

SUMMER 2021

VOL. 46 NO. 2

Collaboration

JOURNAL OF THE INTEGRAL YOGA OF SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MOTHER



The future of the earth depends on a change of consciousness. The only hope for the future is in a change of man's consciousness and the change is bound to come. But it is left to men to decide if they will collaborate for this change or if it will have to be enforced upon them by the power of crashing circumstances. So, wake up and collaborate!

THE MOTHER, *Message for the First World Conference of the Sri Aurobindo Society (1964)*



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JOHN ROBERT CORNELL joined the *Collaboration* editorial and design teams to help support the journal grow into a more beautiful, relevant, and accessible service that meets our troubled times with love, and catches the visions of beauty and unity breaking on us in waves from the future.

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DAVID MARSHAK is the author of *Evolutionary Parenting and The Common Vision: Parenting and Educating for Wholeness*. His research interests include evolutionary parenting, the evolution of consciousness, and adolescent development. He is also the author of *Inviting Youths to Claim the Power of Their Imaginations: A Guidebook* and *Kids Need the Same Teacher for More than One Year*. David is happy to talk with folks about his work and publications—you can contact him at david.marshak@gmail.com.

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profound insights and experiences regarding the human-earth-Divine relationship. *Recovering a Sense of the Sacred* is based on her personal notes and reflections from these conversations.

ABOUT THE COVER

The currents of the Time-Spirit still at sunset. Cover design by Saili Sawant. To learn more about her work and to view her portfolio visit www.sailisawant.com.

Collaboration

JOURNAL OF THE INTEGRAL YOGA OF SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MOTHER

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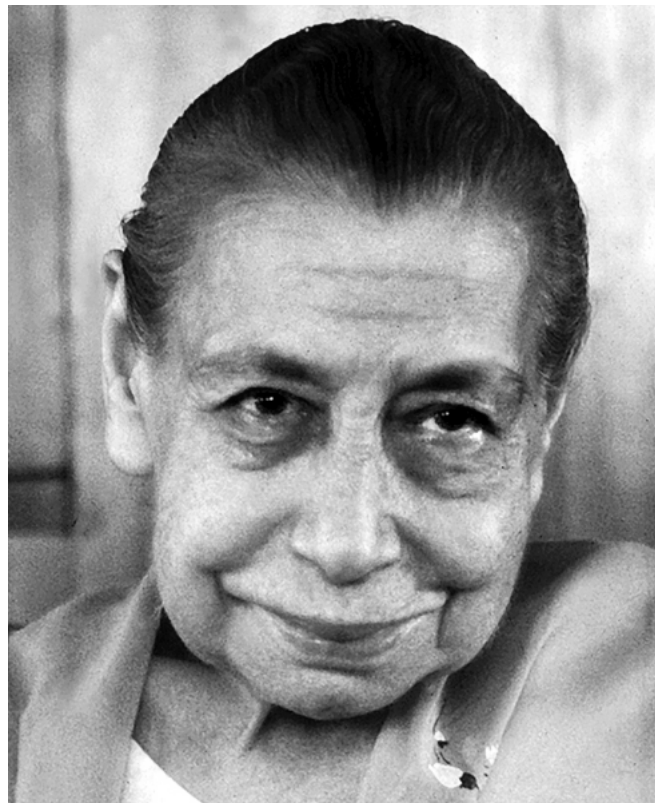
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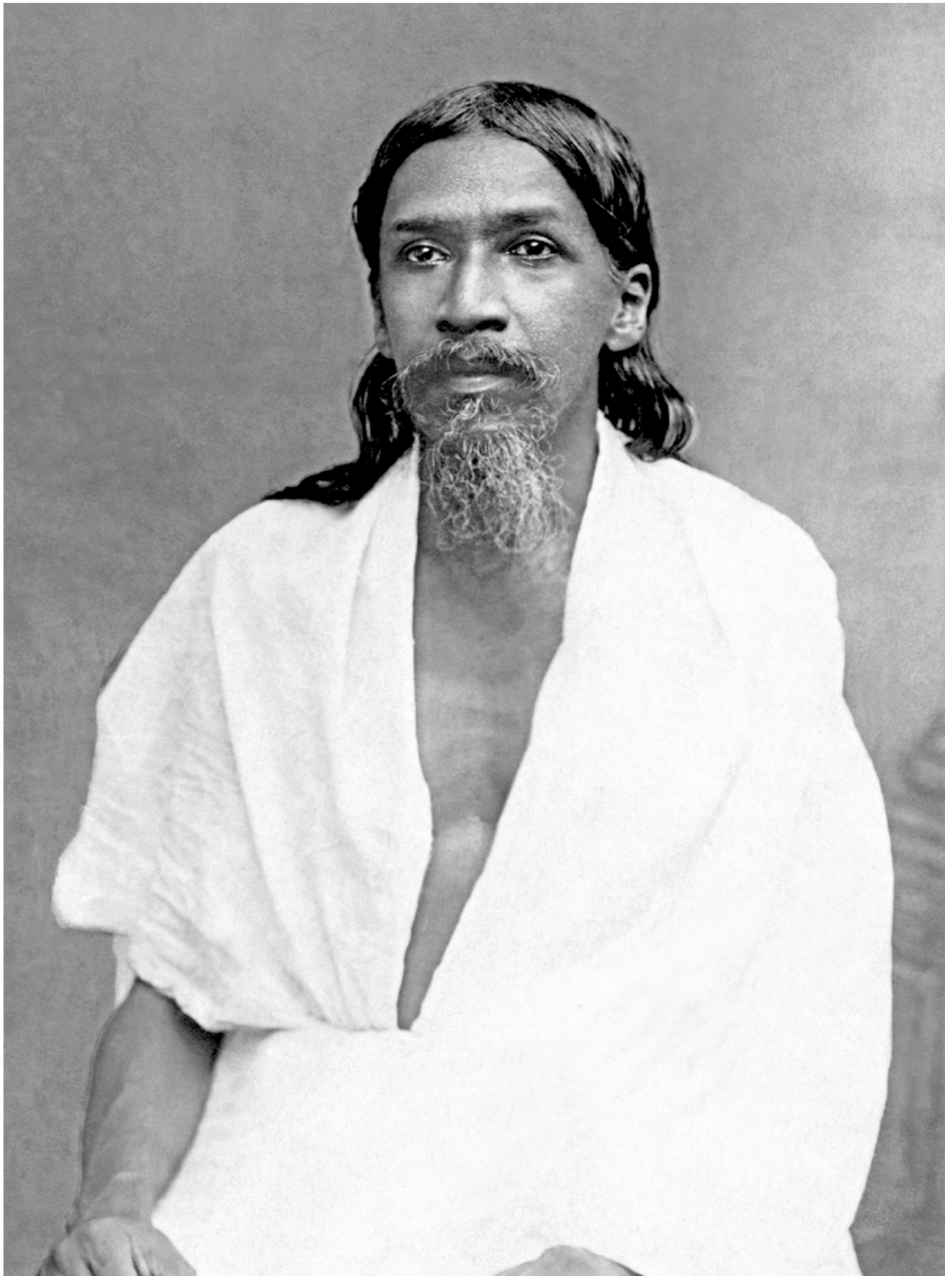


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Polar Conditions

ON THE TAIL OF THE SUMMER SOLSTICE I FLEW 3,000 MILES TO VISIT MY AUNT, A FIELD BIOLOGIST, IN ALASKA. SINCE MY previous trip, she had come all too close to a polar bear on the tundra of the North Slope—far from the melting sea ice of the Arctic—desperate for food, for survival. Massive wildfires had flanked her cabin, their swathes of flame ultimately wolfing *millions* of acres in one season. And the Last Frontier had wrestled drought—a record 79 weeks of water scarcity. Yet my aunt still holds a minority position among Alaskans: that there is urgent need for humans to end their exploitive relations with Earth.

When faced with seething climate on all sides, it is only natural to become crestfallen by the starving animals and raging fires, to feel both complicit in and powerless over the corporations spewing greenhouse gases that keep rising, rising, rising. Except this Yoga is not about resolving these externalized conditions, separate from ourselves, but “gracefully” peeling back our *internalized* conditioning to the point that our divine nature manifests without, across our planet. In the following pages, *Collaboration* contributors share their records of this effort, naming in their own way the psychic conditions necessary to hold both the earth’s agony and bliss together during our 11th hour of ecological meltdown.

In “The Soul’s Calling,” David Marshak spotlights the climate change activism spearheaded by Greta Thunberg and championed by youth around the world, illuminating how we too can embolden this internal will for external change. Ananda’s powerful “Three Meditations” invites us into his spiritual impressions, thanks to the Mother’s

guiding light. Through Alan Baiss’ reflections on global crises in “Where I Find Myself Today,” he collectively asks the question: What can be done? And in “The Natural and Unnatural World” by Karen Mitchell, the author shares three experiences of earth consciousness that shook her reality, upending her understanding of the whole of nature through lightning strikes, desert stars, and crashing whitewater.

This issue also shines a light on Wayne Bloomquist. In “A Barfight for the Earth,” authors Rick Lipschutz and Amanda Emerson vividly retell his vision of life as a Wild West gunslinger, caught in the throes of cosmic transformation. *Collaboration* editor Bahman Shirazi got a chance to speak with Wayne about his early spiritual days, and we have captured excerpts from their conversation in “Decade of Illuminations.” We are also pleased to share prescient ecological (and sacred!) wisdom from avowed “geologist” Thomas Berry in “Seeds of the Future”—excerpted from a recent book by Carolyn Toben.

Now, poetry. With planetary life seemingly on the brink, John Robert Cornell’s “Blessing” brings us pause, and comfort, in Earth’s inborn divinity. Mateo Needham’s “Becoming a Poem” does a service of walking us through Sri Aurobindo’s poetry, meant, he affirms, to be wholly *realized*. Which brings us to “The Cosmic Spirit” and “Because Thou Art”—two sonnets of Sri Aurobindo that lyrically illumine how, and why, we are each “a single Self all Nature fills”—and in possession of our future’s passionate hope for a new way of life.—Alicia K. Gonzales



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THE SOUL'S CALLING

DAVID MARSHAK

Can evolutionary parenting make a difference in the wake of climate change?



CALLUM SHAW

A CHILD BORN TODAY COULD BE A GLOBAL LEADER IN 2036. Greta Thunberg was born in 2003. She began to enact her calling in 2018. She was 15 years old.

Greta is astonishing in her devotion to her soul's calling and the courage that she derives from this devotion. But thankfully she is not unique. In locations all across the planet, humans in their teens are opening up to their consciousness, to their soul's code, and starting to lead our evolution through and beyond our current evolutionary crisis.

