my body is in a bad condition, what have I done? What crime have I committed in the other life so that in this one..." This is all childishness. (CWM 5, pp. 213-216)

Does the psychic being always progress?

There are in the psychic being two very different kinds of progress: one consisting in its formation, building and organisation. For the psychic starts by being only a kind of tiny divine spark within the being and out of this spark will emerge progressively an independent conscious being having its own action and will. The psychic being at its origin is only a spark of the divine consciousness and it is through successive lives that it builds up a conscious individuality. It is a progress similar to that of a growing child. It is a thing in the making. For a long time, in most human beings the psychic is a being in the making. It is not a fully individualised, fully conscious being and master of itself and it needs all its rebirths, one after another, in order to build itself and become fully conscious.

But this sort of progress has an end. There comes a time when the being is fully developed, fully individualised, fully master of itself and its destiny. When this being or one of these psychic beings has reached that stage and takes birth in a human being, that makes a very great difference: the human being, so to say, is born free. He is not tied to circumstances, to surroundings, to his origin and atavism, like ordinary people. He comes into the world with the purpose of doing something, with a work to carry out, a mission to fulfil. From this point of view his progress in growth has come to an end, that is, it is not indispensable for him to take birth again in a body. Till then rebirth is a necessity, for it is through rebirth that he grows; it is in the physical life and in a physical body that he gradually develops and becomes a fully conscious being. But once he is fully formed, he is free, in this sense that he can take birth or not, at will. So there, one kind of progress stops.

But if this fully formed being wants to become an instrument of work for the Divine, if instead of retiring to repose in a psychic bliss, in its own domain, he chooses to be a worker upon earth to help in the fulfilment of the Divine Work, then he has a fresh progress to make, a progress in the capacity for work, for organisation of his work and for expression of the Divine Will. So there is a time when the thing changes. So long as he remains in the world, so long as he chooses to work for the Divine, he will progress. Only if he withdraws into the psychic world and refuses to continue doing the Divine Work or renounces it, can he remain in a static condition outside all progress, because, as I have told you, only upon earth is there progress, only in the physical world; it is not acquired everywhere. In the psychic world there is a kind of blissful repose. One remains what one is, without any movement. (CWM 5, pp. 203-204)



The poetry room

From Savitri: The Superman

The superman shall wake in mortal man
And manifest the hidden demigod
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.
His living cosmic spirit shall enring,
Annulling the decree of death and pain,
Erasing the formulas of the Ignorance,
With the deep meaning of beauty and life's hid sense,
The being ready for immortality,
His regard crossing infinity's mystic waves
Bring back to Nature her early joy to live,
The metred heart-beats of a lost delight,
The cry of a forgotten ecstasy,
The dance of the first world-creating Bliss.
The Immanent shall be the witness God
Watching on his many-petalled lotus-throne
His actionless being and his silent might
Ruling earth-nature by eternity's law,
A thinker waking the Inconscient's world,
An immobile centre of many infinitudes
In his thousand-pillared temple by Time's sea.
Then shall the embodied being live as one
Who is a thought, a will of the Divine,
A mask or robe of his divinity,
An instrument and partner of his Force,
A point or line drawn in the infinite,
A manifest of the Imperishable.
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.
A power released from circumscribing bounds,
Its height pushed up beyond death's hungry reach,

Life's tops shall flame with the Immortal's thoughts,
Light shall invade the darkness of its base.
Then in the process of evolving Time
All shall be drawn into a single plan,
A divine harmony shall be earth's law,
Beauty and joy remould her way to live:
Even the body shall remember God,
Nature shall draw back from mortality
And Spirit's fires shall guide the earth's blind force;
Knowledge shall bring into the aspirant Thought
A high proximity to Truth and God.
The supermind shall claim the world for Light
And thrill with love of God the enamoured heart
And place Light's crown on Nature's lifted head
And found Light's reign on her unshaking base.
A greater truth than earth's shall roof-in earth
And shed its sunlight on the roads of mind;
A power infallible shall lead the thought,
A seeing Puissance govern life and act,
In earthly hearts kindle the Immortal's fire.

—Sri Aurobindo

From The year of the world

Give reverence, O man, to mystery,
Keep your soul patient, and with closed eye hear.
Know that the Good is in all things, the whole
Being by him pervaded and upheld.
He is the will, the thwarting circumstance,
The two opposing forces equal both—
Birth, Death, are one. Think not the Lotus flower
Or tulip is more honoured than the grass,
The bindweed, or the thistle. He who kneels
To Cama, kneeleth unto me; the maid
Who sings to Ganga sings to me; I am
Wisdom unto the wise, and cunning lore
Unto the subtle. He who knows his soul,
And from thence looketh unto mine; who sees
All underneath the moon regardlessly,
Living on silent as a shaded lamp
Burns with steady flame: —he sure shall find me—
He findeth wisdom, greatness, happiness.
Know, further, the Great One delighteth not
In him who works, and strives, and is against
The nature of the present. Not the less
Am I the gladness of the conqueror—
And the despair of impotence that fails.
I am the ultimate, the tendency
Of all things to their nature, which is mine.



