

# Collaboration

Spring 2020

Journal of the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother

Vol. 45, No. 1

## The joy of collaboration

The Mother

### Remembering to be

Don Salmon and Jan Maslow

### *It's You!*

Andrea van de Loo

### Memos on yoga

Lynda Lester

### Engaging the children of Auroville through ATB

Julian Lines

This is the sailor on the flow of Time,  
This is World-Matter's slow discoverer,  
Who, launched into this small corporeal birth,  
Has learned his craft in tiny bays of self,  
But dares at last unplumbed infinitudes,  
A voyager upon eternity's seas. . . .  
A greater world Time's traveller must explore. . . .  
To a new vision of himself and things.

~ Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri*, CWSA, Vol. 33, p. pp. 69-71.



JOHANNES PLENIO, AUG. 12, 2018



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## About the cover art

Front cover: "Untitled," from Ketaki Chowkhani, Ph.D, faculty of sociology of Manipal Centre for Humanities, Manipal Academy of Higher Education, India. Her work may be seen on her website (<https://ketakichowkhani.weebly.com>).

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Back cover: Jaanus Jagomägi, "Meteor streaking across the sky in Jeris, Finland," on Unsplash.

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# Collaboration

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# Collaborating with the Time-Spirit

THE SRI AUROBINDO ASSOCIATION

Dear readers and friends,

*Collaboration* wants to grow. The Sri Aurobindo Association of America, publisher of *Collaboration*, has been dreaming of new directions for this labor of love. Nourished in the capable hands of founders and editors for decades, the journal is poised to break out into new shapes of beauty, spaciousness, and joy. *Collaboration* wants to light up cracks in mental and cultural cages of fear and despair. *Collaboration* wants to meet our times with love and catch the visions of beauty and unity breaking on us in waves from the future. “The world is not an unfortunate accident, it is a marvel which moves towards its expression,” said the Mother.

This issue goes to press during the Great Pause of the Coronavirus pandemic. Life seems to be on hold.

But do we really want to get back to normal? Mass extinctions, rising seas, weather out of whack, plastic overwhelming the oceans, fragmenting social institutions, the oligarchy of billionaires—that’s our “normal” now. Don’t we want something more attuned to the times than that?

A hundred years ago Sri Aurobindo wrote of “the demand of the Time-Spirit on the human race that it find subjectively, not only in the individual, but in the nation and in the unity of the human race, its real self and live according to that.” Can the pandemic and the unravelling of the web of life be voices of that Time-Spirit?

And is it time yet for a truly radical answer? Sri Aurobindo’s transformational yoga of the last century seems to be coming at us from a mysterious future just in time: a real human unity through a radical change in consciousness. “What we propose in our yoga is nothing less than to break up the whole formation of our past and present which makes up the ordinary material and mental man and to create a new center of attention and a new universe of activities in ourselves which shall constitute a divine humanity or a superhuman nature,” he wrote.

These are impossibilities, idealistic absurdities, to our ordinary practical mind.

They signal that the ordinary mind must be overpassed.

Evolution is not over.

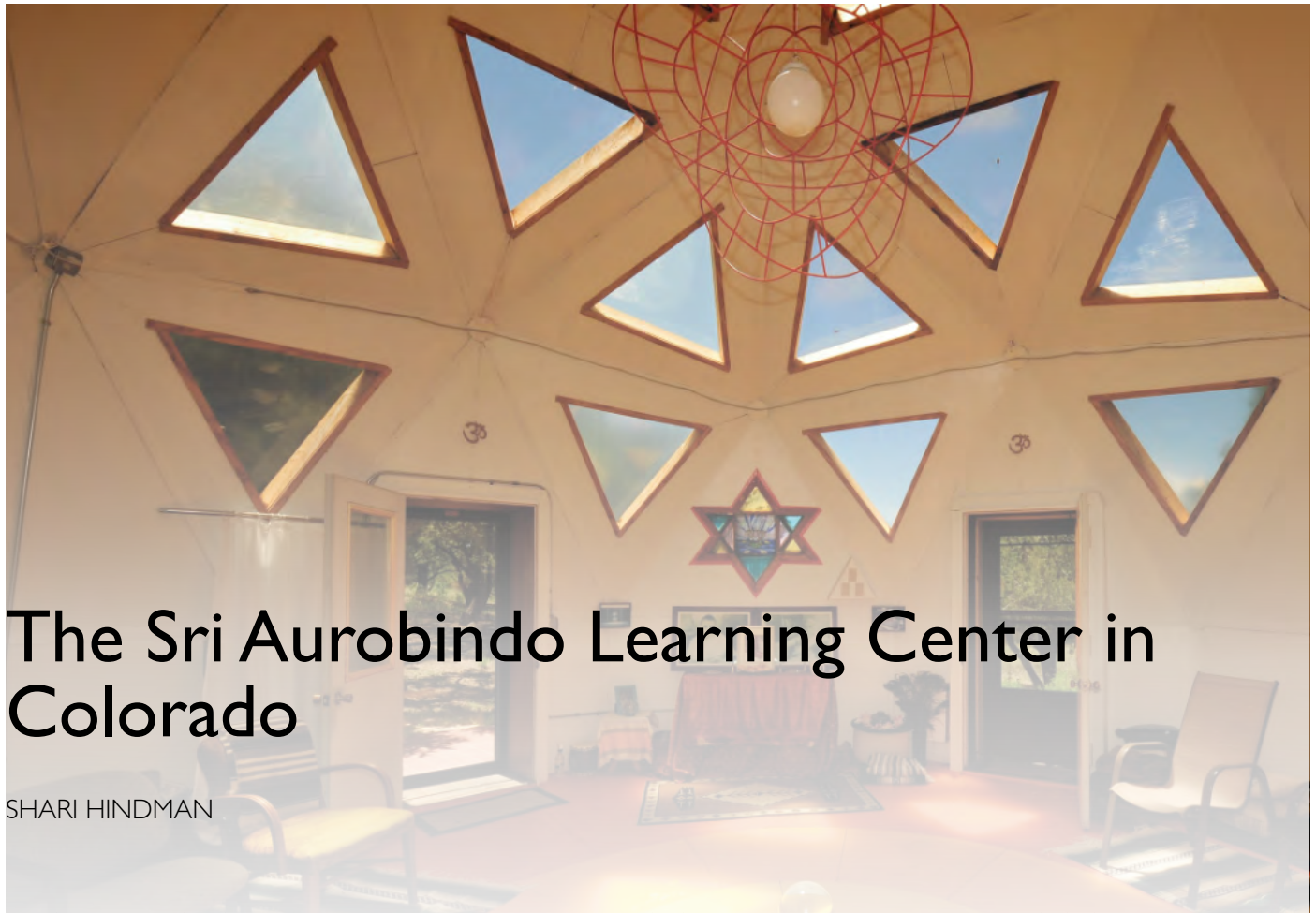
It invites our collaboration.

*Collaboration* intends to listen deeply to the soul of America, “co-labor-ate” with friends and fellow travelers on the way, and share threads of marvel and light that the Time-Spirit demands. In this issue, Sri Aurobindo, master poet, makes present the incandescent experience of this evolutionary future in his sonnet, “The inner Sovereign.” Another sonnet, “The infinitesimal Infinite” makes the scope truly cosmic. Lynda Lester spreads delight and fun by contrasting inner experience with the high-tech mentality of her old workplace in “Memos on yoga.” Julian Lines describes Awareness through the Body, “Jedi training” for today’s children—OK, adults too—coming out of Auroville, the City of the Dawn in South India. The Mother remembers how Mother Nature has already agreed to collaborate with the dawning change of consciousness, and she recounts her experience of becoming a flower-prayer to heaven in the form of a blossoming Japanese cherry tree.

Don Salmon and Jan Maslow offer their sensing of the waves of the Time-Spirit and their experiments using language accessible to ordinary Americans for early stages of yoga in “Remembering to be.” Andrea van de Loo’s story-telling gifts bring alive her youthful travels on the hippie trail to India of the 1960s and 1970s in “It’s You!” What she found was life-changing.

There is more. Lovely art and photography. Inspiring poetry. Words of the Masters.

We hope you enjoy the issue. We love hearing from you. We welcome your support.



# The Sri Aurobindo Learning Center in Colorado

SHARI HINDMAN

The Sri Aurobindo Learning Center (SALC) is located in Crestone, Colorado, and nestled at the base of the distinctive Sangre de Cristo Mountains. Our mission is to provide a spiritual knowledge center that offers the study and realization of the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother through individual and collective experience. We hold at our core Sri Aurobindo's vision of conscious evolution and the profound impact it has had for all of humanity. The operative concepts at SALC are knowledge, devotion, service, and community. They guide the participation of individuals and the goals of the collective.

The interests of the community are as wide as the yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. The mantric sound of Sri Aurobindo's epic, *Savitri*, often fills the air. The study of *The Synthesis of Yoga* and engagement with Sri Aurobindo's

*Letters on Yoga* and other texts is a constant. SALC makes available to the public a variety of events and retreats for spiritual advancement, cultural enrichment, and shared learning. We also occasionally host other gatherings that are in line with our mission.

SALC is home to several buildings and beautiful gardens. Savitri House and the Solar Bridge are residential and are also used for community meetings, retreat functions and learning circles. The Solar Dome is a powerful sanctuary for meditation and also used for collective intentional activities. In addition, SALC maintains a library and bookstore in Savitri House.

The rich history of the land along with the active intentional communities in the Baca\* make this residence a perfect retreat facility and special refuge for silence and renewal. Our residents and

guests particularly love the starry nights (without interruption of city lights), fresh produce from the garden and an array of wildlife that comes to visit.

SALC invites all members of the Sri Aurobindo community, nationally and internationally, to contact us about possibilities for visits as well as individual and group retreats and to participate in the life of the community. We encourage the active engagement of all and look forward to connecting with you.

SALC is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, tax-exempt organization. We can be contacted through our newly redesigned website at [www.sriarobindolearningcenter.org](http://www.sriarobindolearningcenter.org), by emailing [info@sriarobindolearningcenter.org](mailto:info@sriarobindolearningcenter.org) or calling 719-256-4917.

\* The Baca Grande is a community in rural Saguache County, Colorado.



# Our thoughts are not ours

MICHAEL MIOVIC

Our thoughts are not ours,  
We live in the house of God:  
Sacred the air we breathe,  
Sacred the dust we've trod.

Our dreams are long arms, they reach  
To lives we cannot see:  
Sacred our moon-tossed fleeting hours,  
And sacred our company.

Our hopes are high vaults that soar  
To wing-brushed ether overhead:  
Sacred the light that shines above,  
Sacred tonight's resting bed.

Into star-shower fields we are cast,  
Like sparks from a glowing core:  
Sacred the vasts through which we sail,  
And sacred the distant shore.

All things return in the end,  
Are wed and by Oneness bound:  
Sacred is joy and sacred pain,  
Sacred this threshing ground.

Thoughts are deeds, mighty steeds  
That ring throughout the spheres:  
Sacred is silence and sacred prayer,  
Sacred our station here.

~ *Initiation* (Hyderabad: Sri Aurobindo Society, 2004), p. 287.

# Memos on yoga

LYNDA LESTER

A new consciousness has come; I noticed it last week in the project meeting.

Ed. Note: This selection was originally published in the spring 1996 issue of *Collaboration*.