Joseph Chilton Pearce was the author of *Magical Child* and several other books that provide an integral description of human unfoldment in childhood by brilliantly integrating psychology, biology, and spirituality. Pearce explained that youths often experience three felt qualities that most adults in their lives fail to understand and honor. The first is an energetic idealism, sometimes raw and exaggerated but nonetheless true in its core nature. Youths begin to see the limitations and failures of adults and envision the possibility of rectifying the failures and exceeding the limitations. This idealism may seem unrealistic to adults, but within the current context of accelerating evolutionary change in human culture and consciousness, who can claim that they know for certain what is realistic and what is not?

In my estimation, Greta looked at the Swedish Parliament's dallying on the climate change crisis, and through her energetic idealism recognized the need for it to be called out and transformed. "I painted the sign on a piece of wood and, for the flyers, wrote down some facts I thought everyone should know. And then I took my bike to the Parliament and just sat there,"¹ she recalls. "The first day, I sat alone from about 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.—the regular school day. And then on the second day, people started joining me. After that, there were people there all the time."²

The second felt quality Pearce identified is a feeling of great expectations for their own lives. For most this is a barely conscious recognition that we each have the capacity to experience a calling in our lives and that a calling is the expression of the will, which is the expression of the soul. Even youths who have had very restricted or repressed lives in childhood can open to a sort of transparency in these years during which they gain some felt sense of their souls. I see youths experiencing their souls as an attraction, a strong curiosity,

a pull in a particular direction in life, even a clearly articulated calling.

I feel like Greta knew, even when she sat alone outside Parliament, a single youth with a sign reading *Skolstrejk för klimatet* °(School strike for climate), that she had a calling, a purpose, a responsibility, right now in her life. She knew she deserved great expectations for her purpose, and she acted on this knowledge. "You must take action. You must do the impossible. Because giving up is never an option."³

For Pearce, the third felt quality many youths experience is a feeling he calls hidden greatness. While youths are prone to self-centeredness as a regular part of their unfoldment, this feeling of "hidden greatness" is something different. It's another way that the soul can come into the consciousness of the youth, sometimes as a whisper and other times as a shout. And it can be a feeling of wholeness—or of the potential for wholeness. This feeling should be respected and valued, not ridiculed. It's a vehicle through which youths can know that what they do matters in the world, that they have a real contribution to offer.

On this final point, I know in my own heart that Greta discerned she was absolutely prepared to enact her calling. Right then and there. And she did. She kept her promise to strike every day until the Swedish national elections. Afterward, she agreed to make a speech in front of thousands of people at a People's Climate March rally. Her parents were reluctant. Knowing Greta had been so reticent on account of selective mutism, they tried to talk her out of it. But the teenager was determined. "In some cases where I am really passionate, I will not change my mind,"⁴ she says. Despite her family's concerns, she delivered the address in nearly flawless English, and invited the crowd to film her on their mobile phones and spread the message through social media.

We know that in manifesting climate change, we have constructed the perfect evolutionary crisis for Homo sapiens. The crisis is life threatening, ultimately species threatening, and universal. We also know that if we intend to move through and beyond this crisis, we need to enact an evolution of human consciousness on a scale and at a speed never seen before in our history as a species.

Evolving consciousness is challenging and complex for adults who have settled into a particular stage of evolutionary stasis. Even when people seek to evolve, it may require years of meditation or therapy. Or it may require a crisis of meaning, a profound trauma, a terrible loss, a dark night of the soul. Even with all of this intensity of challenge to an existing stage of consciousness, rather than evolve, people may regress into prior stages. On the whole, it does seem that consciousness is evolving for adults all over the planet despite the contemporaneous regression in some societies, but is it enough evolution soon enough?

In contrast, we know from the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother that humans can parent and educate in ways that maximize the likelihood of youths recognizing their soul's calling and generating the will and courage to begin to enact this calling as teenagers.

Drawing from my own research, I have identified five key insights of evolutionary parenting:

1. Every conception and birth of a human being is a wedding of flesh and soul.
2. Since the soul in its fullness is present from before birth, each child's soul is expressing its knowing through the vehicle of the physical body from the beginning of life. Yes, the soul is constrained by the infant's physical, emotional, and mental limitations—but the will of the infant is manifest from the first day of life outside the womb (and sometimes before). And the will of the child at every age and stage is the expression of the soul's intent. The soul is "the inner teacher." Parents can learn to see the child's will not as their opponent but as a source of wisdom about what the child needs in any moment, with which they can ally their parental efforts. The primary work of soul-informed parenting is gaining the wisdom and emotional maturity to give the child as much freedom as possible to live out their inner teacher's guidance while providing them with love, safety, and individually appropriate boundaries.
3. To work at giving a child freedom with safety, parents will inevitably have to grow themselves—emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually. Even with all of the demands of parenting, family life, and economic well-being, the more that parents choose to participate in activities that will help them to grow, the better they will be able to give their child what their soul needs.


4. There is information available to parents now about the trajectory through which human beings unfold and grow in childhood and youth. Yes, each child is unique in the most literal sense of that word. In concert with that uniqueness, the vast majority of children and youth unfold and grow through similar patterns of unfoldment, through similar trajectories of growth. But each individual grows and unfolds in their own way, at their own rate.
5. The most conscious parenting that we can provide for our children will make a significant contribution to the evolution of human consciousness. Perhaps the most significant contribution.

To a significant extent, our successful evolution as a species is dependent on our capacity to accelerate the unfoldment of consciousness among our young across the continents of this planet—the pathway for this has already been described to us by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. It's now up to us to help thousands and thousands and thousands of youths and young adults lead the transformation of consciousness and of human societies over the next 50 years.

Notes

1. *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/mar/11/greta-thunberg-schoolgirl-climate-change-warrior-some-people-can-let-things-go-i-cant>
2. Ibid.
3. *The Independent*, <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/greta-thunberg-congress-speech-climate-change-crisis-dream-a9112151.html>
4. *The Guardian*, op. cit.

DAVID MARSHAK is the author of *Evolutionary Parenting and The Common Vision: Parenting and Educating for Wholeness*. His research interests include evolutionary parenting, the evolution of consciousness, and adolescent development. He is also the author of *Inviting Youths to Claim the Power of Their Imagination: A Guidebook* and *Kids Need the Same Teacher for More than One Year*. David lives on the western edge of Arcata, California. He is happy to talk with folks about his work and publications—you can contact him at david.marshak@gmail.com.



I saw the Omnipotent's flaming pioneers
Over the heavenly verge which turns towards life
Come crowding down the amber stairs of birth;
Forerunners of a divine multitude,
Out of the paths of the morning star they came
Into the little room of mortal life.
I saw them cross the twilight of an age,
The sun-eyed children of a marvellous dawn,
The great creators with wide brows of calm,
The massive barrier-breakers of the world
And wrestlers with destiny in her lists of will,
The labourers in the quarries of the gods,
The messengers of the Incommunicable,
The architects of immortality.
Into the fallen human sphere they came,
Faces that wore the Immortal's glory still,
Voices that communed still with the thoughts of God,
Bodies made beautiful by the spirit's light,
Carrying the magic word, the mystic fire,
Carrying the Dionysian cup of joy,
Approaching eyes of a diviner man,
Lips chanting an unknown anthem of the soul,
Feet echoing in the corridors of Time.

SRI AUROBINDO, *Savitri*, pp. 343–344

THREEMEDITATIONS

ANANDA



GIGI UNSPLASH

ONE DAY IN 2012, I WAS DRIVING THE BACK ROADS OF Nevada alone, contemplating the purpose of existence, meditating on nirvana. After “scratching the surface” of the vast nothingness, I made a request with perhaps a little more sincerity than I’d ever had before: “I just want to know the Truth ... the real Truth ... the self-existent Truth that does not require an outside observer for it to exist—the Truth of creation and the purpose behind it.”

I felt that the request was heard—and months later, at 58 years of age, I left my home in Cedar City, Utah, in search of a more spiritual life. Initially I found myself at a place in Oregon called Alpha Farm. It was my habit in the morning to get a cup of coffee and walk down to a bridge at the entrance to the farm. A small river, perhaps three or four meters wide, flowed under the bridge. There I had what I termed my “Siddhartha” meditation time, having been strongly influenced by the book of the same name written by Herman Hesse.

At Alpha Farm I met a person from Auroville who’d given me a booklet written by Sri Aurobindo called “The Mother.” The following morning as I read the opening lines, I realized that this was what I had been searching for—and that the Mother had heard my prayer, led me to this place at the river, and been guiding, directing, and watching over my entire life.

A few weeks later I arrived at the Sri Aurobindo Sadhana Peetham in Lodi, California. An initial two-week stay turned into two and a half years. The ashram is an oasis of light and love and transformation. It occupies three acres of land just outside of town and is situated among the vineyards. The spiritual atmosphere, the occasional workshop, the monthly retreats, and the evening reading groups where I was immersed in the words of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo provided a strong foundation for sadhana.

In the early months of my stay, I had a series of pre-dawn dreams or impressions—perhaps they could be called meditations.

FIRST IMPRESSION

As I lay in bed, not asleep, not awake, in my subtle thought a man and a woman without clothing appeared above me, backgrounded by a blue sky. Slowly the two merged into one. All body parts specific to gender slowly melted away and a new individual began to take on a reddish, orangish, golden hue. The sense within was that this was a glimpse of the Divine goal for humanity. Slowly the “New Person” descended into me and took up residence deep within me.

SECOND IMPRESSION

A few weeks later in the same pre-dawn state of awareness, I saw a large, shallow bowl in front of me. It was black with a gold inlay of the Mother’s and Sri Aurobindo’s symbols, and the symbols were connected by two thin gold lines in an ornate way. This gold inlay circled the sides. The Mother was sitting some ways back behind the bowl. Smiling, she encouraged me to empty everything into the bowl: all my dreams and nightmares, all my successes and failures, all my hopes and fears, faith and doubts. The desire for progress, the desire for what I thought I needed, any desire of any kind was to be placed in the bowl—and also emotions, inaccurate mental images of who I was, faulty perceptions of family and friends, and even the essence of the observer.

By the time the process of putting everything into the bowl ended, nothing was left. At Mother’s prompting, the empty vastness that remained gently touched the bowl and floated to her. Still smiling, she rose from her seated

By the time the process of putting everything into the bowl ended, nothing was left. At Mother's prompting, the empty vastness that remained gently touched the bowl and floated to her. Still smiling, she rose from her seated position, approached me, and took up a position deep within my heart.

position, approached me, and took up a position deep within my heart.

THIRD IMPRESSION

After some time had passed, early one morning I was meditating on the psychic being and passages I had read on the subject. I felt encouraged to collect all the strings of thought and emotion and center them in a concrete way at the base of my skull where it met the spinal cord. This collected center, a glowing mass, moved slowly down my spinal column until it rested at the level of my heart. It then moved toward my heart but stopped about halfway between heart and spine. I had the impression, "Here is your psychic being." Slowly, gently my awareness moved to my heart, then back to my spine, then back to my heart, each time passing through the psychic centre and creating a channel.

