



Collaboration

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Visitors to the Matrimandir Gardens flower show in February 1979. Front row: Narad, of the Matrimandir Gardens; Champaklal; Nirodbaran.
(Photo by Matrimandir Gardens staff.)

We conclude the fifth year of *Collaboration* with a range of topics. Our feature, on death, has been prepared by Charles Maloney, who is working on a book on death from an evolutionary perspective. We continue with several regular features, including Integral Psychology and the significance of flowers. We are also happy to present a new translation of the preface to Satprem's *On the Way to Supermanhood*, which we believe our readers will find of special interest.

We are always interested to hear from our readers, and appreciate also seeing poetry to be considered for *Collaboration*.

Please note that 15 August is Sri Aurobindo's birthday. Most centers hold special functions in observance, so if you wish to attend any such functions, contact the center nearest you.

— The Editor

With an increasing interest in and a growing body of literature on death we offer in this issue of *Collaboration* some of the views of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on this subject. At a time when an unveiling of numerous "experiences of death" has occurred

through the work of Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, Raymond Moody, and Karlis Osis, there appears to be a movement of consciousness in the collectivity to realize a deeper dimension of this universal force. Currently the developments in this new field of Thanatology have focused mostly on gathering the raw phenomena of the experiences of death and dying without attempting to discover the role of death in the evolutionary process of life. As more and more knowledge of this repressed and feared "traveling companion" becomes available, we may be glimpsing the first dawning of the psychology of the future when the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* and the *Egyptian Book of the Dead* will, perhaps, hold a more prominent place than the works of Freud, Jung, and Adler. In the evolutionary vision of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother there exists a fully developed and tested psychology of death which is offered in a contemporary framework. The following passages have been selected with the intention of suggesting this deeper meaning and psychology of death and further illuminating the important work being done in the field of Thanatology. — Charles Maloney

THE LAW OF DEATH AND EVOLUTION

Sri Aurobindo

Death is imposed on the individual life both by the conditions of its own existence and by its relations to the All-Force which manifests itself in the universe. For the individual life is a particular play of energy specialised to constitute, maintain, energise and finally to dissolve when its utility is over, one of the myriad forms which all serve, each in its own place, time and scope, the whole play of the universe. The energy of life in the body has to support the attack of the energies external to it in the universe; it has to draw them in and feed upon them and is itself constantly being devoured by them. All Matter according to the Upanishad is food, and this is the formula of the material world that "the eater eating is himself eaten." The life organised in the body is constantly exposed to the possibility of being broken up by the attack of the life external to it or, its devouring capacity being insufficient or not properly served or there being no right balance between the capacity of devouring and the capacity or necessity of providing food for the life outside, it is unable to protect itself and is devoured or is unable to renew itself and therefore wasted away or broken; it has to go through the process of death for a new construction or renewal.

Not only so but, again in the language of the Upanishad, the life-force is the food of the body and the body the food of the life-force; in other words, the life-energy in us both supplies the material by which the form is built up and constantly maintained and renewed and is at the same time constantly using up the substantial form of itself which it thus creates and keeps in existence. If the balance between these two operations is imperfect or is disturbed or if the ordered play of the different currents of life-force is thrown out of gear, then disease and decay intervene and commence the process of disintegration. And the very struggle for conscious mastery and even the growth of mind make the maintenance of the life more difficult. For there is an increasing demand of the life-energy on the form, a demand which is in excess of the original system of supply and disturbs the original balance of supply and demand and, before a new balance can be established, many disorders are introduced inimical to the harmony and to the length of maintenance of the life; in addition the attempt at mastery creates always a corresponding reaction in the environment which is full of forces that also desire fulfilment and are therefore intolerant of, revolt against and attack the existence which seeks to master them.