Date: Tuesday

Re: Information Resources Catalog

I'm at my desk editing the *Scientific Computing Division Information Resources Catalog*. Thirty-three pages done. Seventy-seven to go:

The Multigrid Differential Package is a collection of free, portable Fortran subroutines, vectorized on Cray computers, that automatically discretize and use multigrid iteration to generate second- and fourth-order approximations to two- and three-dimensional linear elliptic partial differential equations on rectangular regions with any combination of periodic, mixed derivative, and specified (Dirichlet) boundary conditions.

Zzz! Snore!

And yet . . .

I glance up. A stillness settles in, a large imperturbable peace tinted rose. The air is full of it: gentle wonder, spring deliciousness. It has been a hard week at work, people are out of sorts, complaining; and yet *this* is here, suffusing the atmosphere—a sweetness, a diaphanous embrace of love, a feeling that everything will be all right. Life is not a nightmare. Grace is real.

I do not mention it to my coworker. She has posted an article on the bulletin board outside my office, perhaps in response to my relentless optimism: "Happiness Is a Disease."

Date: Friday

Re: C program\*

A new consciousness has come; I noticed it last week in the project meeting. We were talking about host nodes and compute nodes, message passing and code migration. I was listening to the reports on next-generation computer architectures and cutting-edge software, all the while running a larger process in the background: a wider, more robust C (consciousness) program. I could use my forebrain and intellect, but at the same time felt a powerful awareness extending out from me—concentrated, strong, sleek. Long-distance perception, with invisible vapory symbolic links to larger parts. Not too specific yet, but big. A Local Area Network (LAN) with Wide Area Network (WAN) upgradability.

It has pressure and mass; it's denser than ordinary consciousness, it takes more strength to bear. I can bear it now for six, eight hours at a time, and off and on for days on end: The force beats down, love generates in waves, light shimmers around the head and shoulders, joy wells up like silver elixir inside.

This is happening to me in the basement of a national research lab where I edit articles on machine-specific implementations of basic linear algebra subroutines.

Thus I learn to multiplex: to experience magnitudinal states and still maintain surface functionality, to be in the world and hold the infinite within.

\* In general usage, C refers to a computer programming language.



I am tired of secret experiences. I want the Divine here, embodied, on earth. Gnostic awareness and gnostic buddies, already.

Date: Thursday  
Re: Committee meeting

Fifteen of us are sitting in plastic chairs around the faux-wood table. We're discussing single- vs. double-precision math, trying to decide if we should recommend *Q autodouble=double pad* or go with compiler flags.

The eyes inside my heart become the eyes of Brahman, looking at the world. My heart opens until it's a sea; I begin to ache with the love that fills me, full-bodied and rich, tender, intense. Ego dissolves; all I have and all I am starts to flake off in little pieces. I begin to melt into abject surrender.

I see the soul and then comes silence. The mind grows still. Peace is everywhere, and an utter, unmoving purity.

"Could you add a section on Parallel Virtual Machine to the user guide?" Dan asks.

"Good idea," I say. "No problem."

Always I sit in meetings keeping my mouth shut while currents of cosmic clarity lift me up and down like the ocean swells off Bodega Bay.

I am tired of secret experiences. I want the Divine here, embodied, on earth. Gnostic awareness and gnostic buddies, already.

Date: Monday  
Re: Global tropospheric 3D model

The clutter in my office is reaching unspeakable levels. Piles of notebooks, stacks of papers, purchase orders, Post-Its, technical journals—and three big honking computers.

I am at my desk writing an action-item list in my executive Day-Timer:

1. Compile text for didactic poster on global tropospheric 3D chemical transport model
2. Build website for Distributed Climate Simulation Laboratory
3. Interview director of Atmospheric Chemistry Division

Meanwhile it's kind of hard to work. Rivers of light are streaming down and my body is charged with force. I feel like a Volkswagen with a V-8 engine, a transformer from Toys-R-Us, a Mighty Morphin' Power Ranger.

Lightning crackles around me. Individual boundaries fade. The small self is in abeyance, quiet, sleeping. All is taken by a larger Self.

And right in the center, touching me in the secret heart of being, is God. I am completely given, a completed woman—this is what being a woman truly is, to be possessed by Him.

I love you, God.

I love you, world.

The report is due on the global tropospheric 3D chemical transport model.

I go to the vending machine for a Diet Coke.

Timestamp: Later

I'm peering at my color monitor, using Netscape to download atmospheric pictures off the Internet: GIF-1, Aurora Borealis; GIF-2, Lightning.

I feel like an aurora borealis, like lightning.

The core of my being is radiance—sparkling, intoxicating, weightless. My body is like gossamer, a spider web strung with dew.

Date: Wednesday  
Subject: Whining

I am all bunged up. Couldn't get to sleep last night till 3 a.m. My skeleton feels like a crumbled fossil, my head is a bag of broken rocks. Depression and sadness so heavy I can hardly breathe—every cell in the body hurts, every muscle aches. All I want to do is cry. Beaten, bashed down, microcytically anemic. Snarfing ibuprofen like M&Ms. Sick for months, disapproved of by all.



Rivers of light are streaming down and my body is charged with force. I feel like a Volkswagen with a V-8 engine...

But walking down the long, fluorescent-lit hall, I notice a breath of—fresh air? Hope?

Then I sense it: another consciousness overhead, like a cumulonimbus. I can feel it moving in, substantial but light, with a density and force field all its own.

Burdens fall off, despair slips to the floor. I open my mind and let myself go—up, up, like one of those suburban houses with a roof-top addition, through the crown of my head—ah!

Up there is peace. The mind is motionless. No breeze on the horizon, only still sweetness, release from care . . . relief at last!

If the pharmaceuticals could sell this, they'd make millions.

(It's not *me*, that's for sure—all I want to do is sneak into the supply room and close the door, lie down on the Naugahyde couch, and crash.)

I reach the cafeteria. I am hanging onto that overhead consciousness with one hand, like Harrison Ford dangling from the helicopter in *Clear and Present Danger*, repeating a mantra: *Open my mind my heart my life to Thy Light Thy Love Thy Power, in all things may I see the Divine*—even in this rude dweeb who has just barged into line, and this lady ahead of me who is taking five minutes to dish up pickles and sprouts.

Lynda Lester is a director of the Sri Aurobindo Association of America and has given a number of presentations at the annual AUM Integral Yoga conference. Her presentation "Our many selves: Moving toward mastery of our complex being" is online at <https://vimeo.com/208724699>.





# The inner Sovereign

SRI AUROBINDO

Now more and more the Epiphany within  
Affirms on Nature's soil His sovereign rights.  
My mind has left its prison-camp of brain;  
It pours, a luminous sea from spirit heights.

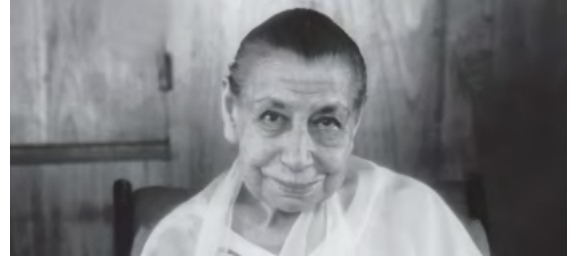
A tranquil splendour, waits my Force of Life  
Couched in my heart, to do what He shall bid,  
Poising wide wings like a great hippogriff  
On which the gods of the empyrean ride.

My senses change into gold gates of bliss;  
An ecstasy thrills through touch and sound and sight  
Flooding the blind material sheath's dull ease:  
My darkness answers to His call of light.

Nature in me one day like Him shall sit  
Victorious, calm, immortal, infinite.

~ *Collected Poems*, CWSA, Vol. 2, p. 613

# The joy of collaboration



THE MOTHER

Suddenly Nature understood . . . that this new Consciousness which has just been born does not seek to reject her but wants to embrace her entirely. . .

**I**n the course of one of our classes (30 October 1957) I spoke of the limitless abundance of Nature, the inexhaustible creatrix who takes the multitude of forms and mixes them together, separates them again and remoulds them, unmakes and destroys them, to move on to ever new combinations. It is a huge cauldron, I said: she stirs things inside and brings out something; it's no good, she throws it in again and takes something else.... One or two forms or a hundred have no importance for her, there are thousands and thousands of forms, and then as for years, a hundred years, a thousand, millions of years, it is of no importance, you have eternity before you! It is quite obvious that Nature enjoys all this and that she is not in a hurry. If she is told to rush rapidly through and finish this or that part of her work quickly, the reply is always the same: "But why should I do so, why? Doesn't it amuse you?"

The evening I told you about these things, I identified myself totally with Nature, I joined in her game. And this movement of identification provoked a response, a sort of new intimacy between Nature and myself, a long movement of a growing closeness which culminated in an experience which came on the eighth of November.

Suddenly Nature understood. She understood that this new Consciousness which has just been born does not seek to reject her but wants to embrace her entirely, she understood that this new spirituality does not turn away from life, does not recoil in fear before the formidable amplitude of her movement, but wants on the contrary to integrate all its facets. She understood that the supramental consciousness is here not to

diminish but to complete her.

Then from the supreme Reality came this order, "Awake, O Nature, to the joy of collaboration." And the whole of Nature suddenly rushed forward in a great surge of joy, saying, "I accept, I shall collaborate." And at the same time, there came a calm, an absolute tranquillity so that the bodily vessel could receive and contain, without breaking, without losing anything, the mighty flood of this Joy of Nature which rushed forward as in a movement of gratitude. She accepted, she saw with all eternity before her that this supramental consciousness was going to fulfil her more perfectly, give a still greater strength to her movement, a greater amplitude, more possibilities to her play.

And suddenly I heard, as if they came from all the corners of the earth, those great notes one sometimes hears in the subtle physical, a little like those of Beethoven's Concerto in D-major, which come in moments of great progress, as though fifty orchestras had burst forth all in unison, without a single false note, to express the joy of this new communion between Nature and Spirit, the meeting of old friends who come together again after having been separated for so long.

Then these words came, "O Nature, Material Mother, thou hast said that thou wilt collaborate and there is no limit to the splendour of this collaboration."

And the radiant felicity of this splendour was sensed in perfect peace. . . .

I will tell you only one thing: you should not misinterpret the meaning of this experience and imagine that from now on everything is going to take place without any difficulties and



# This flower-prayer to heaven

THE MOTHER

A DEEP concentration seized on me, and I perceived that I was identifying myself with a single cherry-blossom, then through it with all cherry-blossoms, and, as I descended deeper in the consciousness, following a stream of bluish force, I became suddenly the cherry-tree itself, stretching towards the sky like so many arms its innumerable branches laden with their sacrifice of flowers. Then I heard distinctly this sentence:

“Thus hast thou made thyself one with the soul of the cherry-trees and so thou canst take note that it is the Divine who makes the offering of this flower-prayer to heaven.”

When I had written it, all was effaced; but now the blood of the cherry-tree flows in my veins and with it flows an incomparable peace and force. What difference is there between the human body and the body of a tree? In truth, there is none: the consciousness which animates them is identically the same.

Then the cherry-tree whispered in my ear:

“It is in the cherry-blossom that lies the remedy for the disorders of the spring.”

~ *Prayers and Meditations, CWM, Vol. 1, p. 364.*

always in a manner that favours our personal desires. It is not on this plane. It does not mean that when we do not want it to rain, it will not rain! that when we want something to happen in the world, it will happen immediately; that all difficulties will be done away with and everything will be as it is in fairy-tales. It is not that. It is something much deeper: Nature, in her play of forces, has accepted the new Force which has manifested and included it in her movements. And as always, the movements of Nature are on a scale which is infinitely beyond the human scale and not visible to an ordinary human consciousness. It is an inner, psychological possibility which has come into the world rather than a spectacular change in earthly events.