As the energy from the psychic started to pulse through the circulatory system of my body, spontaneously a mantra arose from within: "Aum Maa, Aum Maa," continuing as the center of awareness moved to and from.

LOVE, LIGHT, AND NO LIMITS

Now in Pondicherry for the past five years, I have had other impressions, but these first three, which came to me by Mother's grace, seem to be foundational. It is with great love and affection for her that I share them now with a larger community. With her there is love and light ... and no limits!

ANANDA (Terry Lynn Billington) was introduced to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo in June of 2013. After two and a half years at the Sri Aurobindo Sadhana Peetham ashram (SASP) he moved to Pondicherry, India, where he currently resides. Living at Mother's House in Vaithikuppam, he provides administrative support and maintains the guesthouse website. As part of the team that crafted The Mother's Guidance website, he continues to add new content. He travels to Mother's Garden twice a week and is part of the creative team at NavaVihan where an e-commerce site is currently under construction. Taking to heart the saying "you only get old when you stop learning" he is enrolled in online courses oriented around the digital arts.



WHERE I FIND MYSELF TODAY

ALAN BAISS

WITHOUT A DOUBT, THE IMPRESSIVE DEVELOPMENTS in matter that humanity has pioneered are an astonishing legacy of the current stage in the evolution of our consciousness, but from this place we are not able to grasp the wider consequences of our progress, let alone the fullness of existence. As a result, our attempts to control our lives, our planet, and our destiny have significantly contributed to the current global crises and, quite clearly, if we are going to get out of this mess we must take our guidance from a consciousness that is different from the consciousness that got us here.

The notion that humanity needs to participate in an evolutionary leap in consciousness in order to survive on Earth was a new and exciting idea for me when I made

my first documentary film inspired by the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. The current film in postproduction that my husband, Joseh Garcia, and I are making seeks to understand the transformation in consciousness that the current global crises seem to be asking of us. The many unexpected explanations that our diverse and often esteemed interviewees have offered for this new film have reshaped my personal relationship with the global crises.

As I reflect on my responsibility concerning the global crises, the words that ring in my head tell me that if I want to change the world, then change myself. I hear that I need to embrace a greater universal love, embody acceptance, and surrender to a divine power. But as long as these are just words, very little changes in me. Although

I might fleetingly experience a taste of something like divine love, I invariably return to my familiar stance, which is often colored with judgments.

The change required of me is huge: It's a complete transformation of my consciousness. My mind says, "I'm trying, but it's too much." It's starting to sound like I just don't have what it takes, but I believe we all have the potential we need, and none of us are alone on this journey.

I often feel like my efforts to change my consciousness are going in circles, but I believe it is more like a spiral. A spiral might, at first glance, appear like it keeps returning to the same spot, but actually a new advance is achieved with each go-around. By way of personal example, several concepts and potentials that I once considered too outrageous to include in a film have, over time, become part of my conscious reality. Just as my consciousness is slowly shifting, I believe the collective consciousness of all the peoples on Earth is unavoidably changing. It's like we are all part of a great ongoing cosmic unfolding, although the reality of this movement remains mostly under the surface of our awareness.

The current crises, maybe because they are global, appear to be accelerating the change in our collective consciousness. They are like hammers tapping away and creating cracks in our consensus reality. As these cracks grow, flashes of awareness slip through and, eventually,

we experience our reality a little differently. But is this enough? Sure my awareness has changed sufficiently that I now eat less meat, ride my bike, and compost, and all of these are important, respecting our home matters, but it is not transformation, it's negotiation. I'm doing enough so that I don't feel bad, but not so much that I forsake my familiar reality or my beautiful life. I feel I am denying the inevitable. If this is all I'm willing to do, then very likely a larger crisis is going to come along and force me to change, or simply exterminate me.

I do think it's reasonable to ask why any of this should matter at all. I'm going to die and so why not just live my life in whatever way feels good and let Nature take care of the rest? This might be an attractive option if my hunger to experience a deep peace, love, beauty, and wholeness wouldn't leave me feeling dissatisfied with the spoils of a hedonistic lifestyle. This craving seems to be present, somewhere, in each and every one of us, so surely it must be meaningful to our lives' journeys. Personally, although I long to have my consciousness imbued with these higher values, I often feel alone and lost at sea with a task beyond my capability.

I will likely remain lost if I don't access the aids that Nature has given me to navigate my way to a higher consciousness. I turn to the words of Haridas Chaudhuri, founder of the California Institute of Integral Studies and

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"The notion that humanity needs to participate in an evolutionary leap in consciousness in order to survive on Earth was a new and exciting idea for me," says Baiss.

the Cultural Integration Fellowship. Chaudhuri suggests that if we can accept that humanity is a child of Nature, organically related to Nature, “then it would be very



reasonable to assume that the deepest aspirations of the human soul or human heart have some organic relation to Nature herself.”¹ So these deep aspirations, as Chaudhuri says, “actually are the reflections in our consciousness of the potentialities of cosmic evolution.”² Furthermore, as Chaudhuri states, “the voice of cosmic consciousness is present in the soul of every human individual.”³ The peace, love, beauty, and wholeness that I aspire for, and that is reflected in the soul of each person, is like a marker toward which I can set my course in my adventure to evolve my consciousness.

I’m still in uncharted and stormy waters, and it is hard to stay on course. So what is my job if I choose to participate with Nature in this great evolutionary unfolding? Once again I turn to Chaudhuri, who says, “the first order

of business in the practice of Integral Yoga is to bring the soul principle in us to the front of our consciousness. If that is done other things can follow suit, so that is really the first order of business, bringing the soul, which is now hidden in the depth of our being, forward to the front of our consciousness so that it can take over the administration of our life.”⁴ My responsibility is to listen, deeply and sincerely, to the soft voice of wisdom present in my soul and to welcome this as my life’s guide toward the peace, the love, the beauty, and the wholeness that I aspire for.

This is a spiritual practice that connects me with the potentials of cosmic evolution and, undoubtedly, my ability to hear grows the more intentionally I listen to the wisdom and guidance of my soul. But another voice speaks in opposition, the voice of my modern mind asks, “Why should I listen to something that may not even be real?” My mind fights to maintain an old and familiar existence. I hear my mind dismissing my soul’s wisdom and sometimes even confusing me by masquerading as deeper wisdom. I can’t just pit one voice against the other without having a fight on my hands.

I want to keep each cycle of my spiral advancing and so, rather than righteously condemning the voice of my mind, why not listen to it with love and acceptance while also hearing the wisdom of my soul? Why not hear both? Unless I am deluding myself, my mind objects less to this approach and, in fact, it’s even a little curious and might be willing to help. With the battle diminished there may be more space for my deepest inner wisdom to come to the front of my awareness and then, as Chaudhuri suggests, “other things will follow.”

This is a very beautiful practice, but isn’t it a bit self-indulgent and a distraction from the desecration and suffering that is resulting from the unrelenting global crises? It is if I don’t bring the glimpses of my soul’s wisdom that I have experienced along my journey to the front of my awareness and address the global crises from within this consciousness. When I have fully tuned into my soul identity, I will realize that everything, including the global crises, is not what my mind thought it was, and so my responses will be grounded in a new reality. Brant Cortright, who was interviewed for the new film, says, “When we tune into our soul identity, our deepest level of self, of our being, everything changes, it’s like a new dimension

I'm still in uncharted and stormy waters, and it is hard to stay on course. So what is my job if I choose to participate with Nature in this great evolutionary unfolding?

opens up and so everything changes.”⁵ Cortright adds, “When we have a deeper perception, then our whole view of the global crises changes.”⁶

Because this awakening stems from Nature’s own evolutionary potentials, my response to the global crises will surely be in harmony with Nature’s evolution. I am beginning to accept that I no longer need to feel desperately lost in my desire to eradicate the global crises before they eliminate all life on Earth. Rather, my assignment is to faithfully follow the wisdom of cosmic consciousness and to remain open to what comes.

I have direction and a guide for my journey in consciousness, but my mind still dithers and casts doubt on what I know deep within my being. A story that my spiritual teacher, Lynne Hemry, told me years ago helps me here. In the story, an old monastery is undergoing renovations, and while dismantling one of the monastery’s ancient stone walls human remains are discovered, embedded in the large boulders. Apparently, during meditation, some of the monks had changed their vibrations to the point that they could pass through the rock walls. But when some of the monks began to doubt that they could actually do what they were already doing, their vibrations changed and they were stuck in the wall. Whether this story is absolutely true or not doesn’t really matter, the message for me is that if I doubt that I can do what I am already doing, then what I am doing falls apart. So, in an effort not to be seduced by doubts, my practice is starting to include my keeping my course, trusting what I know, and upholding my faith that with each cycle of the spiral my consciousness is changed.

It does seem that the cosmos is aiming for conscious evolution with humanity as its vehicle, and it is my great potential and responsibility to participate. I have not been

left alone in this effort, I have the tools, the support, and the guidance of the cosmos with me at every moment, and I must do it consciously, this is the only way. Even with my very small steps, I know that with each turn of the spiral my consciousness is changed and new things will come. This is the place where I find myself today.

Notes

1. Haridas Chaudhuri, *Life Divine*: Chapter One (Lecture recorded 17 April 1973), track 1, 8 minutes.
2. Haridas Chaudhuri, *Life Divine*: Integral Yoga (Lecture recorded 10 April 1973), track 4, 15 minutes, 22 seconds.
3. Haridas Chaudhuri, *Cosmic Consciousness* (Lecture recorded 24 July 1966), track 5, 06 seconds.
4. Haridas Chaudhuri, *Therapy of Divine Love* (Lecture recorded 18 June 1975), Disc 2, track 3, 6 minutes, 45 seconds.
5. Brant Cortright, (Interview conducted 30 May 2018), scene 6, 8 minutes, 44 seconds.
6. Brant Cortright, 10 minutes, 45 seconds.

ALAN BAISS graduated from California Institute of Integral Studies in 1992 and pursued a successful career as a psychotherapist for 12 years. He then became inspired to make his first film, *INTEGRAL CONSCIOUSNESS: Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga and how Haridas Chaudhuri brought it to the West*. Alan is now working with his husband, Joseh Garcia, on his fourth film inspired by the Integral Yoga. Their most recent release, *CONSCIOUS: Fulfilling our Higher Evolutionary Potential*, won a Merit of Awareness Award (2019 Awareness Film Festival, Los Angeles). Alan can be reached through the film’s website, www.integralinspirations.com.

