

SUMMER 2023

VOL. 48 NO. 2

Collaboration

JOURNAL OF THE INTEGRAL YOGA OF SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MOTHER



Relationships
as Spiritual Practice



Image: Galanda / Artvee

*To live, to love are signs of infinite things,
Love is a glory from eternity's spheres.*

*—Savitri, Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo,
vols. 33–34, p. 397*

Collaboration

SUMMER 2023

VOL. 48 NO. 2

FROM THE EDITORS

- Relationships as Spiritual Practice 4

SOURCE MATERIAL

- The Secret of Relations • SRI AUROBINDO 6
The Release from the Heart and the Mind • SRI AUROBINDO 21
Human Relations and Yoga • SRI AUROBINDO 30
Relationship with the Divine • THE MOTHER 42
The Secret of a Lasting Union • THE MOTHER 44

FEATURES

- A Planetary Initiation • SEAN KELLY 8
Why Collective Yoga? • LYNDA LESTER 16

REFLECTIONS

- Finding a Hallway to Harmony • RAND HICKS 26
Yoli's Story • VISHNU ESCHNER 28

PRACTICE

- Circle Work as a Tool for Collective Sadhana • SHREE HINDMAN 36
Connecting with the Psychic Being • BLUESTAR SHAMA DEERWOMON, AKA PRESTI 46

POETRY

- Shakti of the Sun • MARY 'ANGEL' FINN 41
Savitri: The Truth of Love • SRI AUROBINDO 45
Savitri: The Finding of the Soul • SRI AUROBINDO 50
In Some Faint Dawn • SRI AUROBINDO 54

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

- Themes for Spring 2024, Summer 2024, and Fall 2024 52

COVER ART

Gerd Altman / Pixabay

Collaboration

JOURNAL OF THE INTEGRAL YOGA OF SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MOTHER

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, LAYOUT, AND PROOFREADING: John Robert Cornell, Margaret Greer, Darío Ponce Joshina, Lynda Lester, Robert Orton, Tom Parker, 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.

COPYRIGHTS: Copyright © Sri Aurobindo Association, 2023. Photos of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, passages

from their works, and excerpts from the books published by the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust are © Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust unless otherwise noted, and are used here with the kind permission of the Ashram.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: A 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.

SRI AUROBINDO ASSOCIATION BOARD: Mateo Needham, president; Susan Curtiss, secretary; John Robert Cornell, treasurer; Jonathan Kay and Lynda Lester, directors.



Contributors

Image: Maksim Romashkin / Pexels

BLUESTAR SHAMA DEERWOMON, aka Presti, M.S. Ed., was introduced to the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother at the California Institute of Integral Studies in the early 1980s. She practices “Shamanic Improvisation: The Art of Being in the Moment and Going between the Worlds,” a practical and spiritual tool for being at one with life’s journey. She has taught at New College in Sarasota, Florida, and Hendrix College in Conway, Arizona.

VISHNU ESCHNER is a founding director of the Sri Aurobindo Sadhana Peetham in Lodi, California, and lived there from 1990 to 2009. He is a lifetime practitioner of Integral Yoga and a student of art, music, and philosophy. He has been a grateful volunteer at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Auroville, and Auromere, and a member and occasional president of the Sri Aurobindo Association.

RAND HICKS directs the Integral Knowledge Study Center in Pensacola, Florida. Seeking the interface where philosophy and psychology meet led him to Sri Aurobindo and his ashram in Pondicherry, India. Rand returned to America, not to complete a dissertation in an Ivy League philosophy department, but to grow a center that promotes transformative practice.

SHREE HINDMAN lives a peaceful life in the mountains above Boulder, Colorado. In 2017, she turned her home into an events/meditation center called the Mother’s Center, founded on principles of Integral Yoga. The Center offers life-enriching activities including meditation, kirtan, retreat space, and support for the birthing journey. Most of what is done is in circle

format—a safe and loving way to share, be acknowledged, and enjoy the wisdom of others.

SEAN KELLY, Ph.D., is a professor at the California Institute of Integral Studies department of Philosophy, Cosmology, and Consciousness. He has taught religious studies at the University of Windsor, the University of Ottawa, and Carleton University in Canada. Sean’s area of research includes the evolution of consciousness, integral ecologies, and transpersonal and integral theory. He is the author of many books and articles. His latest book, *Becoming Gaia: On the Threshold of Planetary Initiation*, further develops some of the themes he discusses in this issue of *Collaboration* (see p. 8).

