

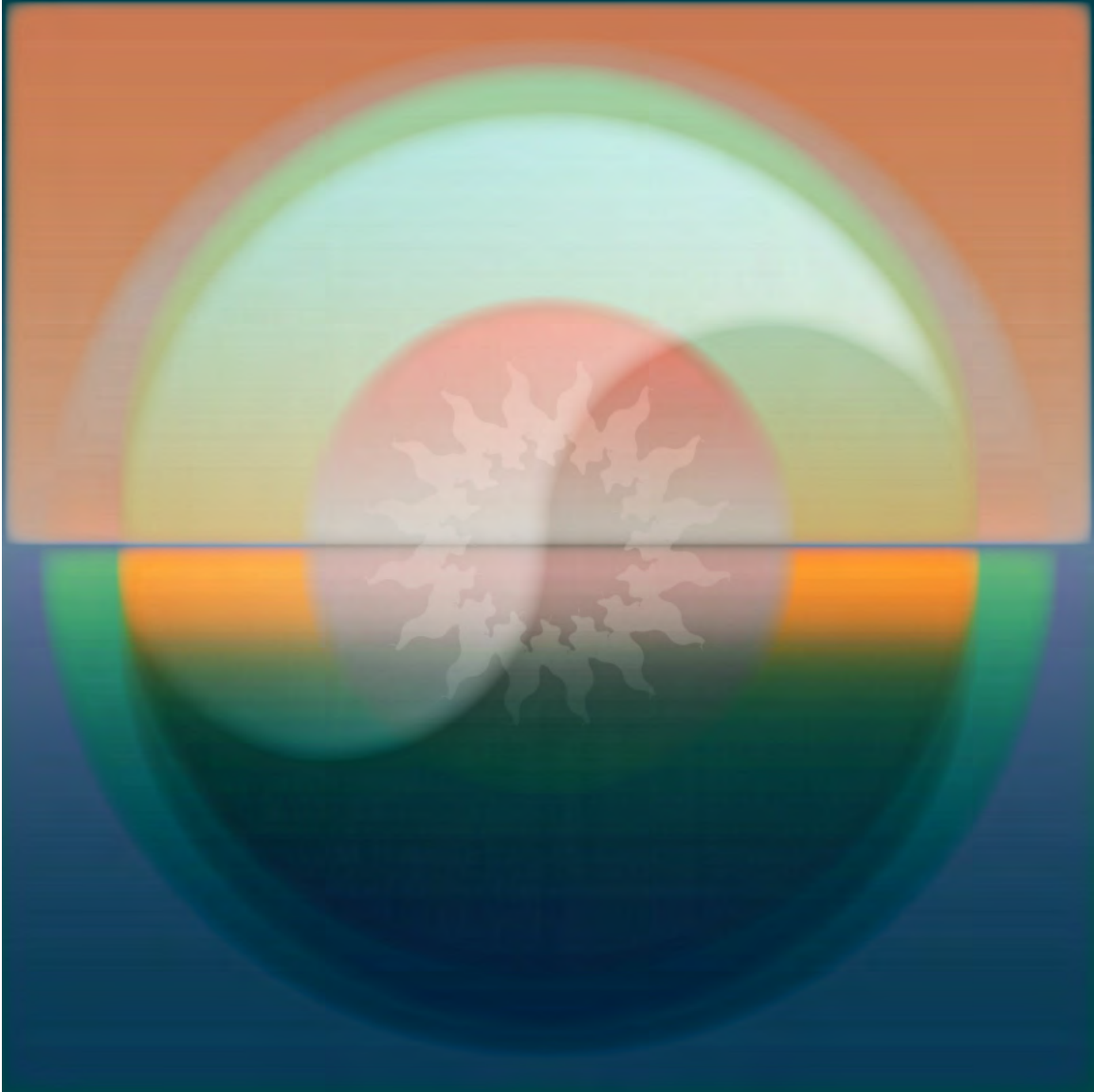
SPRING 2023

VOL. 48 NO. 1

Collaboration

JOURNAL OF THE INTEGRAL YOGA OF SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MOTHER

The
Divine
Feminine



"Surrender." Digital art by Margaret Astrid Phanes

*Without him, I exist not;
without me, he is unmanifest.*

—The Mother, *Words of the Mother I,*
Collected Works of the Mother,
vol. 13, p. 32, May 6, 1957

Collaboration

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PUBLISHER: *Collaboration* (ISSN 0164-1522) is published by the Sri Aurobindo Association (SAA), a California nonprofit corporation, 2715 W. Kettleman Lane, Suite 203-174, Lodi, CA 95242 USA; email: info@collaboration.org; website: <https://www.collaboration.org>. SAA distributes information about Sri Aurobindo, the Mother, and Auroville, and supports projects related to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Auroville, and Integral Yoga activities in America.

EDITORIAL TEAM: John Robert Cornell, Lynda Lester, Mateo Needham, Martha Orton, Bahman A. K. Shirazi. The opinions expressed in *Collaboration* are not necessarily those of the editors or SAA.