FEATURES



LONDON PARENTEAU

THE
natural &
unnatural
WORLD

KAREN MITCHELL

EARTH AS WE KNOW AND RELATE TO IT TODAY IS NOT THE SAME Earth our ancestors knew. A very clear example of this can be found in the ancient 4.5-inch-tall oolitic limestone figure commonly referred to as the Woman of Willendorf. This figurine's full, nurturing breasts and life-giving belly are striking. Around her faceless head are seven coils, which some speculate represent the orbit of the planets. Archeologists now estimate that the figurine was made over 20,000 years ago. As I sit with this image and feel my way into it, I sense her faceless, featureless head crowned with circling motions, and the large breasts, rounded belly, and strong hips that amplify her fertile power.

While a maternal remnant of our earlier experience of Earth remains (we sometimes still refer to our planet as Mother Earth), by and large we humans are now experiencing ourselves as the *conduits* of planetary power—not through our bodily fertility and connection to the natural world, but through our fertile imaginations and technological prowess. Earth has become a “re-source”—a secondary source. While facets of this “re-source” have admittedly been well cared for in addition to exploited, Earth nonetheless remains secondary to human cognition, human imagination, and human interest (including human aesthetics, recreation, and spirituality). These are viewed as lord and master, as the primary creative and directing sources of power and energy on the planet. Perhaps this human-centered mentality has been able to gain ground because of a relatively stable climate the past few centuries. Perhaps major climate change will begin a collective and transformational shift in how we see, experience, and relate to Earth. This remains to be seen.

Now in my mid-60s, with the quieting that comes with aging and more days at home brought on by the pandemic, I am continuing a process begun in October 2019 at a transformative retreat. During the retreat, I began to see and understand the underlying coherence behind very disparate personal experiences. This disparity of experience, which up until then had been very painful, could be described as feeling deep connection with the natural world, and being part of the intensifying, collective movement away from the natural world and into the technological. And as I began to sense a paradoxical

coherence underlying all these experiences, I felt a new wholeness. I felt that Earth was up to something of incomprehensible significance.

WHEN LIGHTNING STRIKES

The Supermind, the divine gnosis, is not something entirely alien to our present consciousness ...¹

When I was 7 years old, I received Catholic religious instruction on Saturday mornings. This was a regular practice for children being raised Catholic but not attending a Catholic school. My father would drop me off and pick me up, and he was never late for either. There was a single exception. One Saturday, my father wasn't there to pick me up. At some point, all the other children had left. I remember it being somewhat foggy, which increased my sense of aloneness, but I knew my dad would come for me. I started swinging myself around the flagpole, and then I stood still.

Suddenly, I had the impression of a powerful lightning strike, which completely captured my attention. It was as if I and everything else in the world were trees, and the lightning had, in an instant, destroyed this immense forest—except for me. I, alone, was still standing. I was not the least afraid of this power, and I immediately thought of it as God. I also somehow knew that the destruction of all the other trees wasn't happening in the world I knew. It wasn't real. This power communicated that the virtual destruction of all the other trees occurred so that nothing could stand between this power and myself. For many years, I never told anyone about this experience.

A few months later, I made my First Communion. This is a very important Catholic ritual and a celebration of a spiritual and developmental milestone. I knew its importance, but during the whole event I felt nothing. As my family and I drove back home, my mother, who was sitting next to my father in the front seat, turned around and said to me, “You must be so happy now!” Immediately I realized that what my mother said had no power to change my “unfeeling” condition, and no power to change the memory of it. I knew this was somehow connected to the experience I had when I was waiting for my dad.

About two years prior, my mother helped awaken a deeper conscious feeling in me. On her birthday, lightning struck a tree in our backyard and nearly cracked it in two. My mother's grief over its shattering was a revelation to me. Through her I felt what it was like to love a tree, and what it meant to grieve the loss of a tree. With this experience I felt newly connected to my mother and to trees, though neither she nor I spoke of it. This event was full of human feeling and natural connection.

The event at the flagpole two years later was very different. All connection to everything except that divine power was cut. But there was no fear, just a clear seeing and knowing that the power had wanted me to become aware of it, and that the purpose of this seeing was a direct, immediate connection to this power with nothing in between. The power claimed my complete attention. Rather than being connected to the real world, this experience was one of being completely separated out from it. All that belonged to and had emerged from the natural world had been pushed far away. It was in view only "virtually," as an image of something utterly destroyed. In mid life, I realized that this experience—arriving as it did when my capacity to reason was beginning to develop—was a demonstration of the inner nature of reasoning. To reason in this inner way meant not allowing anything or anyone to come between the power and myself. This stance and determination with regard to how truth reveals itself to us in this way is an essential expression of our individuality.

I recently have come to believe that the common elements of these two events—the lightning strike at my mother's tree and the lightning strike at the flagpole—were

given as a hint, a sign of the wholeness underlying the two very disparate events and ways of knowing. These can be likened to the base pair of our "spiritual" DNA. The event at my mother's tree was experienced as natural, the event at the flagpole did not seem to conform to natural ways or laws even to my 7-year-old self. During the earlier event I felt a natural connection; during the latter I felt an unnatural separation. Reconciling the coexistence of the natural and the unnatural, let alone their collective wholeness, requires a new power of consciousness.

When I had the flagpole experience, my family had just moved from Michigan to the mega-suburbia of Orange County, California. My parents had bought a home in one of the new cookie-cutter middle-class neighborhoods. There was minimal vegetation. My surroundings felt sterile and empty. Among my few consolations was that we could see mountains to the north and hills to the east. However, over the years, the view of the mountains and the hills progressively became obscured by air pollution.

As a young person, I attributed my cold, empty desert feeling to the built environment around me, to a largely uninspiring schooling, and to the conditions and atmosphere of our family and home. Only later could I appreciate that the lightning strike, the power that created separation, was not confined to myself, but was a more universal event, though other individuals may not have had as intense of an experience of it as I did.

Perhaps, for as long as it remains unconscious, there will be the not-understood compulsion to project out, to create a reflection in the "real" environment of the destruction of the natural world.

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From the cold, empty desert created by my awakening to individuality and reason, longing emerged and grew. It was as if a fire was lit within me, experienced as something precious, as the one lifeline out. I believe the depth, intensity, and length of this “desert” experience, as well as the ideas, images, archetypes, and stories I was exposed to in early childhood and adolescence, shaped the mental formulation of my longing as a young adult. (For others, this longing can seemingly start at birth, arise in mid life, or perhaps even occur in later life, though that seems not as common.) The igniting of the flame of longing is a very important event.

In the Judeo-Christian tradition, the revelation of I-AM and the fire that burns but does not consume is brought together in the story of the burning bush:

And Moses was herding the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, priest of Midian, and he drove the flock into the wilderness and came to the mountain of God, to Horeb. And the Lord’s messenger appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of the bush, and he saw, and look, the bush was burning with fire and the bush was not consumed. And Moses thought, “Let me, pray, turn aside that I may see this great sight, why the bush does not burn up.” And the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see, and God called to him from

the midst of the bush and said, “Moses, Moses!” And he said, “Here I am.” And He said, “Come no closer here. Take off your sandals from your feet, for the place you are standing on is holy ground.”²

The voice from the “midst” of the bush tells Moses he is sending him to free his people from Egyptian oppression. When Moses asks for the name of who is commanding him, this is the reply: “And God said to Moses, *ehyeh-asher-ehyeh*, I-will-be-who-I-will-be.”³

In this incredibly deep biblical account, one interpretation of the burning bush can be understood as the natural world. It is not, however, the natural world that provides us food or building material. It is not the natural world that captures and cocoons human imagination, emotion, and feeling. It is not the natural world that lifts us up with its grandeur and beauty. It is the desert bush. It is the *immanence* of the natural world that does not give *us* anything, and eludes our understanding. At a material level, the bush is the natural world existing as revealed interiority. This makes it “unnatural” as shown by how it burns without being consumed or destroyed.

Longing is like that burning: It secretly reconnects us to the natural world as revealed interiority. This gives our longing a feeling of profound and surprising “naturalness,” which makes the intense hunger and thirst of longing bearable, even desirable. As this conscious connection

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JAULIEN CAVANDOLI



begins to emerge, longing falls away. For me, this resulted in a sense of emptiness that no longer only existed “out there” but also as my very self.

THE MARRIAGE OF HEAVEN AND EARTH

Earth must transform herself and equal Heaven
Or Heaven descend into earth’s mortal state.⁴

When I was 16 years old, my soul caught fire. This occurred through reading a passage in Fyodor Dostoevsky’s *The Brother’s Karamazov*. Alyosha, the youngest Karamazov brother, has lost the monk Zosima, his spiritual teacher. When Zosima died, his body quickly began to show signs of corruption. Several monks, who had been envious of the love Zosima inspired in others, began talking about the early bodily decomposition as a sign that Zosima was not as holy as others imagined him to be. All of this deeply troubled Alyosha’s soul. But then, as he is near Zosima’s open coffin, he has a vision of Zosima—“joyful and quietly laughing”—and Zosima calls him to a wedding feast: “We are rejoicing ... we are drinking new wine, the wine of a new and great joy. See how many guests there are? Here are the bridegroom and the bride, here is the wise ruler of the feast, tasting the new wine.”⁵

After this vision, Alyosha leaves Zosima’s body and hurries outside. This is what Alyosha experiences next:

Filled with rapture, his soul yearned for freedom, space, vastness. Over him the heavenly dome, full of quiet, shining stars, hung boundlessly. From the zenith to the horizon the still-dim Milky Way stretched its double strand. Night, fresh and quiet, almost unstirring, enveloped the earth. The white towers and golden domes of the church gleamed in the sapphire sky. The luxuriant autumn flowers in the flowerbeds near the house had fallen asleep until morning. The silence of the earth seemed to merge with the silence of the heavens, the mystery of the earth touched the mystery of the stars ... Alyosha, stood gazing and suddenly, as if he had been cut down, threw himself to the earth.

He did not know why he was embracing it,

he did not try to understand why he longed so irresistibly to kiss it, to kiss all of it, but he was kissing it, weeping, sobbing, and watering it with his tears, and he vowed ecstatically to love it, to love it unto ages of ages ... with each moment he felt clearly and almost tangibly something as firm and immovable as this heavenly vault descend into his soul. Some sort of idea, as it were, was coming to reign in his mind—now for the whole of his life and unto ages of ages. He fell to the earth a weak youth and rose up a fighter, steadfast for the rest of his life, and he knew it and felt it suddenly, in that very moment of his ecstasy.⁶

As I read this passage, I became Alyosha. I felt his feelings. Most of all a great love for Earth burned in me. It took the form of a desire to serve and be part of the marriage of the heavens and the Earth, of transcendence and immanence, spirit and matter, soul and nature. With that kindling of desire and aspiration I left “weak youth.” I had the strength of a sense of purpose.