LYNDA LESTER edited *Collaboration* for ten years, is a past president and current board member of the Sri Aurobindo Association, and has given many presentations on Integral Yoga. A series of talks she gave called “Our Many Selves: Moving toward Mastery of Our Complex Being” is available on the Sri Aurobindo Association’s YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCMH0Mxu1wEGIT4kw6OrCqsQ>

DR. RITAM UPADHYAY graduated in the arts with a focus on drawing and painting, Indian classical vocal music, and English literature. She has a postgraduate degree in English literature and a doctorate in philosophy. Her research focused on the topic, “Spectrum of Consciousness in the Select Works of Sri Aurobindo with Special Reference to *Savitri*.” She is currently teaching in the Government Arts and Science Postgraduate College in Ratlam, Madhya Pradesh, India. Art is her gratitude towards the Divine.

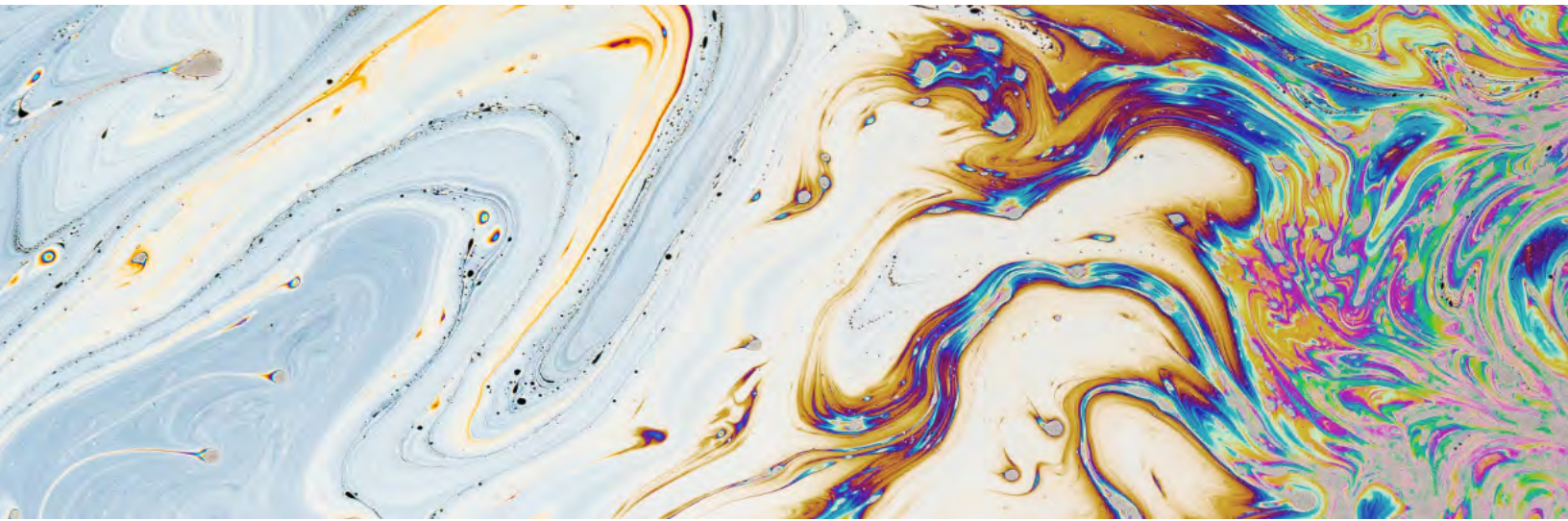


Image: Daniel Olah / Unsplash

EDITORIAL

Relationships as Spiritual Practice

[T]he Spirit created the world for Ananda, enjoyment and possession of the many by the One, of the One by the many and of the many too by the many ...

—Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga*,
Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo, vol. 24, p. 646

ACCORDING TO SRI AUROBINDO, there are three poises of Being, or modes of consciousness: individual, universal, and transcendent. While the individual consciousness is centered on the soul as its organizing principle, the universal dimension comprises all possible relationships between two or more individuals, between the individual and the world, and with the entire universe. The transcendent mode is usually beyond our immediate phenomenal experience of time and space; it is otherwise known as Being—the unified ground of existence out of which all manifestation springs into existence, and to which everything returns.