CONTENTS

The Law of Death and Evolution, Sri Aurobindo	2
Death and the Soul, The Mother	4
Integral Psychology (9), Sri Aurobindo	6
On the Way to Supermanhood, Satprem	8
The Metaphysic of Integral Nondualism, Rebecca Field	10
What Is Free Progress System?, Pavitra	11
Flowers and Their Messages (2), The Mother	13
Expressions of Auroville	
The Aspiration Talks (3)	13
News of Auroville	14
Interface Video Project: The First Year, Cheryl Kasdorf	17
News of Sri Aurobindo Ashram	18
General News	18
News of Centers	19
News of Matagiri	20
Towards (poem), An Aurovilian	20
Book Review: <i>To Live Until We Say Good-bye</i> , by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross	20

There too a balance is disturbed, a more intense struggle is generated; however strong the mastering life, unless either it is unlimited or else succeeds in establishing a new harmony with its environment, it cannot always resist and triumph but must one day be overcome and disintegrated.

But, apart from all these necessities, there is the one fundamental necessity of the nature and object of embodied life itself, which is to seek infinite experience on a finite basis, and since the form, the basis by its very organisation limits the possibility of experience, this can only be done by dissolving it and seeking new forms. For the soul, having once limited itself by concentrating on the moment and the field, is driven to seek its infinity again by the principle of succession, by adding moment to moment and thus storing up a Time-experience which it calls its past; in that Time it moves through successive fields, successive experiences or lives, successive accumulations of knowledge, capacity, enjoyment, and all this it holds in subconscious or superconscious memory as its fund of past acquisition in Time. To this process change of form is essential, and for the soul involved in individual body change of form means dissolution of the body in subjection to the law and compulsion of the All-life in the material universe, to its law of supply of the material of form and demand on the material, to its principle of constant intershock and the struggle of the embodied life to exist in a world of mutual devouring. And this is the law of Death.

This then is the necessity and justification of Death, not as a denial of Life, but as a process of Life; death is necessary because eternal change of form is the sole immortality to which the finite living substance can aspire and eternal change of experience the sole infinity to which the finite mind involved in living body can attain. This change of form cannot be allowed to remain merely a constant renewal of the same form-type such as constitutes our bodily life between birth and death; for unless the form-type is changed and the experiencing mind is thrown into new forms in new circumstances of time, place and environment, the necessary variation of experience which the very nature of existence in Time and Space demands, cannot be effectuated. And it is only the process of Death by dissolution and by the devouring of life by Life, it is only the absence of freedom, the compulsion, the struggle, the pain, the subjection to something that appears to be Not-Self which makes this necessary and salutary change appear terrible and undesirable to our mortal mentality. It is the sense of being devoured, broken up, destroyed or forced away which is the sting of Death and which even the belief in personal survival of death cannot wholly abrogate. [1]

The soul takes birth each time, and each time a mind, life and body are formed out of the materials of universal nature according to the soul's past evolution and its need for the future.

When the body is dissolved, the vital goes into the vital plane and remains there for a time, but after a time the vital sheath disappears. The last to dissolve is the mental sheath. Finally the soul or psychic being retires into the psychic world to rest there till a new birth is close.

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This is the general course for ordinarily developed human beings. There are variations according to the nature of the individual and his development. For example, if the mental is strongly developed, then the mental being can remain; so also can the vital, provided they are organised by and centered around the true psychic being; they share the immortality of the psychic.

The soul gathers the essential elements of its experiences in life and makes that its basis of growth in the evolution: when it returns to birth it takes up with its mental, vital, physical sheaths so much of its Karma as is useful to it in the new life for further experience.

It is really for the vital part of the being that *śraddha* and rites are done—to help the being to get rid of the vital vibrations which still attach it to the earth or to the vital worlds, so that it may pass quickly to its rest in the psychic peace.

After leaving the body, the soul, after certain experiences in other worlds, throws off its mental and vital personalities and goes into rest to assimilate the essence of its past and prepare for a new life. It is this preparation that determines the circumstances of the new birth and guides it in its reconstitution of a new personality and the choice of its materials.