Not long afterward, as I was browsing the stacks of my high school library, I came across a prominently displayed book of photos of Earth taken from space. It was a book I couldn’t check out but was able to view while in the library. I removed it from its display stand, sat at a table, and became engrossed in the images. What struck me very powerfully was that Earth was spatially already in the material heavens. There really wasn’t a separate heaven and Earth in nature. I realized that a natural “marriage” had already occurred! What was interesting was that I sensed there was still something I didn’t understand about this “marriage.”

Thirty-four years later, in 2006, this theme reemerged for me in a surprising way. My husband and I were in San Francisco waiting for a bus when I knew I had, for the first time, “landed” fully on Earth. It was similar to the recognition that one has moved from dream-sleep and is freshly awake. I had not been fully here, but now I knew I was fully here. And I was here as a seed buried in Earth.

I realized that my desire to help marry transcendent heaven and immanent Earth was a reflection and expression of my absence from planet Earth itself. Now I was in Earth,

but not yet opened up. I felt I was self-enclosed like a seed that had not yet died or sprouted. I didn't feel as if there was anything I could or should do about this. There was a process going on that was obviously beyond my comprehension and control.

Two years later, in the summer of 2008, the seed cracked open. My husband and I were traveling in Colorado and decided to go whitewater rafting. Not being a thrill seeker by nature, I had convinced my husband to take a rafting trip on the Blue River instead of on the more intense whitewater of the Arkansas River. Well the Blue River, as we came to find out while we were on it, had been flowing with a greater volume of snowmelt that season. In addition to this, we had a guide who wasn't "all there" that day. There were two large rafts going out. Before launching, there was the usual spiel on "what to do in case of an emergency." This potential emergency was described as an individual ending up in the water. After this we were on our way.

For about 20 minutes we had a glorious, fast float trip. Then we came upon whitewater and rocks. As soon as we did, our guide managed to get us pancaked on the rocks while the other boat went on unimpeded. All of us working together managed to get the raft off the rocks, but the rapids were too fast, and before we could regain full control of the raft, we hit more rocks, and the whole raft tipped over. *Everyone* was in the water. My husband, the guide, and a woman who was a very experienced rafter were quickly taken to shore by the current. The rest of us were carried farther downriver. However, everyone survived and no one was severely injured. I ended up being the most banged up, finding myself in a strong current that took me into shallower waters studded with rocks. I remember telling myself, "I am not dying on this river today." I came out with a swollen knee, a huge contusion on my lower back, and a cracked molar.

On the way back home, as we were approaching the eastern side of the Sierra Nevada, there was a clear recognition that the seed that had fallen to Earth and been buried in 2006 had "cracked" open. Perhaps given that I had fallen into water, it would be more precise to say, that I had been "softened up" enough to be completely exposed. I knew that this meant I was really here and no longer so self-enclosed. I also knew this meant I could and would experience Earth in a new way. Only a few months later, I began a seven-year

journey with spiritual psychologist Robert Sardello to develop conscious sensing.

THE MANY KINDS OF SILENCE

Being the oldest of nine children, noise of some sort was a constant. But I didn't notice it until I was 14 and a friend, who was an only child, invited me to trailer camp with her parents. On our first full day at the campground, my friend and I set off on a hike. The trail took us up a hill and then down into a bowl where there were trees and a small meadow. The quiet was like a revelation. I experienced silence as a new kind of palpable presence that wrapped me round. After a few moments, young men riding noisy ATVs on the trail above us shattered the quiet.

After that experience, I craved silence. I did things my siblings considered crazy in order to find it. I would sit in a closet, set an alarm for 4 a.m. to have a few quiet minutes, go off a little ways when we went to a park or beach. When I was alone, I seemed to experience silence in a fuller and more sustaining way.

At 16, I read and heard about monastic life and its "observance" of silence, which greatly appealed to me. I ended up at age 17 in a monastery on about 10 enclosed acres. It sat right next to a highway, so there was less silence than I had hoped for. However, the religious order I belonged to, the Poor Clares, got up in the middle of the night (1 a.m.) to chant the psalms and to meditate. Earth's silence seeped through the walls of the chapel, and I experienced silence again filling and wrapping me palpably. Sometimes in the early morning, I experienced a similar silence sitting outside for meditation.

When I left the monastery and met my future husband, I discovered a fellow lover of the natural world. We have always lived in a town, but have taken many backpacking and camping trips into the wilderness. More recently, I have attended retreats in quiet, natural settings. During this time, I discovered that Earth has many kinds of silence. The sounds of the natural world lent a tone, a quality, a feel to silence. They did not disrupt or disturb it. One of my most peaceful nights ever was spent sleeping at the base of a thunderous waterfall. The Swiss philosopher Max Picard described this phenomenon very movingly in his book, *The World of Silence*:



Silence ... is the air in which nature breathes. The motions of nature are the motions of silence. The alternation of the seasons is the rhythm of silence; the pattern of the changing seasons is covered by silence.

The silence of nature is the primary reality. The things of nature serve only to make the silence clearly visible. The things of nature are images of the silence, exhibiting not themselves so much as the silence, like signs pointing to the place where silence is.

Silence was there first, before things. It is as though the forest grew up slowly after it: the branches of the trees are like dark lines that have followed the movements of the silence; the leaves thickly cover the branches as if the silence wanted to conceal itself.

A bird sings in the forest. That is not a sound directed against the silence; it is the bright glance falling from the eye of silence itself on to the forest.⁷

There is also something special about desert silence at night. About six years ago, my husband and I spent the night in Chaco Canyon in New Mexico. The Milky Way galaxy stretched from horizon to horizon, and there were so many stars that for the first time I experienced the depth of space. I was nowhere and everywhere in flowing silence. This was nothing like the "interior" desert of my youth. Bernadette Roberts, a Christian contemplative and Carmelite nun, describes these experiences of silence as fleeting

moments of what she called, "no-self." For her, these fleeting moments of "no-self" became, at the end of her journey, the whole of time.

Max Picard's book was published in 1948. Since then, the silence of the natural world seems to be increasingly broken by the "unnatural" noise of machines. Rare is even the wilderness silence that is not punctuated by at least the sound of planes. Death Valley, one of the quietest places my husband and I have ever visited, is now flown over regularly by military jets. In once quiet parks and trails you can hear the ubiquitous leaf blower. My own neighborhood is now subject to low-flying passenger planes at all hours going in and out of the recently expanded airport 30 miles away. For a long while, I thought of all this noise as soulless and unnatural and found myself more and more irritated with it.

One morning, as I was driving to the Integral Yoga center in Lodi, California, it was as if I had slipped into the body of Earth herself. I sensed Earth's delight in all this buzzing noise of human activity that was, to be honest, quite surprising. It was as if noise could not detract from or oppose her silence. Earth's silence was more profound than I had thought.

This sense of Earth's delight with the modern-day "buzz" also opened up the possibility of rethinking and reimagining noise. Regarding this, I found something Bernadette Roberts wrote in one of her books very helpful. She tells the story of being with a young child who was in a full-blown screaming tantrum when she received the inspiration not to inwardly resist the noise in any way.



Letting go of her resistance, she found herself dropping down into a whole new level of knowing. I decided to begin practicing this same inward non-resistance to mechanical noise. I tried to become aware of what the disturbing “unnatural” noise was doing rather than resist it. What I observed when I did this was a screwing inward of energy to a constitutive level or depth of reality. It did not “feel good.” It was not joyful, peaceful, or even pleasant, but after a while there was a kind of sober satisfaction as if a small, but not insignificant step in a vast work had been completed.

I now recognize that my conception of unnatural mechanical noise as something alien and remote from the natural world was created through an ignorance and lack of curiosity about what mechanical noise is doing. When

I stopped resisting and turned awareness toward the noise, I dropped below the surface polarity of natural silence and mechanical commotion. For most contemporary people engaged in frenetic activity and living in sheltered environments, days spent outdoors provide an experience that is like a long exhale from “the noise.” These experiences are often restorative, a “recharge” before returning to the technological drain.

As I have become more aware of what our technological world is doing, and how best to be with it, that awareness has led to a new appreciation of Sri Aurobindo’s *Savitri*. Of this magnificent poem, Sri Aurobindo himself wrote: “...this is not a mere allegory, the characters are not personified qualities, but incarnations or emanations of living and conscious Forces

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with whom we can enter into concrete touch and they take human bodies in order to help man and show him the way from his mortal state to a divine consciousness and immortal life." A living and conscious Force I have recently become very drawn to and curious about is Death.

Today, Death rules more than most realize, though we may sense it and feel it very deeply. It is seen in the dying off of our ecosystems and the ever-greater development of our technological world, a world both altered and experienced through human artifice. Of course both the natural world and the creation of the unnatural world by human artifice are all *Prakriti* (Nature), but to see better what *Prakriti* is up to, it is good to acknowledge what is happening on Earth, including its destruction. Death is not evil, even though we may feel it is so. It is one of the most natural forces out there, our shadow and instrument, though it may take us many, many years as a species to understand how this is so. It will take us realizing how we are both Satyavan and Death in Sri Aurobindo's epic poem. It will take us realizing we are all Savitri. Perhaps

only then will we be on the cusp of another way of knowing Earth: as the mother of a new form of divine life.

Notes

1. Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 841.
2. Robert Alter, *The Five Books of Moses: a Translation with Commentary*, W.W. Norton & Company, New York, London, 2004.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 320.
4. Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri*, p. 486.
5. Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamozov*, translated by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky, Vintage Classics, NY, 1991, p. 361.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 362–363.
7. Max Picard, *The World of Silence*, translated by Stanley Goodman, Regnery Gateway, Inc., Washington, D.C., 1988, p. 137.

KAREN MITCHELL is a contributing writer for *Collaboration* and a member of the journal's editorial team. Her work has been featured in previous issues, and Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have helped inspire her research, writing, and way of life.

a barfight for the earth

RICK LIPSCHUTZ AND AMANDA EMERSON

This short piece is based on a vision that Wayne Bloomquist had in the late 20th century and shared with the authors in recent years. Wayne has been involved in Integral Yoga for nearly five decades. In 1973 he traveled to India with his partner, Surama, to meet the Mother in Pondicherry. However, after arriving in India he learned that the Mother had just passed away on 17 November 1973, before the two were able to travel to Pondicherry. After reaching Pondicherry, however, Wayne had very significant spiritual experiences that transformed his consciousness and changed his life permanently. You can read a more in-depth account of Wayne's and Surama's experiences in the Fall 2015 *Collaboration* article "Seaside: Wayne Bloomquist's Big World" by the same authors.—Editors



BIT OF A STRETCH FOR HIM, TO HAVE THAT DREAM, OF SUDDENLY flying out of a frontier saloon, some dulled-in sepia version of the 1850s, devoid of any gaiety, straight from Virginia City into virgin space and the next century, to see a brighter picture than the astronauts did.