While spiritual practice is often described in the context of the relationship between the individual soul and the transcendent dimension (God), the universal or relational dimension plays a key part in Integral Yoga. In traditional forms of spirituality, enlightenment was often

defined by the process of dissolution of the small self in its return to transcendent consciousness. In Integral Yoga, on the other hand, the goal is to transform both the individual and the world with the assistance of transcendent consciousness. Relationships of all kind, therefore, play a key role. How do yogic practices affect our ordinary family or work lives, our relationship with other aspirants, and our relationship with nature? How do spiritual insights affect our understanding of our planet and the current crises that threaten our very existence?

In this issue our source material includes letters and conversations by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on a variety of topics, from human relations and spiritual life to relations with the Divine, culminating in the intimate unity between our own self and the self of the cosmos: “... the fulfilment of our self-existence and at the same time the fulfilment of our cosmic existence, of the

individual in himself and of the individual in his relation to the cosmic Many” [*Synthesis of Yoga, Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo*, vols. 23–24, p. 386].

Next, we have two featured articles. In “A Planetary Initiation,” California Institute of Integral Studies professor Sean Kelly begins with the premise that our universe is a finely tuned manifestation of consciousness, and that matter, life, and mind are evolving toward the cosmos awakening to itself. However, we are now entering a new era where we are facing environmental and climatic challenges that threaten our existence and potential evolution toward higher truth, beauty, and goodness. These challenges are forcing us to undergo a change of consciousness that brings us out of our narrow sense of identity to a wider sense of participation with the earth community. He ends with a sense of guarded optimism by affirming our capacity to participate consciously in the next phase of human evolution.

“Why Collective Yoga?” is a talk given by Lynda Lester during the summer 2022 All USA Meeting (AUM) conference. Collective transformation, a key feature of Integral Yoga, expands the notion of spiritual practice beyond the individual level and into larger communities of spiritual aspirants—and ultimately, to the entire planet. Lynda describes how the Sri Aurobindo Ashram was first a collection of individual aspirants, but after 1956, the year of supramental descent, a new collective reality began to take shape. Lynda reminds us of the evolutionary crises we now face and the urgent need to find a wider truth of being. She concludes with an emphasis on the need for supportive companions on this journey.

In the section titled “Reflections,” we have two short pieces. In “Finding a Hallway to Harmony,” drawing on Vedic wisdom, Rand Hicks argues that although the realization of the soul plays a pivotal role in spiritual development, “our yogic work is incomplete until we extend soul-awareness into society.” Through conscious and harmonious action in the service of the Divine Mother, we can manifest a greater love, power, and delight by eliminating divisions and finding strength in oneness. “Yoli’s Story” is a poignant and inspiring short story by Vishnu Eschner about the relationship between humans and other animals. Just before dying, his canine friend Yoli reminds him of the human responsibility towards all forms of life—a vow made to the other animals long ago that we have since forgotten. Yet it not

too late to remember, and to create a safe and prosperous world for all beings.

Next we have two practice-oriented pieces. “Circle Work as a Tool for Collective Sadhana” is a process developed by Shree Hindman at the Mother’s Center in Colorado as a “way of being, sharing, and holding space.” Circle work can be a powerful way for building collective yoga, as was demonstrated during the 2022 AUM conference. Circle work is offered, first, as an “alignment, a purification, a commitment, and a discipline”; second, as a living symbol that can facilitate transformation; and finally, as an extension into our daily lives. Shree concludes her essay by inviting us all to join a circle or start our own circle. “We can become a powerful social stem cell because this process will self-replicate itself, calling forth a new social fabric and allowing the soul of the circle to create a new birth, a new life, and ultimately usher in the descent of a new creation.”

“Connecting with the Psychic Being” describes a workshop by Bluestar Shama Deerwomon given at Sri Aurobindo Sadhana Peetham in Lodi, California. Through guided visualization and artwork exercises, participants tap into their inner being and create a visual symbol that represents their psychic consciousness. This in turn is used as a way of contemplating and accessing one’s psychic qualities.

In the poetry section we have a poem by Mary ‘Angel’ Finn titled “Shakti of the Sun,” as well as several selections from Sri Aurobindo: “The Truth of Love” and “The Finding of the Soul” from *Savitri*, and a short poem titled “In Some Faint Dawn.”

Collaboration is grateful for all the contributions by authors and artists. We hope you find our selections stimulating and inspirational.—Bahman A. K. Shirazi for the *Collaboration* editorial team

DIGITAL CONNECTIONS



[Sri Aurobindo Association](#)



[Collaboration: A Journal of Integral Yoga](#)



[Collaboration Journal Community](#)

Sign up online to receive our printed journal in your postal mailbox. Digital subscriptions in full color are also now available. Go to:
<https://www.collaboration.org/journal/subscribe>