The departed soul retains the memory of its past experiences only in their essence, not in their form or detail. It is only if the soul brings back some past personality or personalities as part of its present manifestation that it is likely to remember the details of the past life. [2]

* * *

The change of the consciousness is the necessary thing and without it there can be no physical siddhi. But the fullness of the supramental change is not possible, if the body remains as it is, a slave of death, disease, decay, pain, unconsciousness and all the other results of the ignorance. If these are to remain the descent of the supramental is hardly necessary—for a change of consciousness which would bring mental-spiritual union with the Divine, the overmind is sufficient, even the Higher Mind is sufficient. The supramental descent is necessary for a dynamic action of the Truth in mind, vital and body. This would imply as a final result the disappearance of the unconsciousness of the body; it would no longer be subject to decay and disease. That would mean that it would not be subject to the ordinary processes by which death comes. If a change of body had to be made, it would have to be by the will of the inhabitant. This (not an obligation to live 3000 years, for that too would be a bondage) would be the essence of physical immortality. Still, if one wanted to live 1000 years or more, then supposing one had the complete siddhi, it should not be impossible. [3]

* * *

Normally, when we insist on the soul's undying existence, what is meant is the survival after death of a definite unchanging personality which was and will always remain the same throughout eternity. It is the very imperfect superficial "I" of the moment, evidently regarded by Nature as a temporary form and not worth preservation, for which we demand this stupendous right to survival and immortality. But the demand is extravagant and cannot be conceded; the "I" of the moment can only merit survival if it consents to change, to be no longer itself but something else greater, better, more luminous in knowledge, more moulded in the image of the eternal inner beauty, more and more progressive towards the divinity of the secret Spirit. It is that secret Spirit or divinity of Self in us which is imperishable, because it is unborn and eternal. The psychic entity within, its representative, the spiritual individual in us, is the Person that we are; but the "I" of this moment, the "I" of this life is only a formation, a temporary personality of this inner Person: it is one step of the many steps of our evolutionary change, and it serves its true purpose only when we pass beyond it to a farther step leading nearer to a higher degree of consciousness and being. It is the inner Person that survives death, even as it pre-exists

before birth; for this constant survival is a rendering of the eternity of our timeless Spirit into the terms of Time.

What our normal demand of survival asks for is a similar survival for our mind, our life, even our body; the dogma of the resurrection of the body attests to this last demand, even as it has been the root of the age-long effort of man to discover the elixir of immortality or any means magical, alchemic or scientific to conquer physically the death of the body. But this aspiration could only succeed if the mind, life or body could put on something of the immortality and divinity of the indwelling Spirit. There are certain circumstances in which the survival of the outer mental personality representative of the inner mental Purusha could be possible. It could happen if our mental being came to be so powerfully individualised on the surface and so much one with the inner mind and inner mental Purusha and at the same time so open plastically to the progressive action of the Infinite that the soul no longer needed to dissolve the old form of mind and create a new one in order to progress. A similar individualisation, integration and openness of the vital being on the surface would alone make possible a similar survival of the life-part in us, the outer vital personality representative of the inner life-being, the vital Purusha. What would really happen then is that the wall between the inner self and the outer man would have broken down and the permanent mental and vital being from within, the mental and vital representatives of the immortal psychic entity, would govern the life. Our mind-nature and our life-nature would then be a continuous progressive expression of the soul and not a nexus of successive formations preserved only in their essence. Our mental personality and life-personality would then subsist without dissolution from birth to birth; they would be in this sense immortal, persistently surviving, continuous in their sense of identity. This would be evidently an immense victory of soul and mind and life over the Inconscience and the limitations of material Nature.