Inside a dream experience, Bloomquist woke up, pushing through swinging saloon doors. The whole thing was theatrical, a scene out of a Western. “I had on my shiny boots and my black Stetson, my big belt with the six-guns in the holsters, like I was the whole shebang. Steady as ever in the eyes, stolid, but something wild in me, untamed; not lawless, a law unto myself. I’d been ready long as I can remember, but for what? I’ve always pictured myself some kind of cowboy, but tonight I dressed the part.

“I stepped up to the bar, banged my fist down like you see me do sometimes: ‘I’m thirsty, can a man get a drink in here?’

“Guy with a dirty apron stops wiping glasses, and says, ‘Is the Earth turnin’, pardner?’ I had never seen the Earth turning, but that was going to change. I didn’t feel much like his partner. Only the kind that’s right behind him, going the other way.

“I heard a noise from the table back of me. Cards, scooped up by what sounded like somebody’s hands, and knocked back against the table, four times, each side, to make a nice, neat pack. Then that riffing sound, of the two halves being reintegrated. But when I turned around there was nobody there: The cards seemed to be doing all that for themselves. Spoons were moving, a shoe went by, then the clock off the wall.

“*What goes?* I called out. A man made his way into this cartoon of chaos: spindle thin, looked like he’d been beating the road. He could have said, *Nothing for nobody* if he felt like being friendly. But I was nobody to him, so he said nothing. An ordinary night in old Nevada. A night

that smoking trains ran through, and maybe stopped in places like this. You could count on the stagecoach being held up, one way or another, just the way an honest joint like this can count on the odd visit from guys like me: shameful, less than human, but sons of the Mother of us all; reckless seekers of beauty, barred ever from sight of Her. I get the feeling if I hadn't walked into that place, none of this would have happened.

"There were tonier establishments, where if you had the loot you'd have good company, and you could do it up in style with oysters Rockefeller. There was nothing edible about this place. Some controversy about silver hung in the air. I don't guess anybody cared, but I had a feeling we were in for it. Even before my journey to the East, seeing the whole Western world, sort of a gin mill about to explode, about summed it up.

"Who paid my tab, or is that bartender still standing there with his hand held out? Somehow I knew I had to skedaddle. There was only trouble brewing in there, and my feet knew about it before my brain; they were already on the way out. Then I heard it, I think we all did: WHOLE PLACE IS GONNA BLOW! That signal pulled us with it. Everybody took off.

"I was thrown out of that bar, but nothing like I was used to. I went flying out the window. I was out in space, I left the old world behind, and all I saw was the new world. The frontier way out there in front of me. I think there were other people with me, but I guess they got lost in the shuffle. The whole saloon? Just suspended, like I was, suspended in space? I don't know about that. You lose track of each other. But I'm pretty sure I saw the barkeep. You get shuttled out that fast forward, I mean not just in space, but more than a century later—who'd want to go back to that bucket of blood?

"The Earth was about the size of a full moon. Upper hemisphere practically transparent, other half streaked with silvery grey. Pale blue dot it never was—big blue marble, my eye—it was blazing. Brilliant lines close together, radiated out a sort of corona, all 360 degrees. I was never much for pretty words, but I loved the way the lines went pulsating on. Like strings of different lengths,

and orchestrated—or improvised, like a jazz combo—you get different notes. It was pulsing, all pulsing and shining as if it was alive—which it is, of course. Was I seeing the soul of the Earth, its essence? You live here, too. You tell me.

"I never saw the world that way before or since. It resembled the Earth, but seen from considerable distance. Closely configured, colorful lines lit out completely around a skeletal framework that was transparent, except it seemed to have some opaque lower portions. Pulsating away from the Earth—these brilliant colors of all kinds. Were we all thrown out of an Old West barfight into a whole other story, this whole other life? It feels that way to me. Those days were like golden sparks of light. I was on fire."

RICK LIPSCHUTZ: What kind of nutcase packs up his whole family and embarks on a pilgrimage from Albuquerque, New Mexico, to western Massachusetts, believing that in some place called the Pioneer Valley we might find a northeast passage through schizophrenia? A devotee of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, that's who. And one who is engaged, with partner and son, in a pilot project in Open Dialogue Therapy, and continues to write "that novel about the soul" (in fulfillment of his late wife's last words). Now, when he meets with his son, at his son's request, he reads aloud from Sri Aurobindo's poetry. Three portions of *The Soul That Makes Us Matter* and some of his own poems have appeared in this journal. Though officially retired after 30 years in hospital medical transcription, he feels he has come out of retirement and is working as never before on his true vocation.

AMANDA EMERSON is a practitioner of decorative darning and Rick Lipschutz's partner in literature and in life. This distant relative of Ralph Waldo Emerson and descendant of American Natives, farmers, fishermen, horse thieves, pirates, and clergymen styles herself a spoiled child of God. She has traveled extensively in Williamsburg, Massachusetts.

DECADE *of* ILLUMINATIONS

AN INTERVIEW WITH WAYNE BLOOMQUIST

Travel back to the 1970s with this “A Barfight for the Earth” protagonist (p. 30) and longtime practitioner of Integral Yoga as he shares his memories of Haridas Chaudhuri and Nolini Kanta Gupta, spiritual experiences in Auroville and Pondicherry, and even the founding of Auromere, with *Collaboration* editor Bahman Shirazi. Here are some condensed excerpts from their conversation.—Editors

COLLABORATION: Growing up, did you have any experience with spirituality or religion, or another context in which your future engagements with Integral Yoga might be understood?

WAYNE BLOOMQUIST: Well, there really wasn’t anything in my early life. I was brought up as a Presbyterian, and that kind of left me cold. There wasn’t much there, so I went from one thing to another. For example, I used to try to hypnotize myself, working on the different parts of the body, and I think once when I was traveling for business one of the attempts was successful and I experienced, not a trance, but something similar. That was a start. When I was in the Army up in Alaska, I was just taking stuff out of the magazines. For example, I wrote and asked for some information about the Rosicrucians, and that didn’t go too far. So I was dabbling here and there. Eventually, I got into meditation, and I liked that a lot.

C: So this mediation phase was roughly when? In the early 60s?

WB: Well, I was in my 20s, so it would have been in the 50s. Things were just starting to develop in the U.S. I forget

the sequence now of what happened, but I used to do some automatic writing. I sat there with a piece of paper and a pen and waited for it to move [laughs]. I started writing and one thing led to another, and I did quite a bit of spontaneous writing that got things moving.

C: When did you come to the Bay Area?

WB: Let’s see. I still had a couple of years of college left, so I went into the Army. I was in Arkansas, and then they shipped me to Alaska. In Alaska I was writing away for anything, any kind of religion, like the Rosicrucians. So I was getting a lot of mail from various sources like magazines. Anyway, I got out of the Army and finished my undergraduate education at San Jose State College [now University] in business. So I was in the Bay Area at that time.

C: I suppose when you were around San Francisco, you somehow found out about the Cultural Integration Fellowship?

WB: Eventually, yes. I read about the Fellowship and Dr. Chaudhuri in San Francisco. That interested me, so I

started going over to his Sunday lectures, taking night classes with him at the California Institute of Asian Studies. I liked what I heard, and he was a great teacher and speaker. I remember taking Sanskrit at the school there. I kept going, and eventually I got a [Ph.D.] degree in the mid-1970s.

WB: I was working on dreams a lot at this time. I would wake up at night and write my dreams down. They started coming quite a bit, like three or four a night, which would interrupt my sleep of course. That's how I got started. And the more I heard Dr. Chaudhuri, the more I got interested in Sri Aurobindo and the Yoga. Before that I wasn't getting any dreams, and then I got a lot of dreams that I was concentrated on. So it was kind of a self-discovery process, and then I got into the Yoga with Dr. Chaudhuri. The next thing I knew I was going to India. That was my goal, so I started saving up some money.

C: What was it like for you, going to Pondicherry?

WB: Well, I guess it changed my life. When I got there it was all Greek to me, going to the Samadhi and watching people, and then Jacqui, my wife (we weren't married at the time) also went with me. I invited her along, as well as my adopted daughter Cathi—so the three of us went. Jacqui was very disappointed at first. She said, "This isn't what I expected at all." But once she got there, she saw Nolini Kanta Gupta for the first time. I had given her a little booklet about him, so she knew about him. When she saw him she immediately went to his feet. It was spontaneous on her part. She would see him around the Samadhi and developed a relationship with him, and when she got back she wrote him letters. Once she wrote, "I feel there is something you can give me." He gave her the name Surama, which means "most pleasing person," and that was their connection. She would write him and ask

him for advice often, and he would guide her.

C: So the name Surama was given by Nolini Kanta Gupta?

WB: Yeah. This brings back a lot of feelings. We had that connection, and I remember being with her and going to Nolini's room, and he would come shuffling out—he was quite old at the time. So we had our first trip to Pondicherry just after the Mother had passed away. By the time we got there the Ashram was very peaceful. People had accepted it in a way, and all the turmoil had subsided or was passing. I think we were gone for six months.

C: Oh, that's great!

WB: Auroville was still pretty raw. It was pretty rough out there. There wasn't a lot of development—it was just starting. So we were kind of in that group. And when we got back we decided to do some importing from Auroville, and set up a shop in Berkeley. This was a big experiment for us. We rented a place in Berkeley and were selling clothing and some goods from Auroville. We were barely making it, just being able to pay the expenses by selling the merchandise. We went back about every couple of years.

C: Was Dr. Chaudhuri still alive when you went to India for the first time? He died in 1975.

WB: Oh yeah! He was alive. I remember I had just come back and was at the Fellowship. He saw me standing there and his face lit up and he said, "Aha" [Laughs]. He saw something. I remember that very distinctly.

C: During this time, were you reading about the Yoga and absorbing some of the energies firsthand when you traveled there? Would you say at that time you were

I was trying this and that and I wasn't getting too far and I finally let go of everything and just surrendered, and that's when I started making progress—that was the key for me.

already committed to the Yoga? Was that the real force behind it all?

WB: Oh yeah. I think on the first trip, if I remember it right, I was trying this and that and I wasn't getting too far and I finally let go of everything and just surrendered, and that's when I started making progress—that was the key for me.

C: Did you feel that behind Integral Yoga there was something that you already had in you in some way, and it was being articulated for you and you resonated with it, or was that something new to you?

WB: Yeah, I thought that I had done something like this before. I think I wrote about it in my book. I felt a descent or something that came into me in Pondicherry. It was an illumination and it changed me. In fact, it was a pivotal point for me. This is hard for me to reconstruct. All this was going on at the time of being in San Francisco and part of the Fellowship.