I am saying this because you might be tempted to believe that fairy-tales were going to be realised on earth. It is not yet time for that.

[Silence]

One must have much patience and a very wide and very complex vision to understand how things happen.

[Silence]

The miracles which take place are not what could be called story-book miracles, in the sense that they don't happen as in stories. They are visible only to a very deep vision of things—very deep, very comprehensive, very vast.

~ *Questions and Answers 1957-58, CWM, Vol. 9, pp. 245-248.*

# Engaging the children of Auroville through ATB

JULIAN LINES

An experiential journey within for children of all ages

A curriculum consisting of a collection of exercises drawn from dance, spiritual practice, old and new games, and adapted and modified for different ages has fallen into a wonderful basket called “Awareness through the Body” (ATB) in Auroville. It has been variously described as “serious fun” or an “introduction to witness consciousness” and perhaps more contemporarily as “Jedi training” by a class of youngsters in Texas.

You might be playing “Simon Says” at a very high level or exploring someone’s hand while blindfolded. You may be balancing a tin plate on a stick or making a “car wash” with a group using balloons. Through a wide variety of exercises and games, the overall goal seems always to go deeper into knowing oneself, and oneself in relation to others.

ATB started in July 1992 in the schools of Auroville, an international community in South India inspired by Sri Aurobindo

and Mother’s vision, as a program to help children increase their capacity for attention, concentration and relaxation, and to enhance their ability for self-awareness and their sense of responsibility. Nowadays, it is offered to adults as well as to children.

Enter Joan Sala and Aloka Marti, with respective backgrounds in physiotherapy, movement, and dance, both from Catalonia, Spain. They started collaborating with their complementary skill sets towards a common goal: How could they charm the children of Auroville into developing inner and outer awareness? And how could this be tied into a deeper understanding of who they were and why they were in Au-

roville in the light of Sri Aurobindo and Mother’s vision of an evolving humanity? And how could this be conveyed in a way that did not preach or get tangled in philosophy, which would turn the kids off?





# What is yoga for a young person? What can be conveyed to a six-year-old? What is our introduction to yoga and self-knowledge no matter what age we are?

It is an elusive goal and really called the question, *what is yoga for a young person?* What is our introduction to yoga and self-knowledge no matter what age we are?

We have provocative titles of books in our library inspired by this yoga such as *By the Body of the Earth* and *The Mind of the Cells*, but what can be conveyed to a six-year-old?

ATB started with some basic premises concerning self-awareness and exploring the planes and parts of the being. “Witness consciousness” is fundamental to all spiritual paths; for certainly self-knowledge is the foundation of the spiritual search. Whether watching one’s breath or comparing and contrasting one’s heart rate before and after running around the room, the goal seems to be a constant call to observe, to “stop before you start.”

And one can be very playful and one can go very deep and one can take risks and especially laugh. And in the exploration of the body one can also turn up frozen parts and wounds from past traumas and those are observed and explored as well.

The idea of a physical body surrounded by a subtle physical sheath is fundamental to many traditions of spiritual thought. To illustrate the concept, one of the props used in an introduction to ATB is a cutout of the body with three larger layers extending beyond. This gives a visual cue to an invisible reality. But it is one thing to have a concept and another to dive into the waters of experience.

A good first step is an exercise where each participant is asked to go within with the help of a blindfold, so other senses are heightened. This shift from the visual becomes a leitmotif throughout ATB, with touch, hearing, and smell more emphasized. Whole sections are devoted to the five elements exploring air, water, ether, fire, and earth. But what are we exploring when we are asked to walk through a room blindfolded without bumping into others who are doing the same?

The example of the blind who use their other senses to compensate for the loss of sight comes to mind, but certainly the yogis also have other forms of subtle sense and inner vision. And shouldn’t we start the exploration of those realms, even if it is at the most basic level?

The exploration of the subtle senses of energy and a conscious effort to slow down are pathways to expanded awareness. One of the exercises asks that we raise our hands from our laps and put them together in front as we would greet another with “namaste.” *Only we are offered forty-five minutes to do so!* This dramatic lengthening the time of a simple action can have profound results. In our frenzied world this provides a big shift in our consciousness.

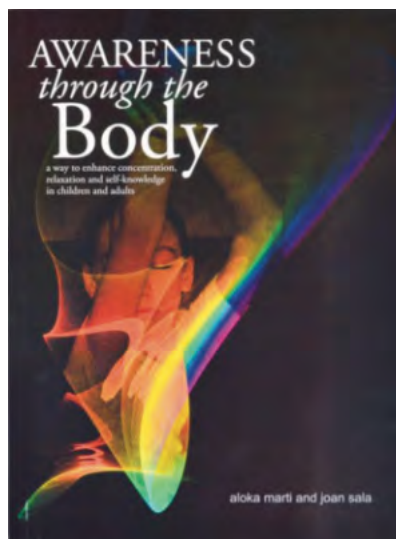
As the years passed, various exercises and props were gathered and grouped until finally Joan and Aloka created a 300-page manual published in 2006, which is now also available in an e-book edition. It focuses on principles with subtitles like:

- Everything is an opportunity for expanding awareness.
- Be in the moment without taking anything for granted.
- Become aware of inner and outer space simultaneously.

Themes include the five senses and the five elements, followed by some examples of exercises and games.

An academic paper on ATB written by Karin Johansson describes an example<sup>1</sup> of an ATB session given in Auroville for young children:

The children come to the classroom and sit down on the floor in a circle together with the teacher. Each child gets a flower and the teacher asks the children to smell the flower. All of the children smell the flower and the teacher lights a candle in the middle of the circle. The teacher demonstrates how to first smell the flower, breathe in, and then blow out the candle, breathing out.





The children softly inhale the smell of the flower to be able to blow out at the candle. The teacher collects the flowers and puts the candle away. At the same time the teacher puts two bags of wooden blocks in the middle of the circle and tells the children to build a small football (soccer) field.

The children form groups of pairs and start building. When the children are done, the teacher gives a ping-pong ball to each pair and explains that the children shall play football using their breath. They are supposed to score the ball in the opposite goal through using nothing else but blowing the ball. The children are down on their bellies and take turns blowing the ping pong ball to get it going in the right direction. In the beginning, some children might use a hand to push the ball, but soon get into the game and use deep breaths to move the ball.

The teacher in ATB doesn't ask the children to perform a competition. Even though they keep score during a game, the result is not the important part. He says that it is the content and process of the game that matters. In this case, the children use and become aware of their breath. By making a game out of it, the children breathe deeply in and out without even thinking of it.

While the children play, they reflect with their body and senses on how they, for example, get the ball going in the right direction. They breathe hard and soft depending on where the ball is on the field. Even though they are only supposed to move the ball with their breath, they are still active with their bodies. They crawl, for example, around the floor to get the best position for blowing the ball. In this way, their whole body is active.

Through these experiences the reflection-in-action turns into knowing-in-action and the children learn how to use their body in order to move the ball with their breath while playing. When the game is finished, everybody collects the wooden blocks and the teacher asks the children to lie down separately

for relaxation on the floor. They lie on their backs and close their eyes. The teacher takes the flowers again and starts to go around in the room and puts a flower under each child's nose. When the children sense the smell of the flower, they can take it and quietly leave the classroom.

Exercises vary from individual experiences, to pairs, to teams, to interactions in a large group. An example of a team challenge requires getting together to cross a "swamp" (the floor of the room) using a variety of props, which could include a chair, blocks of wood, a small pillow, a step stool or any number of objects they "float" on. The team becomes some combination of inch worm and boat moving slowly across the room as the objects are passed from back to front with all passengers in too close quarters moving over and around one another towards the distant goal of the other side of the room. And if one participant falls or touches the "water" of the swamp, all must return and start again. The metaphors and parables come tumbling out as the team tries to collaborate in order to achieve their goal of "reaching the other shore," the most poignant of which is the need to confess to briefly touching the water and forcing everyone to start over again.

*Symmetries*, another group effort, calls upon a quick study of pattern recognition and "mirroring" from one side of a central person to the other. Imagine a human Rorschach or vertical patterns played out with an odd number of people. If one side has a vertical hand and an elbow out from the waist, it has to be "reflected" on the other side the same distance from the center. And like many of the exercises, changes start slow, then increase in speed, then FREEZE. And one stops ... and observes ... the breath, the thoughts, the way one has gotten lost and then found again. And in a classroom setting, especially with young children, this concept of "freezing," where everyone stops what they are doing and maintains silence, has great tangential benefits.

As Joan and Aloka graduated classes in Auroville, some students resolved to become trainers themselves and now a new generation has been officially qualified to carry on ATB. Some of these newly minted ambassadors are now traveling internationally to give both experiential and formal training workshops to "children of all ages."

One trainer who has toured the U.S. in 2019 and plans to return is Amir Azulay. Amir was born in Israel where he lived and worked until the year 2000. He left Israel with his wife,





You move carefully to protect the flame in the first place, then look up to catch the eyes of another and feel some reciprocity, then the gentle attunement and the act of passing, the eyes, the flame, the other candle, the weight of the plate, the eyes, the sparkle, the outer light, the inner light.



Tamar, on a journey to India, leaving behind a well-established business. After three years of study and exposure to diverse disciplines aimed at expanding consciousness, they joined Auroville.

During the following years, Amir was trained as an ATB facilitator under the guidance of Aloka and Joan. Since then he has focused on the ATB practice and teaching ATB to children in the Auroville schools, as well as offering workshops to adults.

Today, Amir is focused on reaching out with this discipline into wider India, Israel, and South Africa. He says, "ATB is a tool that aspires to facilitate a process of inner growth, to allow a chain of changes to unfold and manifest for a better life, and a better planet."<sup>2</sup>

My own small ATB epiphany came when taking a workshop in Auroville with teachers from the Sri Aurobindo International Center of Education. The exercise was part of the exploration of the element of fire. Candles were set up around the room along with various viewing platforms. I could walk through the room as in a gallery, observing the candles at various heights or even looking down from above. You can imagine that half an hour of staring at a flame in silence puts you in quite an altered state. And then we were asked to each take a candle and move slowly through the room, then choose someone to exchange flames with.

You move carefully to protect the flame in the first place, then look up to catch the eyes of another and feel some reciprocity, then the gentle attunement and the act of passing, the eyes, the flame, the other candle, the weight of the plate, the eyes, the sparkle, the outer light, the inner light. The sheer poetry of this simple act was repeated and deepened. There were twenty participants and I hardly knew any of them personally, but as I got to the end, it was clear exactly who remained. I was not in my ordinary consciousness.


Time and again during these exercises the experience is so much more than reading a description. Putting on the blindfold, feeling the "energy" of someone approaching you, trusting that you might sense the color of an object with eyes still closed can lift you to that state of intuition and heightened conscious awareness we seek in our yoga practice.

ATB workshops, still given in India and now around the world including France, Germany, Holland, the UK, Israel, and throughout South America, are primarily for prospective teachers who want to incorporate the exercises in their schools or yoga centers. But they are a wonderful experience for anyone. To play games to invoke a childlike sense of wonder and adventure is a marvelous opportunity. And isn't another of our favorite book titles *The Adventure of Consciousness*?