But such a survival could only persist in the subtle body: the being would still have to discard its physical form, pass to other worlds and in its return put on a new body. The awakened mental Purusha and vital Purusha, preserving the mind-sheath and the life-sheath of the subtle body which are usually discarded, would return with them into a new birth and keep a vivid and sustained sense of a permanent being of mind and life constituted by the past and continuing into the present and future; but the basis of physical existence, the material body, could not be preserved even by this change. The physical being could only endure, if by some means its physical causes of decay and disruption could be overcome and at the same time it could be made so plastic and progressive in its functioning that it would answer to each change demanded of it by the progress of the inner Person:¹ it must be able to keep pace with the soul in its formation of self-expressive personality, its long unfolding of a secret spiritual divinity and the slow transformation of the mental into the divine mental or spiritual existence. This consummation of a triple immortality,—immortality of the nature completing the essential immortality of the Spirit and the psychic survival of death,—might be the crown of rebirth and a momentous indication of the conquest of the material Inconscience and Ignorance even in the very foundation of the reign of Matter. But the true immortality would still be the eternity of the Spirit: the physical survival could only be relative, terminable at will, a temporal sign of the Spirit's victory here over Death and Matter.

1. Even if Science,—physical Science or occult Science,—were to discover the necessary conditions or means for an indefinite survival of the body, still, if the body could not adapt itself so as to become a fit instrument of expression for the inner growth, the soul would find some way to abandon it and pass on to a new incarnation. The material or physical causes of death are not its sole or true cause: its true inmost reason is the spiritual necessity for the evolution of a new being. [4]

* * *

The psychic being's choice at the time of death does not work out the next formation of personality, it *fixes* it. When it enters the psychic world, it begins to assimilate the essence of its experience and by that assimilation is formed the future psychic personality in accordance with the fixation already made. When this assimilation is over, it is ready for a new birth; but the less developed beings do not work out the whole thing for themselves, there are beings and forces of the higher world who have that work. Also when it comes to birth, it is not sure that the forces of the physical world will not come across the working out of what is wanted—its own new instrumentation may not be strong enough for that purpose; for there is the interaction of its own energies and the cosmic forces here. There may be frustration, diversion, a partial working out—many things may happen. All that is not a rigid machinery, it is a working out of complex forces. It may be added, however, that a developed psychic being is much more conscious in this transition and works out much of it itself. The time depends also on the development and on a certain rhythm of the being—for some there is practically immediate rebirth, for others it takes longer, for some it may take centuries; but here again, once the psychic being is sufficiently developed, it is free to choose its own rhythm and its own intervals. The ordinary theories are too mechanical—and that is the case also

with the idea of *punya* and *papa* and their results in the next life. There are certainly results of the energies put forth in a past life, but not on that rather infantile principle. A good man's suffering in this life would be a proof according to the orthodox theory that he had been a very great villain in his past life, a bad man's prospering would be a proof that he had been quite angelic in his last visit to earth and sown a large crop of virtues and meritorious actions to reap this bumper crop of good fortune. Too symmetrical to be true. The object of birth being growth by experience, whatever reactions come to past deeds must be for the being to learn and grow, not as lollipops for good boys of the class (in the past) and canings for the bad ones. The real sanction for good and ill is not good fortune for the one and bad fortune for the other, but this that good leads us towards a higher nature which is eventually lifted above suffering, and ill pulls us towards the lower nature which remains always in the circle of suffering and evil. [5]

References

1. *The Life Divine* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1977), pp. 192-94.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 434.
3. *Letters on Yoga* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1971), 3:1231.
4. *The Life Divine*, pp. 821-23.
5. *Letters on Yoga*, 1:444-45.

DEATH AND THE SOUL

The Mother

"Death is the question Nature puts continually to Life and her reminder to it that it has not yet found itself. If there were no siege of death, the creature would be bound forever in the form of an imperfect living. Pursued by death he awakes to the idea of perfect life and seeks out its means and its possibility." —Sri Aurobindo, *Thoughts and Glimpses*

This is the question which every person whose consciousness is awakened a little has asked himself at least once in his life. There is in the depths of the being such a need to perpetuate, to prolong, to develop life, that the moment one has a first contact with death, which, although it may be quite an accidental contact, is yet inevitable, there is a sort of recoil in the being.