C: So here we are in the 70s and you were already introduced to Integral Yoga for a few years, and your dissertation is done. How would you describe the decade of the 70s in terms of your connection with the Yoga?

WB: It started in the 70s. We started importing from Auroville—Auromere Creations—and selling merchandise. Surama was running the shop. I would still go back to Pondicherry every couple of years. Surama went with me the first few times, and then I started going by myself.

C: These trips must have been important. Can you think of any unusual experiences?

WB: Somehow I established a connection with somebody from a past life. I was reading Sri Ramakrishna's work, and I felt that I knew somebody in that story. There was a photograph in one of his books about his *mahasamadhi*, when he passed, and they had people in the photograph with names below it, so you could identify some of them, and I picked out one of them that I kind of resonated with.

His name was Nityagopal, so I started reading about him. He was one of Ramakrishna's favorites, but he was kind of an innocent young boy.

C: Did you feel that you knew this person or perhaps that might have been you in a past life?

WB: I thought so, and had three meetings in the spirit world with him. I know that in one of them he came toward me and embraced me and I told Surama about it at the time. She was pretty psychic herself, and she said that a holy man came to me that was Nityagopal. She could see him and she could describe him to me. So there was that connection that was made with Ramakrishna and Nityagopal. He came to me once in Berkeley, and once in the Ashram, and there was a third time somewhere, and no more since then.

C: You mentioned something about Satprem before; that you were at the Fellowship once and he appeared in your consciousness. Do you recall that?

WB: I was at the Ashram in San Francisco and I was sitting there meditating by myself and I felt this energy beside me that was kind of swirly and intense, and I heard the name Satprem. I think he was announcing that he was there. I was just sitting there and experienced this swirling of energy next to me, and then I heard the name *Satprem* in my head. I didn't know where it came from at the time, but I figured out that he put it there.

WAYNE BLOOMQUIST received his Ph.D. in East-West psychology from California Institute of Integral Studies (formerly Asian Studies) and lived in the San Francisco Bay Area for over three decades. A past president of the Sri Aurobindo Association, he played a major role in organizing the annual Integral Yoga conferences (All USA Meetings—AUM) and publishing *Collaboration*. Wayne is the author of *God Shall Grow Up: Body, Soul and Earth Evolving Together* (2005), *The Soul and Its Powers* (1992), and *Search for the Soul in Everyday Living* (1990). Since 2002, he has lived in the Reno-Sparks area of Nevada.

PIXELS FROM PIXABAY

seeds of the future

CAROLYN TOBEN IN CONVERSATION WITH THOMAS BERRY

“Tell them something new is happening, a new vision, a new energy, a new sacred story is coming into being in the transition from one era to another.”

—Thomas Berry

IT WAS A WEEK LATER IN LATE MAY OF 2009 THAT I HEADED TO Wellspring [retirement home] for what was to be my last visit with my great companion. The sky was blue, the sun shining graciously, the earth breathing easily as I lifted the lock on the back gate to the retirement center. I moved into the hall and headed toward Thomas’ room with great anticipation of what Thomas would say to future generations—“seeds of the future,” he had called them.

In all my previous visits to Wellspring, Thomas had waited for me to ask him a question that would send him into the gulf stream of his deep mind, but this day was different. Today he had a very specific subject in mind.

He was sitting as usual in his recliner with his American Indian blanket wrapped around his shoulders. The spring sun streamed in upon him from the one window in the room. In the background I could hear the hum of activities in the building, but in Thomas’ small room there was a sense of intimate enclosure, where a moment of considerable significance seemed to be gestating.

With my pen and notebook ready, I prayed that I could adequately take in what he was about to share with me as I felt a heightened urgency within him this morning. I could tell that Thomas had done much thinking in advance about the conversation we were about to have. But he still expressed his usual courtesy and hospitality by first asking, “What’s going on out at your place?”

Then he turned to the subject at hand. “We need to talk about what to tell future generations, don’t we?”

“Yes,” I replied. “When our time was over last week, we were talking about our transition now into the Ecozoic Era. I asked you what we can tell succeeding generations, including my own nine grandchildren, about the way into the future and you said we would talk about it this week.”

Thomas paused for a long time and finally began: “Tell them something new is happening, a new vision, a new energy, a new sacred story is coming into being in the transition from one era to another.

“Tell them in the darkness of this time, a vast transformation is occurring in the depths of human

consciousness, which is leading to the recovery of the soul, the earth, the universe and a sense of the sacred.

“Tell them that the Powerful Loving Voice that spoke through every cosmic activity is speaking again now through voices all over the earth—voices who recognize that loving the earth as their common origin unifies all. In the sacred, all opposites are reconciled.

“This Loving Voice is also speaking through every bird, leaf, and star, and through the polar bear, the wolf, and every threatened species, awakening humanity to see all living forms as a single sacred community that lives or dies together.”

Thomas stopped to rest for a moment and then continued: “Tell them that the concern now must be for the preservation of the whole earth, a bio-spiritual planet; tell them that they must participate in mutual presence with the whole human venture in this perilous course of the future.

“Tell them that they must develop the inner vision that we need if we are to make the adjustments required for a viable future. Our existential questions must now be: ‘How do we relate to the earth and to the universe?’ Our most basic issue is how we bond with the earth.”

Then he added with a smile, “And tell them they will meet great companions along the way, including those that burrow in the soil, fly in the air, and swim in the sea.

“Tell them that each of them has a unique part to play in this period of great transition and that each of them brings specialized emotions and imagination to this time and very different ways of knowing.

“Tell them that they can find their own story within the sacred story of the universe. Tell them that the journey of the universe is the journey of each one of them that can give meaning and purpose for their lives and guide them in the evolutionary process. Tell them to realize that the series of physical and psychic-spiritual transformations of the universe parallel their own individual transformations.”

Tell them in the darkness of this time, a vast transformation is occurring in the depths of human consciousness, which is leading to the recovery of the soul, the earth, the universe and a sense of the sacred.

Thomas paused again and then said with particular emphasis: “They can be helped going through their own difficulties by remembering the crises and transformations that the universe has survived and that they bear within themselves. Each crisis can bring about a higher level of consciousness. Tell them they can learn to deeply honor all processes of life, even the most difficult.

“Tell them to remember as they grope forward to create a new century of life in the twenty-first century, that the universe is still expanding and that they are part of that emergence as the direction of the universe moves always toward greater and greater life.

“Tell them that we live in a contingent, not a determinative universe; that we must create a new way of being as we transition from a period of devastating the earth to a mutually enhancing relationship with it.

“Tell them to seek their own role in the larger evolutionary process; tell them that humans are always in the process of *becoming*, always ‘opening to greater life,’ if they can learn to see it. Tell them the greatest need is to develop a sensitivity to recognize the inner promptings that emerge from the depths of one’s own being where the sacred reality resides.”

Here Thomas smiled. “We are all part of the family of humankind walking toward the light,” he said.

“Above all, tell them to practice an intimate presence to the beauty and wonder of the natural world through their intuitive awareness that recognizes the oneness of all life; tell them to stop and enlarge moments throughout their days to become aware of the mysteries and miracles of creation all around them—the movement of a squirrel, the sound of a bird, the pattern of a leaf, changing patterns of light, the sun, the rain, the stars, dawn and sunset. Tell them we are not ourselves without everything and everyone else.

“Tell them to remember the great seasons and cycles of life. In moments of intimacy with the natural world they

will recover the lost sense of the sacred in the human-earth relationship. And they will be participating in the evolution of a new consciousness on earth that can overcome the mental fixations of our times expressed in radical division between humans and the natural world. A mutually enhancing relationship will then become possible as the communion of all things is understood.

“Finally, tell them that it is of utmost importance that they become aware of the numinous sacred values that have been present in an expanding sequence over four and a half billion years of the earth’s existence, and let them know that they will always be guided by ‘the same Divine Power that spun the galaxies into space, lit the sun, and brought the moon into orbit.’ ”

Thomas leaned back into his chair. Though exhausted, he smiled deeply knowing his task was complete.

As I leaned over to kiss his forehead, I knew that my task had just begun.

Our visit ended and I walked to the door. Before I left, I looked back for the last time at my dear companion. Thomas, despite his deep fatigue, was waving goodbye.

Note

Excerpt from *Recovering a Sense of the Sacred: Conversations with Thomas Berry* by Carolyn Toben (Timberlake Earth Sanctuary Press)

CAROLYN TOBEN is an educator, counselor, and author, as well as a founder of Timberlake Earth Sanctuary. She also founded the Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World, a work inspired by the distinguished cultural historian, author, and priest, Thomas Berry. During her long friendship with Thomas Berry, Carolyn spent many hours with him in deep discussions about his profound insights and experiences regarding the human-earth-Divine relationship. *Recovering a Sense of the Sacred* is based on her personal notes and reflections from these conversations.



Blessing

JOHN ROBERT CORNELL

May earth cradle each step you take
And hold you to her heart at night.

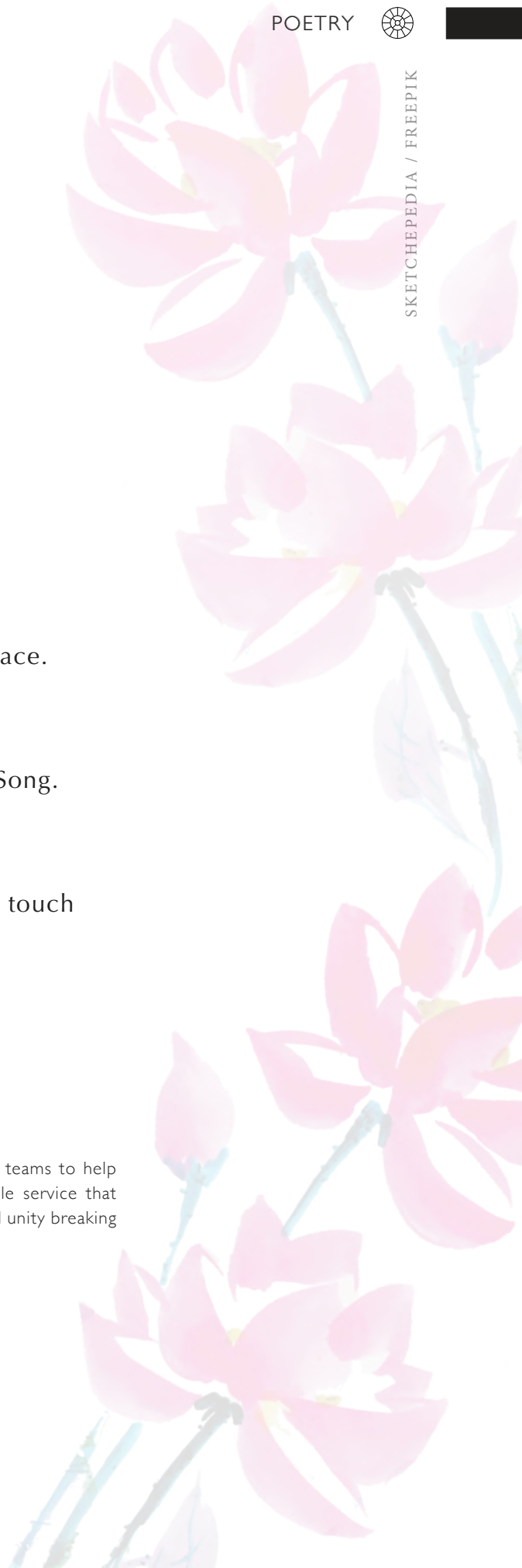
May water run laughing in your hands and eyes
Or, standing calm, reveal the Face behind your face.