## Notes

1. "IT'S NOT ART; IT'S NOT THERAPY; IT'S SOMETHING ELSE"  
An investigation into how aesthetic practice can be used in pedagogic situations for pupils to examine and reflect on themselves. Karin Johansson Konstfack, University College of Arts, Craft, and Design <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:576408/FULLTEXT01.pdf>
2. <https://www.atbwithamir.com/the-origins>

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One must learn to concentrate  
one's energies in the heart—  
then, when one succeeds in that,  
silence comes automatically.<sup>5</sup>

The more a person is quiet in front of all occurrences,  
equal in all circumstances, and keeps a perfect mastery of  
himself and remains peaceful in the presence of whatever  
happens, the more he has progressed towards the goal.<sup>4</sup>

Disciple: I cannot accept all that happens with a calm heart.

Mother: This is, however, indispensable for yoga; he who  
has so great an aim as to be united with the Divine and to  
manifest Him, how can he be affected by all the futilities  
and foolishnesses of life?<sup>3</sup>


Many times I have said: there is only \*one\* answer, one single  
answer: One must be quiet, quiet, and even more quiet, more and  
more quiet, and not trying to find a solution with the head, because  
it cannot. One must only be quiet—quiet, quiet, immovably quiet.  
... I do not say that it is the cure, but it is the only answer: to  
endure in calm and peace, to endure in calm and peace....

Then something will happen.<sup>2</sup>

It is only egoism that is shocked to find egoism in others.<sup>1</sup>

PHOTO JOHANNES PLENIO, JUNE 24, 2017





I know that knowledge is a vast embrace:  
I know that every being is myself,  
In every heart is hidden the myriad One.<sup>6</sup>

God had opened my eyes; for I saw the  
nobility of the vulgar, the attractiveness of  
the repellent, the perfection of the maimed  
and the beauty of the hideous.<sup>7</sup>

When I had the dividing reason, I shrank from  
many things; after I had lost it in sight, I  
hunted through the world for the ugly and  
the repellent, but I could no longer find them.<sup>8</sup>

When I pine at misfortune and call it  
evil, or am jealous and disappointed,  
then I know that there is awake in me  
again the eternal fool.<sup>9</sup>

1. The Mother, *Words of the Mother II*, CWM, Vol. 14, p. 275.
2. The Mother, *On Thoughts and Aphorisms*, CWM, Vol. 10, p. 193.
3. The Mother, *Some Answers from the Mother*, CWM, Vol. 16, p. 155.
4. The Mother, *Words of the Mother II*, CWM, Vol. 14, p. 135.
5. The Mother, *Some Answers from the Mother*, Vol. 16, p. 309.
6. Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri*, CWSA, Vol. 34, p. 594.
7. Sri Aurobindo, *Essays Divine and Human*, "Thoughts and Aphorisms," CWSA, Vol. 12, p. 425.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 425.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 426.



# Remembering to be

DON SALMON with JAN MASLOW

How we might support the current planetary shift in consciousness

The world is in crisis. Many have lost hope. But some suggest something profound may be happening across the planet, something that very few talk about—a radical shift in consciousness, the beginning of a worldwide awakening.

The recognition of, and opening to, this shift is at the heart of Integral Yoga. And in this article, we will share with you some of the ways of collaborating with this shift that we have been exploring.

In the past 20 years, Jan and I have discovered a growing sensitivity to a shift in consciousness that is stirring in the depths of the collective. We have been looking for ways to talk about this shift using language easily accessible to people who are not intentionally engaged in yogic practices.

The process of harmonization and integration of our mind and body plays a large part during the early stages of yogic practice. The practices necessary for this integration are clearly, we believe, accessible to a wide array of folks. For this reason, we thought it would be useful to find a language that would be accessible to people who live an ordinary life—that is, someone not consciously engaged in yogic practice, but open to and ready for inner growth, and who might be put off by yogic terms.

We've been inspired in this pursuit by what Mirra Alfassa (Sri Aurobindo's partner in the creation of the Integral Yoga,

who was known as the Mother) wrote in the introduction to her essays *On Education*, published from 1950–51 in the *Ashram Bulletin*:

In these articles I am trying to put into ordinary terms the whole yogic terminology, for these Bulletins are meant more for people who lead an ordinary life, though also for students of yoga—I mean people who are primarily interested in a purely physical material life but who try to attain more perfection in their physical life than is usual in ordinary conditions. It is a very difficult task but it is a kind of yoga ... These people call themselves “materialists” and *they are apt to get agitated or irritated if yogic terms are used* [emphasis added], so one must speak their language avoiding terms likely to shock them. But I have known in my life persons who called themselves “materialists” and yet followed a much severer discipline than those who claim to do yoga.

What we want is that humanity should progress; whether it professes to lead a yogic life or not matters little, provided it makes the necessary effort for progress.<sup>1</sup>

## THE GROWING INFLUENCE OF SUPRAMENTAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Just over a century ago, Sri Aurobindo began writing about the coming emergence of a new consciousness on earth, one he referred to as the “supramental” consciousness. Mirra

# A greater revolution

SRI AUROBINDO

[T]he coming of a spiritual age must be preceded by the appearance of an increasing number of individuals who are no longer satisfied with the normal intellectual, vital and physical existence of man, but perceive that a greater revolution is the real goal of humanity and attempt to effect it in themselves, to lead others to it and to make it the recognized goal of the race. In proportion as they succeed and to the degree to which they carry this evolution, the yet unrealized potentiality which they represent will become an actual possibility of the future.

~ *The Human Cycle*, CWSA, Vol. 25, p. 263

Alfassa, his collaborator, said in 1970, that in 50 years from that time, large numbers of people would be aware of this shift.

*Fifty years from 1970 is . . . now.*

Over the past 50 years, I've been following, with great interest, shifts in the collective consciousness with regard to the degree and nature of its openness to things spiritual. There seemed to be an upsurge of interest in the 1960s and 70s that was followed in the 80s, and to a lesser extent in the 90s, by a more outward orientation, culminating in what seemed like a near eclipse of interest immediately after 9/11. Then about 10 years ago, I noticed the beginning of a gradual process of increasing receptivity that, in the past 5 years has been gaining momentum.

Actually, there seem to be two simultaneous, apparently contradictory, movements currently taking place in the collective.

On the one hand, there are a growing number of people being drawn to some kind of spiritual practice, as well as to more harmonious ways of living on this earth and with one another. Many spiritual teachers have commented on the greater ease with which people are able to experience an opening to greater depths of inner silence, an awakening to a deeper and higher consciousness.

On the other hand, there seems to be a collective upsurge of material from what Mother and Sri Aurobindo refer to as the "subconscious"—that dark realm of barely conscious

phenomena—showing up around the globe as intense polarization, divisiveness, anger, and fear.

And perhaps this is not two movements, but rather two aspects of one movement. Perhaps we are living in one of those "Hours of God"<sup>2</sup> when, by virtue of an increasing intensity of the supramental force, a small effort can yield large result. And perhaps it is the pressure of that very same Force that is bringing the dark material up to the surface where it can be seen and cleansed.

Let's recall that nearly a half century ago, Mother wrote:

We are in a very special situation, extremely special, without precedent. We are now witnessing the birth of a new world; it is very young, very weak—not in its essence but in its outer manifestation. [It is] not yet recognized, not even felt, denied by the majority.... But it is here.<sup>3</sup>

This utterly new world is now calling to people, toward which they are reaching. And perhaps the cleansing of the subconscious is clearing the way for the new world to manifest in its fullness.

Here is some of the evidence that has supported my sense of this global shift in consciousness.

Dan Siegel is clinical professor of psychiatry at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) School of Medicine and founding co-director of the Mindful Awareness Research Center at UCLA. Dr. Siegel has travelled the world over the past decade teaching people to experience the calm and stillness at the center of their being using the image of a wheel of awareness. Over 30,000 people of all ages and all backgrounds—



The Circles of Awareness  
(our modification of Siegel's Wheel of Awareness)

Actually, there seem to be two simultaneous, apparently contradictory, movements currently taking place in the collective.

He talks about growing numbers of people responding to this Force, this energy of the Divine Feminine, experiencing vast depths of luminous silence along with deep interconnectedness with the manifest world.



spontaneously and filled me with tears of gratitude" ... "it was incredibly peaceful. It was so clear, so empty, yet so full."

Others said they felt "as wide as the sky," "as deep as the ocean," "a connection to the world," "at home in the universe," "the presence of God," "a sense of Timelessness," "a sense of infinity."<sup>7</sup>

including many with no experience of things like meditation—have taken his courses. In these classes they learn to distinguish the calm, still awareness at the center of the wheel—the experience of simply being—from the objects of awareness arrayed around the rim of the wheel,<sup>4</sup> the experience of the mind and the experience of the outer world.

Thousands of children, from age five to college age, are being taught this exercise in schools with impressive results, including a substantial reduction in anxiety and depression, and a deeper sense of clarity, security, and overall well-being. A teenage patient of Siegel's diagnosed with bipolar disorder, after a year of working with the wheel of awareness image, became completely free of all symptoms of mania and depression, without needing to use any medication.<sup>5</sup> Another patient, a five-year-old boy who was unable to control his anger and was tired of being a bully, asked his teacher for help. She taught him the wheel of awareness and within a month, he had completely gotten over his impulsive, angry moods.<sup>6</sup>

Beyond these beneficial psychological changes, Siegel cites the words people have used to describe more profound experiences they've had by virtue of this exercise: "a deep sense of love, peace, kindness, and connection that arises

Such responses to what is really a very simple, minimal practice reflect the intensified Divine Force (*shakti*) that is making these experiences more accessible. My guess is that had Siegel been doing this 20 years ago, the response would have been very different.

On a deeper level, Sufi teacher Llewelyn Vaughan-Lee tells of a shift that has taken place in his own consciousness over the past 20 years. His path, from his late teens into his 40s, was primarily that of the traditional path of the mystic, seeking the flight of the Alone to the Alone. In 2000, he became vividly aware of a Divine Force (known in the Indian tradition as the *Mahashakti*, or Divine Mother), which he described as Divinely Feminine, permeating the atmosphere of the planet, a Force insistent on a radical shift of consciousness.

Within just a few years, however, he felt the Light had gone out in the inner worlds, that humanity had so resisted the call of this Force that it would be doomed to centuries of darkness. In the last ten years, something again shifted and his sense of the emergence of a new consciousness was renewed. He talks about growing numbers of people responding to this Force, this energy of the Divine Feminine, experiencing vast depths



of luminous silence along with deep interconnectedness with the manifest world. A small but growing number of people appear to be experiencing a permanent shift to more awakened modes of being.<sup>8</sup>

Devotional nonduality teacher Andrew Hewson has a particularly vivid and direct way of describing this twofold process of awakening and resistance to awakening. Hewson speaks of a “threshold point” being reached on a collective level, referring to an increasing number of people who are making decisive shifts out of ego-identification. We are seeing, he says, “an increase in awakenings,” a shift into direct awareness of the Self. But he adds that there is also a surfacing of what is referred to in Integral Yoga as the dark forces of the subconscious, which are resistant to this awakening. As Hewson puts it, this surfacing “is taking place, collectively. So if we watch the news, we’ll see all kinds of different things going on, and may think, ‘Oh, things are getting worse!’ But actually the Power, the energy field that’s present on this planet right now, is [bringing] all these things up to the surface.” Bringing them up, he adds, for the purpose of “transmutation,” as he refers to it.<sup>9</sup>

If this account of our collective evolution is accurate, then the endeavor to make yogic practices accessible to larger numbers of people has become even more urgent.