In persons who are sensitive, it produces horror; in others, indignation. There is a tendency to ask oneself: "What is this monstrous farce in which one takes part without wanting to, without understanding? Why are we born, if it is only to die? Why all this effort for development, progress, the flowering of the faculties, if it is to come to a diminution ending in decline and disintegration?" Some feel a revolt in them, others less strong feel despair and always this question arises: "If there is a conscious Will behind all that, this Will seems to be monstrous."

But here Sri Aurobindo tells us that this was an indispensable means of awakening in the consciousness of matter the need for perfection, the necessity of progress, that without this catastrophe, all beings would have been satisfied with the condition they were in—perhaps.... This is not certain.

But then, we have to take things as they are and tell ourselves that we must find the way out of it all.

The fact is that everything is in a state of perpetual progressive development, that is, the whole creation, the whole universe is advancing towards a perfection which seems to recede as one goes forward towards it, for what seemed a perfection at a certain moment is no longer perfect after a time. The most subtle states of being in the consciousness follow this progression even as it is going on, and the higher up the scale one goes, the more closely does the rhythm of the advance resemble the rhythm of the universal development, and approach the rhythm of the divine development; but the

material world is rigid by nature, transformation is slow, very slow, there, almost imperceptible for the measurement of time as human consciousness perceives it... and so there is a constant disequilibrium between the inner and outer movement, and this lack of balance, this incapacity of the outer forms to follow the movement of the inner progress brings about the necessity of decomposition and the change of forms. But if, into this matter, one could infuse enough consciousness to obtain the same rhythm, if matter could become plastic enough to follow the inner progression, this rupture of balance would not occur, and death would no longer be necessary.

So according to what Sri Aurobindo tells us, Nature has found this rather radical means to awaken in the material consciousness the necessary aspiration and plasticity.

It is obvious that the most dominant characteristic of matter is inertia, and that, if there were not this violence, perhaps the individual consciousness would be so inert that rather than change it would accept to live in a perpetual imperfection.... That is possible. Anyway, this is how things are made, and for us who know a little more, there is only one thing that remains to be done, it is to change all this, as far as we have the means, by calling the Force, the Consciousness, the new Power which is capable of infusing into material substance the vibration which can transform it, make it plastic, supple, progressive.

Obviously the greatest obstacle is the attachment to things as they are; but even Nature as a whole finds that those who have the deeper knowledge want to go too fast: she likes her meanderings, she likes her successive attempts, her failures, her fresh beginnings, her new inventions; she likes the fantasy of the path, the unexpectedness of the experience; one could almost say that for her the longer it takes, the more enjoyable it is.

But even of the best games one tires. There comes a time when one needs to change them and one could dream of a game in which it would no longer be necessary to destroy in order to progress, where the zeal for progress would be enough to find new means, new expressions, where the *elan* would be ardent enough to overcome inertia, lack of understanding, fatigue, indifference.

Why does this body, as soon as some progress has been made, feel the need to sit down? It is tired. It says, "Oh! you must wait. I

must be given time to rest." This is what leads it to death. If it felt within itself that ardour to do always better, become more transparent, more beautiful, more luminous, eternally young, one could escape from this macabre joke of Nature.

For her this is of no importance. She sees the whole, she sees the totality; she sees that nothing is lost, that it is only recombining quantities, numberless minute elements, without any importance, which are put back into a pot and mixed well—and something new comes out of it. But that game is not amusing for everybody. And if in one's consciousness one could be as vast as she, why shouldn't one do the same thing in a better way?

This is the problem which confronts us now. With the addition, the new help of this Force which has descended, which is manifesting, working, why shouldn't one take in hand this tremendous game and make it more beautiful, more harmonious, more true?

It only needs brains powerful enough to receive this Force and formulate the possible course of action. There must be conscious beings powerful enough to convince Nature that there are other methods than hers.... This looks like madness, but all new things have always seemed like madness before they became realities.

The hour has come for this madness to be realised. And since we are all here for reasons that are perhaps unknown to most of you, but are still very conscious reasons, we may set ourselves to fulfill that madness—at least it will be worthwhile living it. [1]

* * *

Disciple: Sometimes when people are dying, they know that they are about to die. Why don't they tell the spirit to go away?