DESIGN AND LAYOUT: John Robert Cornell, Lynda Lester, Gloria Sayavedra.

SUBSCRIPTION MANAGEMENT AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: Prateek Mehra with Susan Curtiss, Marco Masi, and Mateo Needham; email: subscriptions@collaboration.org.

PRINTER: Kalpen Shah, Best Print Graphics, Santa Clara, CA.

SUBMISSIONS: Submit material by email to editor@collaboration.org. *Collaboration* cannot be held responsible for loss or damage of unsolicited material. See p. 52 for details on next issue's theme and submission deadline.

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SUBSCRIPTIONS: A print subscription (three issues per year) is \$30 (+\$12 for airmail outside the USA). A digital subscription is \$24 per year. Print + digital is \$36 per year (+12 for airmail outside the USA). A discounted digital subscription for individuals with limited financial means is also available. Pay online by credit card at <https://www.collaboration.org/journal/subscribe> or make a check to Sri Aurobindo Association and mail to: Sri Aurobindo Association, 2715 W. Kettleman Lane, Suite 203-174, Lodi, CA 95242 USA.

INDIA PRINT SUBSCRIPTIONS (three issues per year, limited number of print subscriptions available): India residents, send Rs. 300 for the print edition to: Larry Seidlitz, 180/6 Sri Mirambikai Garden, Old Auroville Road, Bommiyarpalyam, Tamil Nadu 605104.

CONTRIBUTIONS: Donations for the work of SAA, Auroville, and the Sri Aurobindo Ashram can be made online at <https://www.collaboration.org/donate> or mail a check to Sri Aurobindo Association, 2715 W. Kettleman Lane, Suite 203-174, Lodi, CA 95242 USA. Donations are tax-exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code.

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Sri Aurobindo Sadhana Peetham relics room. Image: SASP

Contributors

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MIRA M. WHITE received her bachelor of fine arts and masters of fine arts degrees from the California College of Arts and Crafts. She is a multimedia artist who has taught and exhibited for more than 40 years in both the United States and France, teaching mainly in art centers and private studios. She dreams in paint!



EDITORIAL

The Divine Feminine

THIS ISSUE OF *Collaboration* focuses on the divine feminine as a powerful presence and force in our world. In the Integral Yoga, this presence is known as the Divine Mother. However, there are many names and forms that the presence of the divine feminine takes since it has prominence in many diverse cultures around the world. The recognition of this force has deep historical and even prehistoric roots. Although the representation of male divinity has been emphasized in some traditions with the result that recognition of the divine feminine has been suppressed; nevertheless, the reality of the divine feminine persists and remains prominent. In fact, both feminine and masculine representations of divinity can be compatible and exist in a harmonious relation. Sri Aurobindo describes this sublime compatibility eloquently in a sequence of passages from *Savitri* (Part I, Book I, Canto IV, “The Secret Knowledge”) about the play of the disguised divine masculine and divine feminine in the manifestation. He sums up at one point with the line: “This whole wide world is only he and she.”

The consciousness of the divine feminine has been sensed and experienced in all cultures and can be regarded as the overarching consciousness which orchestrates the life of our world and the universe—the consciousness that exists above all and which cares for all. This wonderful consciousness has been called by Sri Aurobindo simply—the Mother. This divine presence and force exists at transcendent, universal, and individual levels. Most people experience it at the individual level in the inner being—the heart of hearts. More specifically this presence is felt especially by the psychic element in our nature, the psychic being, the spark of the Divine within us all. It is this that resonates with the truth of the divine presence and, in the language of the

Integral Yoga, effectuates the progressive surrender to the Divine. Sri Aurobindo has written extensively about the significance of the Divine Mother and he has also written about the importance of the soul’s offering of itself to her divine presence and reality. The progressive offering, which in effect constitutes one’s surrender to the will of the Divine, ultimately becomes surrender to the Divine Mother. This action in the being greatly enables one’s progress, as the divine Shakti takes up the work of the yoga for the sincerely surrendered individual.

The articles in this issue cannot begin to express fully the range, scope and significance of the divine feminine in our world. Yet, we hope that they will give some indication. Among the expressions of the divine feminine in the current issue is a poem, “Infinity’s Star,” by Rod Hemsell, from his recently published book, *Journey to the House of Light* (Raya Publishing, available from major booksellers), a series of poetic expressions focused on nature and spirit as they mirror each other in the journey to oneness and transformation. The book also includes beautifully evocative photos by Edith Stadig.

Lynda Lester has contributed the text of a talk given on “The Transitional Being and Mother’s Yoga of Matter.” This describes how evolution is both spiritual and physical and includes discussion of the Mother’s work on the very cells of her body. Lynda notes that the Mother’s evolutionary work in the body was based primarily on surrender to the Divine, a practice which all can include in their daily lives.