## MAKING YOGA ACCESSIBLE TO ALL

Over the years, I’ve collected passages from Mother’s and Sri Aurobindo’s writings that provide inspiring, yet simple guidance for the preparatory stages of yogic practice. Since these preparatory stages are much more closely related to the concerns of average, everyday people than the more intermediate and advanced stages of Integral Yoga, we’ve used them as the basis for our 12-week e-course, “Train Your Brain, Change Your Life.” The course addresses both individual and collective change, but I’ll only be speaking in this article about the practices that are focused on individual inner change.<sup>10</sup>

Chapters six and seven of “The Yoga of Self-Perfection” in Sri Aurobindo’s *The Synthesis of Yoga* make an ideal starting

point.<sup>11</sup> In them, Sri Aurobindo speaks of the *buddhi*—the “intelligent will” as he translates it—as the main instrument we have for sorting out the tangles of the outer nature.

Sri Aurobindo’s description of the ordinary, surface *buddhi* corresponds almost exactly to what neuroscientists define as the executive functions of the prefrontal cortex (PFC)—attention, planning, decision making, analysis, comprehension, etc. Because most people quite readily accept what neuroscientists say about human psychology, we’ve found that talking about the PFC is an effective means for conveying the principles of this preparatory stage of the yoga.

Sri Aurobindo makes it clear that the *buddhi*, influenced by the psychic entity (Sri Aurobindo’s term for the soul), is the best guide for the beginning yogi. Speaking in neurological terms, we explain that the PFC, in conjunction with what we call open, heartfelt awareness, will be the main engine behind the development of the brain and psyche throughout the course.

In the chapters on purification, Sri Aurobindo says that the first obstacle we need to deal with is the interference of the *psychic prana*. This phrase refers to the vital or life force animating our thoughts, emotions, senses, and body that is distorted by ego, the mistaken sense of a separate self.<sup>12</sup>

In our various presentations, we have addressed this interference with basic breathing and relaxation exercises embedded in an awareness of the spacious, heartfelt silence that is always present as the backdrop of our experience. To help concentrate the attention and make these exercises more powerful, we often use a variation of one of Mother’s suggestions:

One can act through thought, by calling the peace, tranquility... like this, “peace, peace, peace... tranquility, calm.” When something affects you physically or psychologically, you can say “calm... calm... calm...” become more and more calm until the tension is [gone].<sup>13</sup>

It could be something as simple as silently repeating “relax” as you inhale, and “peace” as you exhale.

As a further means of purifying the *psychic prana*, we make use of one of Mother’s powerful and integrative exercises. It

You must find something within you in whose light you yourself can be your own judge, something which represents for you the best part of yourself, which has some light, some goodwill and which precisely is in love with progress.

recommends using the light of intuition inherent in “open, heartfelt awareness” to calmly, non-judgmentally review your day in order to see where you were in alignment with that light, and where and how that light was blocked. As Mother describes it:

One must be clearly aware of the origin of one's movements because there are contradictory velleities [wishes] in the being—some pushing you here, others pushing you there, and that obviously creates a chaos in life.... You must find something within you in whose light you yourself can be your own judge, something which represents for you the best part of yourself, which has some light, some goodwill and which precisely is in love with progress. Place that before you and, first of all, pass across it as at a cinema all that you have done, all that you have felt, your impulses, your thoughts, etc.; then try to coordinate them, that is, find out why this has followed that.<sup>14</sup>

In various presentations, we also focus on deepening and stabilizing the sense of open, heartfelt awareness. One readily accessible way to do this is through a deliberate widening of attention.

Widening attention has the added benefit of correcting the tense, narrowly-focused way in which many practice mindfulness these days. Widening brings a shift from dominant left

boundless, luminous, free and yet deeply connected and loving consciousness.

This is the foundation. On it, the student learns to recognize and then harmonize distorted movements of what we call “instinctive, emotional, and mental programming” calmly and non-judgmentally. This is related to the popular practice of mindfulness, but substantially changed by being embedded in that deeper and higher heartfelt consciousness.

In the following passage, the Mother describes what appears to be mindfulness, but from an infinitely deeper, richer perspective—for the most part as a means of increasing receptivity to the workings of the Divine Force:

You must always step back into yourself, learn to go deep within—do not lend yourself to the superficial forces [of] the outside world. Always keep your peace, resist all temptations to lose it.<sup>16</sup>

She goes on to say that after stepping back, “you can remain quiet, and call on the Divine Force and wait for an answer. Then you will know exactly what to do.”

In presentations aimed at a wide range of individuals—many of whom may hold explicitly materialist beliefs—we don't speak explicitly of “calling on the Divine Force.” However, we hope that the practices we offer for evoking

Some find it very useful to imagine they are floating on water with a plank under their back. Then they widen themselves, widen, until they become the vast liquid mass.

hemisphere-mode brain functioning to a balance of both hemispheric modes. For this, we use all the methods Mother mentions below:

Some find it very useful to imagine they are floating on water with a plank under their back. Then they widen themselves, widen, until they become the vast liquid mass. Others make an effort to identify themselves with the sky and the stars, so they widen, widen themselves, identifying themselves more and more with the sky. Others again don't need these pictures; they can become conscious of their consciousness, enlarge their consciousness more and more until it becomes unlimited. One can enlarge it till it becomes vast as the earth and even the universe. When one does that one becomes really receptive.<sup>15</sup>

After playing with intuition and attention these ways, the student will have learned several powerful practices to create a more balanced nervous system. Most important, she will have had glimpses of the state of open, heartfelt awareness—a state of

“positive” emotions—emotions with psychic qualities such as love, caring, compassion, and kindness—may inspire at least some intimations of the deeper psychic being. Our intention is that with a recognition of open, heartfelt awareness, along with the evocation of psychic qualities, there will be a much richer and deeper foundation for mindfulness practice than the way it is commonly understood.

We chose *Remember to Be* as the name for our website because it is a simple way of referring to the experience of open, heartfelt awareness. It also helps people to understand that it's not some strange, mystical, or unattainable thing. I've found that virtually all of the people I evaluate—whatever their age, religion, or psychological issues—get this. They know exactly what I mean when I ask if they've ever had an experience that was so deeply peaceful and engaging that whatever problems they may have had seemed in those moments to vanish, and they were simply content to “just

be.” That simple recognition has often been enough to bring about a substantial shift in awareness.

In the following passage, the Mother speaks of the delight that one can perceive in everything and everyone, a delight of simply being just as one is. This simple delight of just being is what we are referring to with the phrase “remembering to be.”

In the Mother’s words,

There comes a time when one begins to be almost ready, when one can feel in everything, every object, in every movement, in every vibration, in all the things around—not only people and conscious beings, but things, objects; not only trees and plants and living things, but simply any object one uses, the things around one—this delight, this delight of being, of being just as one is, simply being. And one sees that all this vibrates like that. One touches a thing and feels this delight ... one moves in the midst of things and it is as though they were all singing to you their delight.<sup>17</sup>

How successful have we been in creating a bridge from yogic practice to everyday life? There are hints of the deeper yogic orientation in all the practices we offer. But in public venues such as schools or mental health centers, words like “God,” “Divine Force,” “psychic being,” etc., would not be acceptable. And they would risk violating the Mother’s admonition not to irritate or agitate people with materialist or secular leanings.

We hope that using music, videos, and poetry, in addition to the practices themselves, makes space for the light of a deeper consciousness and inspiration to slip through the resistance of the skeptical mind that, to some extent, we all share as humans living in the 21st century. Since there appears to be a collective opening on the planet at this time, a greater receptivity to inner and higher consciousness, we hope that more may join us in creating new bridges that connect yoga to the deepest aspirations and ideals of all people.

## ADDENDUM

This article was written in late 2019, before the concerns about COVID-19 emerged. The fearful reaction to this virus appears to be one of those surfacings that Andrew Hewson spoke of as the “energy field that is present on this planet... [bringing] all these things up to the surface.” We have the choice to identify with—and thus strengthen—this fear, or shift into a more open, heartfelt awareness within which the pandemic can be seen clearly as an integral part of the collective shift that is occurring.

## Notes

1. The Mother; *Questions and Answers 1950–1951*, CWM, Vol. 4 (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 2003), p. 7.
2. Sri Aurobindo, “The Hour of God,” *Essays Divine and Human*, CWSA, Vol. 12 (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, 1997), pp. 146–147.
3. The Mother; *Questions and Answers 1957–1958*, CWM, Vol. 9 (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 2004), pp. 296–97.
4. See <http://www.remember-to-breathe.org/Your-Amazing-Brain.html> for a video Jan and I made about the Wheel of Awareness. Dan Siegel has several YouTube videos with guided meditations using the wheel, and his website has explanations as well.
5. Daniel J. Siegel, *Mindsight: The New Science of Personal Transformation* (New York: Bantam Books, 2010), pp. 79–101.
6. Daniel J. Siegel, *Aware: The Science and Practice of Presence* (New York: Tarcher/Perigee, 2018), p. 16.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 115.
8. Llewellyn tells the story of this shift in numerous talks and writings. Here is an interview where he refers to it: <https://goldensufi.org/part-of-an-ancient-story-a-conversation-with-llewellyn-vaughan-lee/>. He goes into much greater depth about it in his book, *The Darkening of the Light*. That is a rather dark, pessimistic book, and his vision has become much more positive since then.
9. Andrew Hewson video, “Nondual Devotion—Collective Transmutation,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IXPrPI nVWSK8>.
10. For more information on collective transformation, see “Shift Happens” at the website [www.RememberToBe.life](http://www.RememberToBe.life), which should go live by the summer, 2020.
11. Sri Aurobindo, “The Yoga of Self-Perfection,” *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Part IV, CWSA, Vol. 12 (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, 2007), pp. 645–673. *The Synthesis of Yoga* is available free online at <https://www.sriarobindoashram.org/>
12. The phrase *psychic prana* was coined by Swami Vivekananda, who uses it extensively in his commentary on Patanjali’s *Yoga Sutras*, contained in the book, *Raja Yoga*, free online at: [https://www.ramakrishnavivekananda.info/vivekananda/volume\\_1/rajayoga/raja-yoga\\_contents.htm](https://www.ramakrishnavivekananda.info/vivekananda/volume_1/rajayoga/raja-yoga_contents.htm)
13. The Mother; *Questions and Answers 1950–1951*, CWM, Vol. 4 (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 2003), p. 266.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 38–39.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 266.
16. The Mother; *Questions and Answers 1929–1931*, CWM, Vol. 3 (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 2003), p. 160.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 72.

Don and Jan have worked in diverse fields, including music, psychology, and business, and have been devotees of Mother and Sri Aurobindo since 1976. They have devoted much of their lives together to developing a variety of means such as writing, videos, music, movement, and poetry to communicate the essence of the Integral Yoga. They have two websites: [www.remember-to-breathe.org](http://www.remember-to-breathe.org) is live and [www.RememberToBe.Life](http://www.RememberToBe.Life) should be live this summer.



# It's You!

ANDREA VAN DE LOO

Andrea set out on the hippie trail from Holland to India in 1971.



In a Dutch magazine, I had read an article about Auroville, the 'City of the Future,' founded by a woman called the Mother in South India in 1968. I had been struck by one small quote from Sri Aurobindo:

*All Life is Yoga.*

These simple words rang like bells in my mind. I didn't know what it meant—I wondered if one was to do *asanas* in the kitchen—but it felt like a window into an all-encompassing spiritual way of life. I had left the Catholic Church because it had been all too narrow-minded and dogmatic for me. I cut the picture of the spiral nebula design of the city out of the magazine and put it on my wall. It looked like a promise for a better future.