The Mother: Ah! well, that depends upon the people. Two things are necessary. First of all nothing in your being should want to die. That does not happen often. You have always a defeatist in you somewhere: something that is tired, something that is disgusted, something that has had enough of it, something that is lazy, something that does not want to struggle and says: "Well! Ah! Let it be finished, so much the better." That is sufficient, you are dead.

But it is a fact: if nothing, absolutely nothing in you consents to die, you will not die. For someone to die, there is always a second, perhaps the hundredth part of a second when he gives his consent. If there is not this second of consent, he does not die.

I knew people who should have really died according to all physical and vital laws; and they refused. They said: "No, I will not die," and they lived. There are others who do not need at all to die, but they are of that kind and say: "Ah! Well! Yes, so much the better, it will be finished," and it is finished. Even that much, even nothing more than that: you need not have a persistent wish, you have only to say: "Well, yes, I have had enough!" and it is finished. So it is truly like that. As you say, you may have death standing by your bedside and tell him: "I do not want you, go away," and it will be obliged to go away. But usually one gives way, for one must struggle, one must be strong, one must be very courageous and enduring, must have a great faith in the necessity of life; like someone, for example, who feels very strongly that he has still something to do and he must absolutely do it. But who is sure he has not within him the least bit of a defeatist, somewhere, who just yields and says: "It is all right"?...It is here, the necessity of unifying oneself.

Whatever the way we follow, the subject we study, we always arrive at the same result. The most important thing for an individual is to unify himself around his divine centre; in that way he becomes a true individual, master of himself and his destiny. Otherwise, he is a plaything of forces that toss him about like a piece of cork on a river. He goes where he does not want to go, he is made to do things he does not want to do, and finally he loses himself in a hole without having any strength to recover. But if you are consciously organised, unified around the divine centre, ruled and directed by it, you are master of your destiny. [2]

* * *

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

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

I can give you some rather external examples. For instance, a psychic being needed to have the experience of mastery, of power in order to know the reactions and how it is possible to turn all these movements towards the Divine: to learn what a life of power may teach you. It took birth in a king or a queen. These enjoyed some power and during that time they had their experiences; they reached the end of the field of experience. Now they know what they wanted to know, they are about to go, they are going to leave their body that's now become useless, and they are going to prepare for the next experience. Well, at that time, when the psychic being is still in the body and has noted what it has learnt, it decides for the next occasion. And sometimes it is a movement of action and reaction: because it has studied one entire field, it needs to study the opposite field. And very often it chooses a very different life from the one it had. So before leaving, it says: "Next time, it is in this domain that I shall take birth...." Suppose, for example, the psychic has reached a stage of growth when it would like to have the chance of working on the physical body to make it capable of coming consciously into contact with the Divine and of transforming it. Now, it is about to leave the body in which it had authority, power, activity, the body it had used for its growth; it says: "Next time I shall take birth in a neutral environment, neither low nor high, where it will not be necessary (how to put it?) to have a highly external life, where one will have neither great power nor great misery—altogether neutral, as you know, the life in between." It chooses that. It returns to its own psychic world for the necessary rest, for assimilation of the experience gained, for preparation of the future experience. It naturally remembers its choice and, before coming down once more, when it has finished its assimilation, when it is time to return, to come down upon earth, it cannot, from that domain, see material things as we see them, you know, they appear to it in another form. But still the differences can be foreseen: the differences of environment, differences of activity in the environment are clearly seen, quite perceptible. It can have a vision which is total or global. It can choose. At times it chooses the country; when it wants a certain kind of education, civilisation, influence, it can choose its country beforehand. Sometimes it can't, sometimes it chooses only its environment and the kind of life it will lead. And then from up there, before it comes down, it looks for the kind of vibrations it wants; it sees them very clearly. It is as though it was aiming at the place where it is going to drop. But it is an approximation because of the fact that another condition is necessary: not only its choice but also a receptivity from below and an aspiration. There must be someone in the environment it has chosen, generally the mother (sometimes both the parents, but the most indispensable is the mother), she must have an aspiration or a receptivity, something sufficiently passive and open or a conscious aspiration towards something higher. And that kindles for the psychic being a little light. In the mass representing for it the environment in which it wants to be born, if under the influence of its own projected will a small light is kindled, then it knows it is there it must go.