Put round thee garments of rich softness, hang
Fine gold about thine ankles, hands, and ears,
Set the rich ruby and rare diamond
Upon thy brow. —I made them, I also
Made them be sought by thee; thou lack'st them not?
Then throw them whence they came, and leave with them
The wish to be aught else than nature forms.
Know that the great Good in the age called First,
Beheld a world of mortals, 'mong whom none
Enquired for Truth, because no falsehood was:
Nature was Truth: man held whate'er he wished:
No will was thwarted, and no deed was termed,
Good, Evil. In much wisdom is much grief.
He who increases knowledge sorrow also
Takes with it, till he rises unto me,
Knowing that I am in all, still the same:
Knowing that I am Peace in the contented.
I, Great, revealed unto the Seer, how man
Had wandered, and he gave a name and form
To my communings and he called it Veda.
To him who understands it is great gain—
Who understands not, to him the Sign
And ritual is authority and guide,
A living and expiring confidence.

—William Bell Scott

Human life's mystery

We sow the glebe, we reap the corn,
We build the house where we may rest,
And then, at moments, suddenly,
We look up to the great wide sky,
Inquiring wherefore we were born...
For earnest or for jest?

The senses folding thick and dark
About the stifled soul within,
We guess diviner things beyond,
And yearn to them with yearning fond;
We strike out blindly to a mark
Believed in, but not seen.

We vibrate to the pant and thrill
Wherewith Eternity has curled
In serpent-twine about God's seat;
While, freshening upward to His feet,
In gradual growth His full-leaved will
Expands from world to world.

And in the tumult and excess
Of act and passion under sun,
We sometimes hear—oh, soft and far,
As silver star did touch with start,
The kiss of Peace and Righteousness
Through all things that are done.

God keeps His holy mysteries
Just on the outside of man's dream:
In diapason slow, we think
To hear their pinions rise and sink,
While they float pure beneath His eyes,
Like swans adown a stream.

Abstractions, are they, from the forms
Of His great beauty?—exaltations
From His great glory?—strong previsions
Of what we shall be—intuitions
Of what we are – in calms and storms,
Beyond our peace and passions?

Things nameless! Which, in passing so,
Do stroke us with a subtle grace.
We say, 'Who passes?'—they are dumb.
We cannot see them go or come:
Their touches fall soft, cold, as snow
Upon a blind man's face.

Yet, touching so, they draw above
Our common thoughts to Heavens unknown,
Our daily joy and pain advance
To a divine significance,
Our human love—O mortal love,
That light is not its own!

And sometimes horror chills our blood
To be so near such mystic Things,
And we wrap round us for defence
Our purple manners, moods of sense—
As angels from the face of God
Stand hidden in their wings.

And sometimes through life's heavy swoond
We grope for them!—with strangled breath
We search our hands abroad and try
To reach them in our agony,—
And widen, so, the broad life-wound
Which soon is large enough for death.

—Elizabeth Barrett Browning



Apropos

Fix not the time and the way in which the ideal shall be fulfilled. Work and leave time and way to God all-knowing. —Sri Aurobindo

Be fearless and resolute, all obstacles will melt away before you. —The Mother

The strength of man consists in finding out the way in which God is going, and going in that way too. —Henry W. Beecher

To understand the workings of God's will, you have to submit yourself to it unreservedly. Then you come to know that everything happens by His will, and for good. —Papa Ramdas

I am like a pencil in (God's) hand. That is all. He does the thinking. He does the writing. The pencil has nothing to do with it. The pencil has only to be allowed to be used. —Mother Teresa

Prayer is like the turning-on of an electric switch. It does not create the current; it simply provides a channel through which the electric current may flow. —Max Handel

Pray as if it all depends on God, but work as if it all depends upon you. —George W. Carver

Nothing is too small a subject for prayer, because nothing is too small to be the subject of God's care. —Henry T. Hamblin

A tamed mind brings happiness. —Dhammapada

Have a happy state of mind, a state that is untouched by the events of life. —Paramahansa Yogananda

Money was meant to be our servant. But when we depend on servants too much they gradually become our masters. —Philip Slater

Starting out to make money is the greatest mistake in life. Do what you have a flair for doing, and if you are good enough at it money will come. —William Rootes

The perfect man's mind is like a mirror. Behind every dark happening, behind every difficulty, there is a hidden blessing. —White Eagle

Every substantial grief has twenty shadows, and most of them shadows of your own making. —Sydney Smith

When you live across the road from a cemetery, you cannot grieve for everyone. —Welsh proverb

The invisible chains are always stronger than the visible ones. —Anonymous

In the last analysis, our only freedom is the freedom to discipline ourselves. —Bernard M. Baruch

Our inner child has to be disciplined in order to release its tremendous spiritual power. —Marion Woodman

You have freedom when you're easy in the harness. —Robert Frost

It is one thing to praise discipline, and another thing to submit to it. —Miguel de Cervantes

Whoever is aware of his own failings will not find fault with the failings of other men. —James Ross

You have in yourself all the faults which you scorn in others. —Will Durant

Never throw mud. You may miss your mark. And you will certainly have dirty hands. —Joseph Parker

Be gentle to all and stern with yourself. —Teresa of Avila

Faith expressed in action is a sure means of realization... Faith is not blind. It is the willingness to try. —Nisargadatta