Rudi, my boyfriend, already knew of the Mother, Sri Aurobindo's spiritual companion. Somebody at the University of Amsterdam had a photograph of this woman in her office. He took me to see it. As I was looking at her ancient face, he told

me that when she saw you, she would know everything about you and, as if that was not mysterious enough, she herself apparently was working on the "transformation of her cells," whatever that meant!

## HITCHHIKING THE HIPPIE TRAIL TO INDIA

Rudi and I were both on a one-year waiting list for the clinical psychology program at the university, so meanwhile we decided to travel around the world, with only one place as a specific destination: Auroville in South India. My mother expressed her premonition: "I'm afraid that you will never

If there is anywhere on earth a place where life is good, I will stay there.

come back." When I looked at that possibility, my mind's eye scanning across the globe, I said to her: "If there is anywhere on earth a place where life is good, I will stay there. Maybe that is Auroville. But I don't really believe it exists." I didn't even know what a good life would be. In the years after World War II, with the terrifying reality and ongoing threat of the atomic bomb, the world as I knew it was a rather ominous place, reason also why I did not want to have children.

I was determined to travel light. I packed a year's worth of birth-control pills and tampons, some underwear, an extra pair of jeans and a few shirts in a very small backpack with a bedroll strapped underneath. My passport and traveler's checks got tucked in a pouch under my shirt.

I was ready to go.

My father was elated with my plans. He seemed to know how auspicious this adventure would be for me. On September 29, 1971, he drove us to the border with Germany to send us off with his blessings. We walked across the border to catch our first ride. I turned around and waved goodbye to my beaming father. I felt as if we were leaving on a ray of light.

We picked up our first ride at the border. To our great

name was Volkert. He proudly smiled at us and announced that *he* was driving to Istanbul. Bursting out laughing we said: "We are going to *India!*"

We drove all day and camped somewhere along the road in Greece. The next day we took the ferry across the Bosphorus from where I beheld the fairytale skyline of Istanbul, my first impression of the non-Western world. Volkert was planning to buy a large quantity of hashish in Turkey and hide it behind the door panels in his beetle. He was convinced that he would cross the borders into Greece and then into Yugoslavia without any problems and make a lot of money in Germany.

We stayed in a funky hotel. I can still see the dank and filthy bathroom, which proved to be the first of many, progressing to the total absence of any facilities at all. We strolled through the colorful Grand Bazaar, where I bought a small oriental rug to be shipped back home. We were in awe of the exquisite beauty of the Hagia Sofia, entirely inlaid in mosaics of blue.

It was our first experience in a Moslem country and we quickly learned from fellow travelers to beware of the men. Apparently, Western women were by definition considered

## Then came Afghanistan. How I got to love that country with the straightforward ruggedness of true mountain people with fierce eyes not afraid of anybody

surprise, he drove us all the way to Munich. We spent the night there and decided to take a train through the Swiss Alps to Yugoslavia where we spent our second night in Ljubljana. The following morning we made a little cardboard sign to Belgrade, the next major city. A young man from Germany, driving a beat up little Volkswagen beetle, picked us up. His



whores. As a woman, you were not even supposed to make eye contact with men, which was rather difficult when dealing with hotel clerks, shopkeepers, waiters, and other public figures. Having to become a second-rate citizen overnight and needing to turn all negotiations over to Rudi changed our dynamics, made me dependent on him, and undermined my self confidence. Neither of us liked it one bit.

I was strongly advised against hitchhiking, even though I had a man with me. We decided to travel by bus from there. For days we rode through endless desert, the bus always packed to the gills with a constantly shifting population of men, women, children, goats, and chickens. Sand and bits of thorny shrubbery as far as the eye could see. The bus would stop in the middle of nowhere, not a dwelling in sight from one horizon to the other to let people off. I wondered where and how they lived.

Looking out the window at one of these desert stops, I saw a girl. She must have been about thirteen or fourteen. Hers were the greenest eyes I had ever seen. We locked eyes and couldn't stop gazing at each other. I felt a deep wondering in

I knew in that instant that I was intimately and completely loved. It was my first spontaneous and authentic experience of the living presence of the Divine.

my heart about what her life was like and what it would be for her as she grew into a woman.

I am sorry to say that I have only unpleasant memories of Tehran. Endless crowds of small, dark, men as far as the eyes could see. Not a woman in sight. I did not feel safe. We took the bus out of there the next morning.

Then came Afghanistan. How I got to love that country with the straightforward ruggedness of true mountain people with fierce eyes not afraid of anybody, their weathered brown skin stained in shades of indigo from their hand dyed-clothing, carts piled high with pomegranates, the tantalizing fragrance of broiling lamb kebab on every street corner, and the inscrutable gaze of men sitting on porches and verandas smoking their enormous *hookahs*. It must have been at a bus stop in Kandahar where I saw a large bundle of laundry lying on the sidewalk. When the bus arrived, it got up. It was a woman covered from head to toe in a white burka, with a small grid of fabric as a window for her to see through.

Rudi got sick for a bit, which gave me the luxury of hanging out in Kabul for a couple of weeks, enjoying some very fine Afghan hashish indeed. From other travelers we heard frightening stories about train robberies along the Kyber pass, but it seemed the only way to proceed. With some apprehension and together with some other travel companions, we took the train and rode all night through the pass and straight through Pakistan to Lahore's border with India.

Due to the threat of war between Pakistan and India in 1971, there was about a mile of no-man's land between the countries where no traffic was allowed. We found ourselves walking on a wide straight dirt road lined on both sides with big trees creating an enormous cathedral as far as the eye could see. In the cool, deep shade, with parakeets and other brightly colored tropical birds flitting and screeching through the foliage, a gentle breeze caressed my cheeks. I found myself transported into another dimension. I felt kissed by God. I knew in that instant that I was intimately and completely loved. It was my first spontaneous and authentic experience of the living presence of the Divine.

One of our traveling companions reached into his coat and pulled out a kilo of hash. "We don't need this anymore," he said and flung the dark brown block into the bushes. Apparently, he had a spiritual experience at the same time I did.

After boarding the waiting train and riding through the north of India to New Delhi, seeing the masses of people in all their abundant colors, outrageous variety, and extreme poverty as only India can display, my view on life changed so radically that I decided to stop taking my birth control pills that day. Looking back, I am slightly aghast at the bewildering levity and speed with which I made such a momentous decision. As many have reported before me and I am sure since and without quite realizing it, I apparently had a life-changing spiritual experience the moment I set foot in India.

From then on Rudi and I happily tried to conceive. Fortunately, and, dare I say by the grace of God, we did not succeed.

## TRAVELING THROUGH INDIA

When we got off the train in New Delhi, we gingerly navigated the throngs of porters and beggars to arrive at a vast town square with scooters, taxis, colorful trucks, and overloaded buses, all of them honking and driving at breakneck speed. Rickshaws and people everywhere and in the midst of the onslaught of noisy commotion, the large, bony, white Brahmin bulls with their huge horns lumbering along or lying down chewing their cud unperturbed.

In the midst of the crowds, Western hippies easily spotted one another and would exchange helpful travel tips. A blond young man from California hooked up with us and invited us to take a bus with him to Mehrauli, a suburb on the outskirts of Old Delhi, where, passing through the fields behind the market square, he took us to an abandoned monastery which had become a crash pad for hippies from all over the world. Only one old monk was left on the premises. The building sported stone rooms with cement bunk slabs. We appropriated a couple of slabs and decided to stay put for some time to absorb the taste and feel of India.



All of us were regularly invited to the home of a local merchant, who would sit cross-legged in his white *dhoti* and spout India's ancient wisdom to all who would hear, while his wife would treat us to endless cups of tea and Indian delicacies. The market square was surrounded by rickety cafes and teashops. One of the owners had figured out just how to please these newfangled, long-haired Western visitors with fresh chapattis and scrambled eggs. We quickly became his loyal customers.

Once a week the old monk would open the valve for the irrigation system. A powerful stream of water would pour into a large cement basin and we all enjoyed taking turns refreshing ourselves under the pounding cool water. All kinds of substances were making the rounds amongst us. There were a few real junkies who were injecting themselves with heroin. I knew to stay away from that. One evening we tried some opium. I did not find it very interesting. However, I did love getting altered on ganja out in the fields immersing myself in the spirit of this sacred land.

I noticed one young man who would often sit quietly and meditate. A light shone in his eyes. I was intrigued. He told us about an ashram in Haridwar, near Rishikesh, where he

had been initiated into a secret meditation technique. We decided it was worth the trek and took the train up north into the Himalayan foothills. I had heard of Rishikesh and it sounded incredibly romantic and intriguing to me.

Indeed, Rishikesh was a small, picturesque town along the Ganges. Chanting filled the air from numbers of low-roofed stone-built ashrams along its banks. An old man in a white loincloth perched like a grasshopper on the stone river bank, his knees sticking out and up behind his shoulders, bending deeply forward to wash his clothes in the river. I couldn't imagine being able to do that myself and certainly, old people in the West, having sat on chairs their whole life, would never accomplish such a feat of flexibility.

In Haridwar, we found the ashram the young man had recommended and were admitted. It was crawling with young people from all over the world. The guru was a fat Indian teenage boy, whose family, especially his mother, was running the show. We were initiated in a few "secret" meditation techniques which you were only allowed to practice under cover of a cloth over your head. One of these was supposed to produce the "nectar of the gods." The essence of the teachings was about the illusion of existence, *Maya*, and focused on the Light.

I enjoyed sitting by the bank of the very fast-flowing Ganges, its waters a curious pale green as it came hurtling down the mountains. If you got in the water you would immediately be carried downstream and had to make sure to clamber out pretty quickly not to end up too far from the ashram grounds. On the banks of this sacred river, inspired by the teachings we had received about *Maya*, I did have a luminous moment of awareness of the illusion of existence.

One day we were going to have darshan, a chance to be in front of the guru. A long line of young people wound its way along the building. The pudgy young man stood in a doorway, his family around him. He looked perfectly ordinary to me, in fact rather boring. One by one, everyone prostrated in front of him. I was greatly perturbed. I felt contempt for the whole situation. I didn't want to do something phony that was supposed to be a profound gesture of worship. However, when my turn came I didn't have the courage to just stand there, look at him, and walk on. I went through the motions with a sickening feeling. Internally, I apologized to whatever God there was for my cowardice.



PHOTO BY MANAS ON UNSPLASH

After about a week, we decided we had had enough. This one wasn't for us. We boarded the train and headed back to New Delhi for another short stay at our old stomping grounds in Mehrauli. We figured we would travel towards the west coast and down to the far south, then come back up along the east coast to Pondicherry to explore Auroville. We caught the train to Bombay, passing through Agra.

Unfortunately, due to the time of war with Pakistan, the entire Taj Mahal had been covered, because it would make a perfect target, gleaming like a jewel in the light of the moon. I still regret having missed the experience of seeing this timeless work of beauty and devotion.

Bombay was a nightmare. We left as soon as we could.

From there we traveled to the Ajanta Caves, surely one of the finest treasures of India. My soul was deeply moved as I gazed onto the serene, intimate, and tender expressions on the faces of the Buddha, bodhisattvas, and devas, all painted in rich earth tones, faded, and chipped, but still hauntingly present after thousands of years.

Then we were quite impressed by the nearby massive Kailashnath Temple, carved downward into the earth out of a single rock, dedicated to Lord Shiva, fully carved with dancing and meditating gods and voluptuous goddesses.