It is necessary, it is this that makes the difference in months or days, perhaps, not so much perhaps in years; however, this creates an uncertainty, and that is why it cannot foretell the exact date: "On that date, that day, at that hour I shall take birth." It needs to

find someone receptive. When it sees that, it rushes down. But what happens is something like an image; it is not exactly like that, but something very similar. It throws itself down into an unconsciousness, because the physical world, even human consciousness whatever it may be, is very unconscious in comparison with the psychic consciousness. So it rushes into an unconsciousness. It is as though it fell head foremost. That stuns it. And so generally, apart from some very, very rare exceptions, for a long time it does not know. It does not know any longer where it is nor what it is doing nor why it is there, nothing at all. It finds a great difficulty in expressing itself, especially through a baby that has no brain, naturally; it is only the embryo of a brain which is hardly formed and it does not have the elements for manifesting itself. So it is very rare for a child to manifest immediately the exceptional being it contains.... That happens. Such things we have heard being narrated. It happens, but generally some time is needed. Only slowly it awakens from its stupor and becomes aware that it is there for some reason and by choice. And usually this coincides with the intensive mental education which shuts you completely from the psychic consciousness. So a mass of circumstances, happenings of all kinds, emotions, all sorts of things are necessary to open the inner doors so that one might begin to remember that after all one has come from another world and one has come for a precise reason. [3]

* * *

Disciple: When an especially developed soul leaves the body, does it take with it the subtle physical sheath? When it reincarnates how does it introduce this into the new body?

The Mother: That too depends on the degree of development, the conditions of death—and above all on the unification of the being and its attitude at the time of leaving the body. The question here was about developed beings, that is, fully developed psychic beings—and I don't know if it means a psychic being which has profited by its presence in a physical body to do yoga, for then the conditions are quite different. But in a more general way, I have often told you that, with regard to the external envelope of the being, everything depends on its attitude at the moment of death, and that attitude necessarily depends on its inner development and its unification.

If we take the best instance, of someone who has unified his being completely around the Divine presence within him, who is now only *one* will, *one* consciousness, this person will have grouped around his central psychic being a fully developed and organised mind, an absolutely surrendered and collaborating vital and an obedient, docile and supple physical being. This physical being, as it is fully developed, will have a subtle body—what Sri Aurobindo calls the “true physical”—which will infinitely surpass the limits of its body and have enough suppleness, plasticity, balance to be able to adhere to the inner parts of the being and follow the movement of the soul in its...I don't want to say in its ascent, but in its peregrinations outside the body. What the soul will do, where it will go—it all depends on what it has decided before leaving the body. And this capacity to keep around itself the being that has been fully organised and unified in its physical life, will allow it to really choose what it wants to do. And this also represents a very different field of possibilities, from passing consciously from one body into another, directly—there are instances in which one of these fully conscious and fully developed beings has slowly prepared another being capable of receiving and assimilating it, and in order not to stop its material work when it leaves one body, it goes and joins another psychic being, merges with it, combines with it in another physical body; that is an extreme case, extremely rare also, but one which forms part of an altogether traditional occult knowledge—to the instance at the other extreme, where the soul having finished its bodily experience, wants to assimilate it in repose and prepare for another physical existence later, sometimes much later. And so this is what happens, among many other possibilities: it leaves in each