May air fill all your empty space
With the fragrant shining whisper of the hidden Song.

And may the secret fire grow within you
To light and warm each word, each breath, each touch

Till every cell of you remembers what it was
You knew when you came here.

JOHN ROBERT CORNELL joined the *Collaboration* editorial and design teams to help support the journal grow into a more beautiful, relevant, and accessible service that meets our troubled times with love, and catches the visions of beauty and unity breaking on us in waves from the future.





Becoming ^a Poem

MATEO NEEDHAM

I LOVE POETRY. I'VE BEEN READING AND WRITING POETRY FOR MOST of my life. But reading and understanding poetry isn't always easy. With Sri Aurobindo's poetry I've never encountered a greater challenge. I want to realize it; I want to make it real in my heart, my mind, and my body.

Many moons ago, while doing my morning reading at The White Raven, a quintessentially "local" cafe spot nestled in my small coastal mountain town, an acquaintance asked me, "Can you compare Sri Aurobindo's poetry to Shakespeare's?" I had never considered this before because, for me, Sri Aurobindo's poetry is in a class of its own. In fact, when people ask me who my favorite poets are, I rarely list Sri Aurobindo. Again, a class of his own. Poetry needs to *move* me—I want to pray with Joy Harjo, soak with Erica Jong, recite Neruda, Ginsberg, and Whitman on the street corner, simply feel Wisława Szymborska in my bones. And I have a simple metric for assessing poetry: How many times do I want to read you, Dear Poem? Sri Aurobindo's poetry sets the bar for me: I want to read it until it is *realized*, that is, dynamic and intimately present in my consciousness. My response to my cafe inquirer came quickly. "If Shakespeare's were a match in the dark, Sri Aurobindo's would be an atomic bomb."

There is immense power in all of Sri Aurobindo's poetry. His sonnets are distilled and complete. The power is also there to become that which is written. And it comes in stages with patience and a long arc. When the amplitude

is infinity, is God, even a slight shift toward that can be quite significant. All poetry that is worth reading multiple times transmits. Sri Aurobindo's poetry is electric. And by giving me, us, this poetry, he offers contact with states of consciousness and parts of my being that I had and have never before felt, understood, or been able to articulate.

Perhaps a few words about reading any poem can help you dive deeper into the transformative power of Sri Aurobindo's sonnets—here or on the back cover. These suggestions were given to me by my high school English teacher; I have shared them with many a friend. If you try the experiment, email me a note to let me know how it works for you: editor@collaboration.org.

Read out loud and in full voice. Read the title. Read the poem. Read the title again. Look up any words you don't know or for which you cannot quickly articulate a definition.

Punctuation is important. Don't stop at the end of a line unless there is a period. If there is a period, pause. If there is a semicolon or a comma, give a half pause. Punctuation, especially Sri Aurobindo's punctuation, is extremely important. He was a master of English.

Then ... read out loud and in full voice. Read the title. Read the poem. Read the title again. Try it a third and fourth time. Something happens with repetition. And, something else is possible if the poem is taken as a meditation.

The Cosmic Spirit, let's get into it. Sri Aurobindo starts off with "I am." He is the author so, yes, he is that I, but can that I be you? Can that I be me? How does it feel to be single, to be one: all of Nature filling you, filling me? What are you in that state?

Close your eyes and say that first line. "I am a single Self all Nature fills."

Immeasurable is the language of the infinite. What happens inside when we identify as immeasurable and unmoved? I get quiet and my body adjusts around the center. Normally silence is a quality. What happens when we personify silence, when silence itself isn't just a noun, but a proper noun, a becoming? I am silence. I am silence, brooding like an eagle on my eggs, giving warmth, gestating life. "He is the silence brooding on her hills."

Circling might. I know a few people who are really afraid of a large meteor striking the earth. I can get scared when I think about it, too. But what about the *meteor*? That meteor is toast. Sense in to the power of a planet striking a meteor. I've heard astronomers describe collisions of celestial bodies in terms of nuclear bomb equivalents. And celestial bodies are orbiting around central points, whole solar systems orbiting around galactic centers and oscillating above and below galactic planes. "The circling motion of her cosmic mights." Then go back to: "I am a single self all Nature fills." How's it going?

Sri Aurobindo is working us, kneading us into expansion, from our individual embodied consciousness into the reaches of the cosmos. And, kaboom! He, perhaps we, break the limits of embodied mind. *Homo sum, et humani nihil a me alienum puto—I am a human being, so nothing human is foreign to me* (so wrote Terence, that old favorite of Shakespeare's). I'm sure every human knows a taste of this expansive conscious-ness. Again, how to make it *realized*? Can we extend these states of consciousness, make them more full, more complete? And, man is it hard for me, in all my petty ego, even to realize myself the figure of a soul. Sri Aurobindo rushes past that realization

and all the galaxies flood in and inhabit, and he, perhaps we, are the universe.

From that state of consciousness, he identifies as the life of a village and the life of a continent. What happens when we say, "I am Santa Cruz, I am Panama City, I am Toronto"? Fill in places you know well. What happens when we say, "I am Aleppo; I am Gaza City; I am Kinshasa"? Something different? How about when we say, "I am America; I am Asia"?

Go slow with it. What happens?

When I do the experiment and I know the place well, I identify with the myriad microcultures, with the land, with the shape of the place from a vista point. When I don't know the place, I identify with the politics, the news, and, strangely, the markets. And I feel sorrow and content and many other things.

And when I identify with a continent, everything slows way down. I'm in geological time, shaped by pressure and time and water: plate tectonics without real borders all interconnected under the oceans. Measured in time, immeasurable. Oh, blessed science, you beautiful approximator, please keep evolving our ability to measure!

I'll leave you, dear lovers of poetry, to the last two lines. Holy moly, this is a beautiful sonnet!

MATEO NEEDHAM has been dedicated to Integral Yoga since 2003 and is devoted to developing our gnostic community, deepening our individual and collective practice, and creating potential for spontaneous co-creation. He has organized many groups focused on the depths of Sri Aurobindo's poetic masterpiece, *Savitri*, and has lived and worked in Auroville and Pondicherry, India. He serves as president of the Sri Aurobindo Association and on the board of directors of the Foundation for World Education. A longtime resident of Felton, California, Mateo and his family currently live in Panama City, Panama.

THE COSMIC SPIRIT

I am a single Self all Nature fills.

Immeasurable, unmoved the Witness sits:
He is the silence brooding on her hills,
The circling motion of her cosmic might.

I have broken the limits of embodied mind
And am no more the figure of a soul.
The burning galaxies are in me outlined;
The universe is my stupendous whole.

My life is the life of village and continent,
I am earth's agony and her throbs of bliss;
I share all creatures' sorrow and content
And feel the passage of every stab and kiss.

Impassive, I bear each act and thought and mood:
Time traverses my hushed infinitude.

SRI AUROBINDO, Collected Poems, p. 619

Crisis & Emergence

Collaboration Journal **CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS**

SPRING 2022 | VOL. 47 NO. 1

Humanity is facing an explosion of crises from every direction. Both individually and collectively, we continue to experience the globalizing pressure of circumstances that are aversive, painful, confusing, and threatening—from political divisions to mounting inequality to persistent global pandemics.

In the onslaught of these crises, historical sources of meaning, consensus, strength, and stability seem to have evaporated. Even our belief in Earth's capacity to sustain us has been profoundly shaken by global climate disruptions. To us, these foundational tremors signal a crisis of consciousness itself, mental consciousness overwhelmed, too small for the task.

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, by their words and example, taught that Integral Yoga takes us into the very heart of darkness—that it was the Night that “nursed a greater Dawn.” That human civilization is by no means the summit of evolution. They remind us that we are alive for purposes that may seem nearly incomprehensible to us at this time. We do know, however, we are not here for ourselves, alone, but for the divinity of our entire planet.

We invite you to share your experiences, efforts, struggles, and realizations: What has emerged from our crisis of consciousness? Can you sense something stirring in the darkness, or is the darkness more impenetrable? What is sustaining your relationships with family and friends? Do you feel evolutionary change rumbling in you or in others? How can Integral Yoga facilitate a path of conscious emergence, healing, and interconnectivity in American life?

ABOUT: *Collaboration* is the journal of Integral Yoga published in the United States. Our intention is to share articles, conversations, poetry, and art that deeply engage our transitional times with the beauty, joy, and hope of the vast wisdom and practice of this evolutionary tradition and its founders, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. We explore and celebrate particularly the individual practice of yoga in this country as well as currents and expressions of the collective yoga of the American soul in our times.

AUDIENCE: *Collaboration* is a means of reflection, encouragement, and critical thinking for the Integral Yoga community here at home. We also want to highlight friends and allies in related areas of personal and social transformation. Including these fellow travelers requires sensitivity from our contributors, whom we ask to refrain from using references and terms of Integral Yoga and the works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother without explaining or clarifying them.

CONTENT: We welcome many kinds of contributions, including community updates, interviews, reflective and educational and experiential essays, poetry, artwork, stories, humor, and reviews. The theme for Spring 2022 invites your works on the contemporary currents of crisis and emergence from a yogic perspective.

DEADLINE: NOVEMBER 1, 2021

Please contact our editorial team for the word count suitable for your contribution prior to submission at editor@collaboration.org. This will allow us to provide you with writer's guidelines that reflect our editorial criteria.



BECAUSE THOU ART

Because Thou art All-beauty and All-bliss,
My soul blind and enamoured yearns for Thee;
It bears Thy mystic touch in all that is
And thrills with the burden of that ecstasy.

Behind all eyes I meet Thy secret gaze
And in each voice I hear Thy magic tune:
Thy sweetness hunts my heart through Nature's ways;
Nowhere it beats now from Thy snare immune.

It loves Thy body in all living things;
Thy joy is there in every leaf and stone:
The moments bring Thee on their fiery wings;
Sight's endless artistry is Thou alone.

Time voyages with Thee upon its prow, —
And all the future's passionate hope is Thou.

SRI AUROBINDO, *Collected Poems*, p. 751