We arrived at one of Goa's picturesque fishermen's villages situated directly on the beach, with boys and men hauling in the large nets and women and girls running along the beach, carrying heavy baskets full of fish on their heads, the wet drippings from the freshly caught fish covering them from head to toe in glistening goop.

One of Goa's unique phenomena are the little wild pigs that run around, freely eating whatever they can find. We discovered small outhouses perched on ledges, where after dropping one's load in the field below, the grunting little pigs rushed over to scarf up the delicacy.

Continuing south, we came to Kerala. The landscape reminded me of pictures I had seen of Indonesia, water everywhere and effervescent green rice paddies surrounded by palm trees. Kerala was then known as the state with the highest level of education among its people. It did not make for a particularly pleasant experience. The general pace of life was faster, much less relaxed than we had grown accustomed to. We were frequently insulted in English by aggressive young males. Long ago, the capital of Kerala, Cochin, had been a Dutch colony. In an old graveyard behind a church, I discovered Dutch names on head stones. I wondered if I had once

lived there and could have been buried there.

An interesting shift had taken place in the food scene. As soon as we hit the southern parts of India, the restaurants would consist of long wooden tables with benches. A banana leaf was laid open on the table in front of you. Waiters walked around with buckets of rice, *sambar* (a spicy broth), a variety of vegetable curries, and dhal, each of them

ladling portions onto your banana frond. They would continue to walk around and keep adding on to your food, always urging you to accept more as if wanting to prevent at all cost that you might not have enough to eat.

All through southern India we found comfortable lodging in bungalows. These are remnants from colonial times, with cool verandas, lovely gardens, and old time courteous service. English tea time is observed religiously. You do feel transported to those times of undeserved luxury, when the Indian keeper of the inn wearing white gloves bows to you, serving your tea as if you are royalty.

Farther south we came to a National Park, where we rode an elephant. She carried a platform on her back, carpeted and laid out with pillows for tourists to sit on. The mahout gingerly climbed up to sit right behind her ears and guided her through the jungle, slowly rocking us sideways as she walked. I was amazed how silently this gigantic animal moved. Not a twig broke under her feet. In fact, we spotted a whole family of deer nibbling away within very close range and none of them seemed to even be aware of our presence. The only sound she produced was a deep low rumbling right under our bodies when she defecated.

We travelled as far south as Trivandrum, then turned to the northeast. We stopped and stayed for a few days in Madurai, which I always remember as a most pleasant city. Our last stop before heading toward Pondicherry was in Tiruchirapalli. The Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple is truly a mountain temple, in fact it seems like the temple and the mountain are completely merged. We joined hundreds of devotees climbing steep worn stairs, weaving in and out of dark temple halls and corridors all the way to the top. *Poojas* were performed everywhere. Priests were droning endless chants. Incense wafted in front of the statues of gods opulently draped with garlands of marigolds and jasmine.

From there we took the train north. Little did I know how radically my life was about to change.

We arrived in Pondicherry on February 12, 1972.... I was suddenly hit by the unmistakable force of Mother's presence coming over the rooftops from the direction of the Ashram.

### A TRUE COMING HOME

On the train from Tiruchirapalli to Madras, we debated whether we still wanted to bother going to Pondicherry. No matter how amazing India is and how many fascinating sites and marvelous temples we had seen, after having travelled throughout that enormous country for several months, we were frankly quite sick of it. Of course, as travelers, we had spent a lot of time at dismal bus and train stations, with disgusting sanitation, throngs of poor people, and hassles everywhere. Also, we had met a number of travelers who had been to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry and they hadn't liked the idea of sexual abstinence. We didn't either. So, we were eager to head for Nepal and then farther east from there. I was thinking Indonesia. As we approached Vanur, where we would have to change trains to head towards Pondy, it seemed a shame to pass it by. I bargained with Rudi: "Hey, we've been wanting to see Auroville all this time. Let's just go for three days and then head up to Nepal." He agreed.

We arrived in Pondicherry on February 12th, 1972. When we asked the rickshaw driver to take us to the Ashram, he nodded his head that he understood and took us to a hotel in town instead. We were led to a room on the third floor and standing on a balcony overlooking the city, I was suddenly hit by the unmistakable force of Mother's presence coming over the rooftops from the direction of the Ashram. Shaken and somewhat frightened by the unexpected impact, my first thought was: "She's a witch!" Because I instinctively knew that she was good, I quickly reassured myself: "Well, she must be a white witch."

Pondicherry had been a French enclave during the British rule of India. The French Quarter in the center of town situated

directly on the coast of the Bay of Bengal consisted of many old colonial-style buildings with large shady trees and parks. As the Sri Aurobindo Ashram expanded over the decades, they had acquired many of these buildings. The Ashram itself was a large three-story building around an inner courtyard. Mother's room was on the third floor above the courtyard with a balcony facing one of the side streets.

It turned out that we had arrived just days before Mother's 94th birthday. 1972 was also Sri Aurobindo's centenary year. It was a huge celebration. Pondicherry was buzzing with thousands of visitors. On Mother's birthday, February 21, she would appear on her balcony to give darshan to the crowd. Naturally, we decided to stay until then. To be able to participate in the Ashram activities, you were supposed to stay in one of the many Ashram guest houses. You would then be given a pass that gave you access to the *Samadhi* and the Ashram dining room, the library, and so on. We entered the main gate and crossed a small courtyard filled with large tropical plants and knocked on the heavy doors of a building overgrown with bougainvilleas to ask for help. We were told to sit on the steps and wait for one of Mother's secretaries to come and assist us.

We sat on the Ashram steps for three days! Since the steps were directly across from the main gate, we just relaxed and watched people coming and going all day long. We couldn't see the main courtyard from where we were sitting. On the second day, I suddenly noticed how the stream of people coming in to meditate by Sri Aurobindo's tomb were not the same people as the ones leaving the compound! The people coming in were ordinary people, preoccupied by their daily affairs, immersed in their thoughts. The people coming out were completely silent and seemed to be emanating white





light. It was eerie, as if they were a different species altogether, not really from this planet. Some mysterious transformation had taken place during the time they had spent in the courtyard.

Finally, on the third day, a quiet Indian gentleman greeted us and invited us into a large dark room, furnished in old colonial style and indicated for us to sit down. I was expecting some kind of interview, but Madhav Pandit sat with us in total



silence. I became silent, too. Suddenly, he seemed to approve of us and after a few perfunctory questions, he smiled: "You can stay. Because of the centenary, all our guest houses are completely booked, but just yesterday a Dutch woman broke her leg. She is in the hospital now. You can have her room."

We were given a room in the Parc a Charbon guest house situated directly on the coast. Later I would discover that many westerners started their adventure with Mother and Sri Aurobindo in Parc Guesthouse.

We discovered the inner courtyard of the Ashram. Doves of people quietly moved around and meditated sitting under the shade of a large peepal tree spreading its branches over Sri Aurobindo's white marble tomb, the Samadhi. A profound peace permeated the area. Every morning devotees covered the Samadhi with colorful, fragrant mandalas of fresh blossoms. Just as I saw others do, I would often sit close to the Samadhi and put my forehead on the cool marble, immersed in the intoxicating fragrance of thousands of blossoms and incense, the all-pervasive silence accentuated only by bees buzzing over the blossoms and punctuated by loud, startling caws of the occasional crow overhead.

We befriended Ron Jorgensen, an American, who kindly took me under his wing. He seemed to sense that I was meant to be there. When he heard that we were only going to stay till after Mother's birthday, he told us that we could write to Mother and ask to see her in person. Mother would always try to see visitors because they might never have that opportunity again. So I did. I took my letter to Madhav and the next day he told us we could see her the following Sunday. This added

another week to our stay, but we weren't going to miss that unique opportunity. Ron impressed on me to make sure to look into her eyes. Many Indian devotees, he explained, would simply prostrate before her and never look at her. He really didn't want me to miss out on that most important opportunity of looking into her eyes. He also told us that people usually bring Mother flowers. My no-nonsense attitude immediately rebelled. "I'm not bringing her flowers," I objected, "I don't even know her."

Ron introduced me to Satprem's book *Sri Aurobindo, or the Adventure of Consciousness*. When I discovered the essence of Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga—to establish the Divine Consciousness on earth, right here in our very body/mind/souls—my enthusiasm knew no bounds. I experienced an immense relief to find a spiritual path which was not focused on the hereafter, but on transforming life itself. My whole being said YES to that.

But first we experienced public darshan on Mother's birthday, February 21. Thousands of visitors thronged in the street below her balcony. A hush fell over the crowd when she slowly appeared. As she gazed down at us, a vast silence descended as if the world came momentarily to a standstill. We all seemed to hold our breath in the sheer awe of her. Later I heard that everyone felt as if she gazed at them personally.

On Sunday morning, February 27, 1972, Rudi and I put on our best clothes and headed for the Ashram. Just as we were leaving the guest house, the manager came out. Seeing us all dressed up, he smiled and greeted us in his wonderful Indian accent: "Good morning! Where are you going?" "We're going to see Mother!" "Oh, wait, wait." He ran to the overgrown wall of the building and picked us each a large, single, orange hibiscus blossom with deep crimson heart.

Much later I discovered that the orange hibiscus was the symbol for Auroville. "Here, take these to Mother!" We accepted his gracious gesture and started off on our walk along the ocean side, each of us carrying our magnificent flower.



We joined a long line of people who were slowly winding their way through the courtyard, up the stairs, on landings and up the stairs again, all the way to Mother's room on the third floor. By the time we entered her room, it was close to noon. It being the end of February in South India, the heat was already intense and my flower was sadly wilting. Due to her considerable age, she sat slightly bent, so to be able to look into her eyes you really had to get down on your knees. When my turn came, I knelt in front of her and presented my poor hibiscus. I became instantly transfixed by the hibiscus opening itself to her in its full radiance. I stared in disbelief at this acid-like transmutation. Suddenly, I remembered to look at her. I handed the flower to her assistant and looked into her eyes. She was so absolutely still and inward, it seemed to me as if she was dwelling on the other side of the galaxy. Nothing happened... I kept looking... until I heard my own voice inside of me command: *Open up!*

In that instant, we recognized each other. *It's You!* my whole being shouted. She seemed to feel exactly the same. We were both equally ecstatic, beaming at one another for the sheer joy of recognition and couldn't seem to get enough of each other. In that moment, even as we were two, we were the same. Somewhere in the back of my mind was the notion of "six thousand years." As I got up to leave, our eyes remained locked, our heads turning until the distance forced us to disengage.



In a daze I walked out of the room. Tears began to stream down my cheeks. I wept for three days. Wherever I went, bittersweet tears kept streaming down my face of unimaginable joy at having been seen, at finally being known to Her *and* to myself, mixed with the grief that it had taken so very, very long, since the beginning of my countless lifetimes of searching for God. In front of Her, in one fell swoop, all my veils were torn and my soul stood revealed. I had come home to myself.

When I woke up after those three days and I seemed "back to normal," first thing Rudi said was, "So, are you ready to go?" The question took me completely by surprise. "I'm not going anywhere," I blurted out. There was no question in my mind that I was ready to give up my old life, now that I had found *Her* and the ideal of Auroville. That morning I took Rudi to the train station.

Pretty soon, Mother granted my request to go and live in Auroville, to be a "willing servitor of the Divine" to do my part in the evolution of consciousness.