Gary Millar has contributed a lovely poem, “O Wild Cherry Tree,” which reflects the joy and beauty of springtime, and also an essay, “The Divine Feminine in Nature,” about a pilgrimage experience in the



Image: GoranH / Pixabay

Himalayas, where he has lived for many years. In this essay, Gary offers a vibrant description of that journey. Martha Orton has also contributed a poetic tribute to the Divine Mother, “Divine Presence.”

Many readers of this journal will have heard of Jyotipriya, the spiritual name which Sri Aurobindo gave to Judith Tyberg. Bahman Shirazi has contributed a deep appreciation of Jyotipriya, “A Tribute to Jyotipriya,” and her role in establishing the Integral Yoga in the U.S. Another person who has made a significant contribution to the Integral Yoga in this country, Dakshina Vanzetti, is beautifully honored in a powerful remembrance by Prapanna Smith. For many of us, Prapanna’s heartfelt tribute will bring back vivid memories of Dakshina and her role with Sri Aurobindo Sadhana Peetham and beyond, including her many talents and accomplishments, not only as an artist, but also as a leader with courage and conviction empowered by faith.

Continuing her exploration of the Shakers and their founder Mother Ann Lee from the previous issue of *Collaboration*, Susan Curtiss notes that the age-old longing of humanity to transform its nature and become

one with God found an astonishing expression in England’s American colonies. Mother Ann attempted to bring spiritual knowledge into a living community wholly committed to a form of a perfected divine life.

This issue also includes enlightening quotations from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, which focus particularly on the reality of the divine feminine and its significance in life.—*Martha Orton for the editorial team*

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Mother's Mission

THE MOTHER

WHEN AND HOW did I become conscious of a mission which I was to fulfill on earth? And when and how I met Sri Aurobindo?

These two questions you have asked me and I promised a short reply.

For the knowledge of the mission, it is difficult to say when it came to me. It is as though I were born with it, and following the growth of the mind and brain, the precision and completeness of this consciousness grew also.

Between 11 and 13 a series of psychic and spiritual experiences revealed to me not only the existence of God but man's possibility of uniting with Him, of realising Him integrally in consciousness and action, of manifesting Him upon earth in a life divine. This, along with a practical discipline for its fulfilment, was given to me during my body's sleep by several teachers, some of whom I met afterwards on the physical plane.

Later on, as the interior and exterior development proceeded, the spiritual and psychic relation with one of these beings became more and more clear and frequent; and although I knew little of the Indian philosophies and religions at that time I was led to call him Krishna, and henceforth I was aware that it was with him (whom I knew I should meet on earth one day) that the divine work was to be done.

In the year 1910 my husband came alone to Pondicherry where, under very interesting and peculiar circumstances, he made the acquaintance of Sri Aurobindo. Since then we both strongly wished to return to India—the country which I had always cherished as



"Supramental Mother." Painted by Sri Aurobindo.

my true mother-country. And in 1914 this joy was granted to us.

As soon as I saw Sri Aurobindo I recognised in him the well-known being whom I used to call Krishna.... And this is enough to explain why I am fully convinced that my place and my work are near him, in India.

—*Words of the Mother I, Collected Works of the Mother*, vol. 13, p. 38

The Divine Conscious Force



Painting by Dakshina Vanzetti.

THE ONE WHOM we adore as the Mother is the divine Conscious Force that dominates all existence, one and yet so many-sided that to follow her movement is impossible even for the quickest mind and for the freest and most vast intelligence. The Mother is the consciousness and force of the Supreme and far above all she creates. But something of her ways can be seen and felt through her embodiments and the

SRI AUROBINDO

more seizable because more defined and limited temperament and action of the goddess forms in whom she consents to be manifest to her creatures.

...

Four great Aspects of the Mother, four of her leading Powers and Personalities have stood in front in her guidance of this universe and in her dealings with the terrestrial play. One is her personality of calm wideness and comprehending wisdom and tranquil benignity and inexhaustible compassion and sovereign and surpassing majesty and all-ruling greatness. Another embodies her power of splendid strength and irresistible passion, her warrior mood, her overwhelming will, her impetuous swiftness and world-shaking force. A third is vivid and sweet and wonderful with her deep secret of beauty and harmony and fine rhythm, her intricate and subtle opulence, her compelling attraction and captivating grace. The fourth is equipped with her close and profound capacity of intimate knowledge and careful flawless work and quiet and exact perfection in all things. Wisdom, Strength, Harmony, Perfection are their several attributes and it is these powers that they bring with them into the world, manifest in a human disguise in their Vibhutis [humans embodying some power of the Divine] and shall found in the divine degree of their ascension in those who can open their earthly nature to the direct and living influence of the Mother. To the four we give the four great names, Maheshwari, Mahakali, Mahalakshmi, Mahasaraswati.

—Sri Aurobindo, *The Mother with Letters on the Mother, Collected Works of Sri Aurobindo*, vol. 32, p. 14 and pp. 17–18