Andrea arrived as Angela in Pondicherry on February 12, 1972. She lived in Auroville, first at Matrimandir Worker's Camp then in Kottakarai till February 1978. For several years she ran a small first-aid clinic in the village of Kottakarai. With Daniel Brewer she gave birth to two daughters, Hiranya and Antara. In Santa Cruz, California, she became a certified practitioner of polarity, acupressure, reiki and hypnotherapy. She was in private practice until 2007 when she retired. Mother and Sri Aurobindo are at the center of her life. She can be reached at [andreavandeloo@gmail.com](mailto:andreavandeloo@gmail.com).

# A stealth of God (*Savitri*)

SRI AUROBINDO

When darkness deepens strangling the earth's breast  
And man's corporeal mind is the only lamp,  
As a thief's in the night shall be the covert tread  
Of one who steps unseen into his house.  
A Voice ill-heard shall speak, the soul obey,  
A Power into mind's inner chamber steal,  
A charm and sweetness open life's closed doors  
And beauty conquer the resisting world,  
The Truth-Light capture Nature by surprise,  
A stealth of God compel the heart to bliss  
And earth grow unexpectedly divine.  
In Matter shall be lit the spirit's glow,  
In body and body kindled the sacred birth;  
Night shall awake to the anthem of the stars,  
The days become a happy pilgrim march,  
Our will a force of the Eternal's power,  
And thought the rays of a spiritual sun.  
A few shall see what none yet understands;  
God shall grow up while the wise men talk and sleep;  
For man shall not know the coming till its hour  
And belief shall be not till the work is done.

~ *Savitri*, CWSA, Vol. 33, p. 55.


RELICS FLOWERS PHOTO BY JIM PAGE





# Dios en sigilo (*Savitri*)

SRI AUROBINDO



Cuando la acrecentada oscuridad estrangule el pecho de la tierra  
Y la mente corporal del hombre sea la única lámpara,  
Como el de un ladrón en la noche será el paso furtivo  
De quien entra en su propia casa sin ser visto.  
Una Voz mal escuchada hablará, el alma obedece,  
Un Poder se desliza dentro de la cámara interior de la mente,  
Encanto y dulzura abren las cerradas puertas de la vida  
Y la belleza conquista al mundo que se resiste,  
La Luz de la Verdad toma por sorpresa a la Naturaleza,  
Dios en sigilo obliga al corazón a la dicha  
Y la tierra crece inesperadamente divina.  
En la materia se encenderá el brillo del espíritu,  
de cuerpo en cuerpo prenderá el sagrado nacimiento;  
la noche despertará al himno de las estrellas,  
los días se convertirán en una alegre marcha de peregrino,  
nuestra voluntad en una fuerza del poder de lo Eterno,  
y el pensamiento en los rayos de un sol espiritual.  
Unos pocos verán lo que todavía nadie comprende;  
Dios emergerá mientras los sabios hablan y duermen;  
porque el hombre no sabrá del advenimiento hasta su hora  
y no habrá certeza hasta que el trabajo esté consumado.

~ *Savitri*, Vol. 1, translated by G. Say, p. 55.

# Cinema for the soul

MATTHEW GILBERT

Films for evolving minds

Unless you have found a way to tune them out, the stories you see and hear about life on planet Earth seem relentlessly hopeless and complex. Economic uncertainty, ecological collapse, political stalemates, religious extremism, ethnic conflicts, racial tension—the list goes on, an endless ticker tape of frustration and despair made even worse as COVID-19 brings unprecedented tumult. They depict a world filled with fear and pain while reinforcing a belief that there is little we can do about it. Even when the worst of the virus pandemic is behind us, we will remain locked in competition for scarce resources, disconnected from the natural world, at the mercy of political, religious, and economic power blocs, and spiraling ever deeper into greater disparity between the haves and have-nots.

But that's not the only story.

There may be growth pains, but we are also moving toward an age of collaboration, authenticity, wisdom, justice, and sustainability. These new ways of engaging the world—and each other—are surfacing across the globe, in business, in our communities, and in our personal lives as we collectively

I discovered just how powerful these films can be—to educate, to inspire, and to ultimately change the way we see things.

experience the emergence of a profound shift in values and consciousness.

A powerful tool for communicating this transformation of perspective and its impact is film, and the past few years have seen an explosion in what have been called "transformational films" or "entertainment with a purpose," a subset of "conscious media."<sup>1</sup> I've always loved movies, and while working in the San Francisco Bay Area as editorial and communications director at the Institute for Noetic Sciences,<sup>2</sup> I discovered just how powerful these films can be—to educate, to inspire, and to ultimately change the way we see things. I also discovered how difficult it was for many of these festival-quality (and festival-selected) films to get noticed in the blur of big-budget, high-profile releases and Hollywood-driven mediocrity.

That experience gave birth to *Cinema Noesis: Films for Evolving Minds* (*noesis* [no-ee-sis] comes from the Greek *nous* for "inner knowing"), which I began as a two-day immersive film event<sup>3</sup> and is now a quarterly newsletter and archival website. What differentiates the movies that *Cinema Noesis* tracks is their explicit intent to either affirm a positive vision of ourselves and the world or to actually change people—to challenge personal or cultural conditioning and beliefs. And to help me (and you) make sense of this genre, I've organized such films into three categories of transformation: individual, institutional, and cosmological.

- **Individual** ("soul seekers"): Stories of actual personal transformation. They are anchored in that timeless mythology of "the hero's journey" and are a staple of



Hollywood filmmaking—but also appear in many documentaries and independent narrative films that profile protagonists facing inner as well as outer demons.

- **Institutional** (“drum beaters”): The most popular, often characterized as “social change” movies. They present stories of widespread abuse or system failure along with remedies of healing and renewal and are the staple of documentaries and many film festivals.
- **Cosmological** (“mind benders”): The newest genre of transformational filmmaking. They challenge current theories of consensus reality (“You mean the Earth isn’t flat?!”) and focus in some way on the mysteries of human consciousness and the evolving story of who we are and what we are capable of—which often occurs at the intersection of ancient wisdom, leading-edge science, and logic-defying events.

There are also powerful “hybrids” such as *Thrive*,<sup>4</sup> *Sam-sara*,<sup>5</sup> and Velcrow Ripper’s *The Fierce Love Trilogy*.<sup>6</sup> All of these movies are intentionally designed to facilitate some kind of shift in the viewer’s perception, changes that essentially happen in one of two ways (but usually both):

- **Inside out:** Where something happens inside of you—psychologically, emotionally, spiritually—that then gets translated into changes in behaviors and beliefs that are directed outward.
- **Outside in:** Information about an external event or institution that changes the way you see it (e.g., the health care system) and sparks action and initiative.

What should be noted about films in this space is that they are not all created equal. However well-intentioned, they must still meet a variety of criteria that include good storytelling, high production values, and a commitment to engage, not lecture. The good news is that there are lots of them out there and the list is growing. *Cinema Noesis* is dedicated to such films and the filmmakers and the industry behind them.

## Notes

1. [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/conscious-media\\_b\\_2585080](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/conscious-media_b_2585080)
2. <https://noetic.org>
3. If you’d like to put on such an event for your group or community, contact me: <https://www.cinemanoesis.com/contact>
4. <http://www.thrivemovement.com>
5. <https://www.barakasamsara.com>
6. [http://www.velcrowripper.com/home/FIERCE\\_LOVE\\_TRILOGY.html](http://www.velcrowripper.com/home/FIERCE_LOVE_TRILOGY.html)



Matthew Gilbert is a professional writer-editor and founder/curator of *Cinema Noesis: Films for Evolving Minds* (<https://www.cinemanoesis.com>) and Cinema Noesis salons and film fests. He has run two print magazines, co-founded a book imprint that published a *New York Times* bestseller, and is a long-time reviewer for the nationally recognized Nautilus Book Awards. Go here for the latest CN newsletter: <https://shoutout.wix.com/so/6dN4t0Tac#/main>. Scroll down to get on the mailing list or sign up on the website. He can be reached directly at [cinemanoesis@gmail.com](mailto:cinemanoesis@gmail.com).



# Scarabs

RICK LIPSCHUTZ

Perhaps what's buried in earth as a seed  
will rot, sprout and flower  
from other sands, another race.  
What's dreaming deep inside the run of us  
will awaken in another way, time and place.  
Every sun seed bursts, that which dreams falls awake.

Flowers rammed into the ground  
bloom, come up eerily through the looking glass of space.  
In the mirror, past memories of forgotten future:  
the aliens have landed, and they are us.  
On star fiery ocean we train our antennae.  
Shall worm of our burrow eat up the blue sky?

Enough stars that swim out there for all of us to navigate,  
a plenitude of tiny wanderers to settle, plant, protect—  
ever-advancing pilgrim stair out of primeval mire,  
ever-spiral path spinning balls of dung to balls of light.  
Perhaps there are no children like us in the neighborhood,  
perhaps we are the start of something.

Lift  
your  
eyes  
towards the  
Sun; He is there in  
that wonderful heart of  
life & light and splendour.

Watch at night the innumerable  
constellations glittering like so many  
solemn watchfires of the Eternal  
in the limitless silence which is no  
void but throbs with the presence  
of a single calm and tremendous  
existence; see there Orion with his  
sword and belt shining as he shone  
to the Aryan fathers ten thousand  
years ago at the beginning of the  
Aryan era, Sirius in his  
splendour, Lyra sailing billions  
of miles away in the ocean of  
space.

# It is yourself

SRI AUROBINDO

Remember that these innumerable  
worlds, most of them mightier than our own, are  
whirling with indescribable speed at the beck of that  
Ancient of Days whither none but He knoweth. . . .

Imagine the endlessness of Time, realise the  
boundlessness of Space; and then remember that  
when these worlds were not, He was, the Same  
as now, and when these are not, He shall be, still  
the Same; perceive that beyond Lyra He is and  
far away in Space where the stars of the Southern  
Cross cannot be seen, still He is there.

And then come back to the Earth & realise who this He  
is. He is quite near to you. See yonder old man who  
passes near you crouching & bent, with his stick. Do you  
realise that it is God who is passing? There a child runs laughing  
in the sunlight. Can you hear Him in that laughter?

Nay, He is nearer still to you. He is in you, He is you. It is yourself  
that burns yonder millions of miles away in the infinite reaches of  
Space, that walks with confident steps on the tumbling billows of the  
ethereal sea; it is you who have set the stars in their places and woven the  
necklace of the suns not with hands but by that Yoga, that silent actionless  
impersonal Will which has set you here today listening to yourself in me.

Look up, O child of the ancient Yoga, and be no longer a trembler and a doubter;  
fear not, doubt not, grieve not; for in your apparent body is One who can create &  
destroy worlds with a breath.

~ Isha Upanishad, CWSA, Vol. 17 p. 130-131.



# The infinitesimal Infinite

SRI AUROBINDO

Out of a still Immensity all came!  
These million universes were to it  
The poor light-bubbles of a trivial game,  
A fragile glimmer in the Infinite.

It could not find its soul in all that vast:  
It drew itself into a little speck  
Infinitesimal, ignobly cast  
Out of earth's mud and slime strangely awake,—

A tiny plasm on a little globe,  
In the small system of a dwarflike sun,  
A little life wearing the flesh for robe,  
A little mind winged through wide space to run!

It lived, it knew, it saw its self sublime,  
Deathless, outmeasuring Space, outlasting Time.

~ *Collected Poems, CWSA, Vol. 2, p. 589.*

PHOTO BY JAANUS JAGOMÄGI ON UNSPLASH