domain—in the subtle physical, in the vital, in the mental domain—the corresponding beings; it leaves them with a sort of link between them, but each one keeps its independent existence, and in itself goes into the zone, the reality, the world of the psychic proper, and enters into a blissful repose for assimilation, until it has assimilated... all its good deeds, digested all its good deeds, and is ready to begin a new experience. And then if its work has been well done and the parts or sheaths of its being which it has left in their different domains have acted as they should there, when it descends again, it will put on one after another all these parts which lived with it in a former life, and with this wealth of knowledge and experience it will prepare to enter a new body.... This may be after hundreds or thousands of years, for in those domains all that is organised is no longer necessarily subject to the decomposition which here we call “death.” As soon as a vital being is fully harmonised, it becomes immortal. What dissolves it and breaks it up are all the disorders within it and all the tendencies towards destruction and decomposition; but if it is fully harmonised and organised and, so to say, divinised, it becomes immortal. It is the same thing for the mind. And even in the subtle physical, beings who are fully developed and have been impregnated with spiritual forces do not necessarily dissolve after death. They may continue to act or may take a beneficial rest in certain elements of Nature like water—generally it is in some liquid, in water or the sap of trees... But they may also remain active and continue to act on the more material elements of physical Nature. [4]

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INTEGRAL PSYCHOLOGY (9) Sri Aurobindo

The Vital (1)

The characteristic energy of bodily Life is not so much in progress as in persistence, not so much in individual self-enlargement as in self-repetition. There is, indeed, in physical Nature a progression from type to type, from the vegetable to the animal, from the animal to man; for even in inanimate Matter Mind is at work. But once a type is marked off physically, the chief immediate preoccupation of the terrestrial Mother seems to be to keep it in being by a constant reproduction. For Life always seeks immortality; but since individual form is impermanent and only the ideal of a form is permanent in the consciousness that creates the universe,—for there it does not perish,—such constant reproduction is the only possible immortality. Self-preservation, self-repetition, self-multiplication are necessarily, then, the predominant instincts of all material existence. [1]

* * *

The life of the human creature, as it is ordinarily lived, is composed of a half-fixed, half-fluid mass of very imperfectly ruled thoughts, perceptions, sensations, emotions, desires, enjoyments, acts mostly customary and self-repeating, in part only dynamic and self-developing, but all centered around a superficial ego. The sum of movement of these activities eventuates in an internal growth which is partly visible and operative in this life, partly a seed of progress in lives hereafter. This growth of the conscious being, an expansion, an increasing self-expression, a more and more harmonised development of his constituent members is the whole meaning and all the pith of human existence. It is for this meaningful development of consciousness by thought, will, emotion, desire, action and experience, leading in the end to a supreme divine self-discovery,

that Man, the mental being, has entered into the material body. All the rest is either auxiliary and subordinate or accidental and otiose; that only matters which sustains and helps the evolution of his nature and the growth or rather the progressive unfolding and discovery of his self and spirit. [2]

* * *

...The recipient of Nature's contacts, touched and stimulated, solicited or assailed by her forces, may react to the pressure or against it. She allows, encourages, impels him to strive, to resist, to attempt, to dominate or engross his environment, to assert his will, to fight and create and conquer. This is the mode of Rajas, the way of passion and action and the thirst of desire. Struggle and change and new creation, victory and defeat and joy and suffering and hope and disappointment are its children and build the many-coloured house of life in which it takes its pleasure. But its knowledge is an imperfect or a false knowledge and brings with it ignorant effort, error, a constant misadjustment, pain of attachment, disappointed desire, grief of loss and failure. The gift of Rajas is kinetic force, energy, activity, the power that creates and acts and can overcome; but it moves in the wrong lights or the half-lights of the Ignorance and it is perverted by the touch of the Asura, Rakshasa and Pishacha. The arrogant ignorance of the human mind and its self-satisfied perversions and presumptuous errors, the pride and vanity and ambition, the cruelty and tyranny and beast wrath and violence, the selfishness and baseness and hypocrisy and treachery and vile meanness, the lust and greed and rapacity, the jealousy, envy and bottomless ingratitude that disfigure the earth-nature are the natural children of this indispensable but strong and dangerous turn of Nature. [3]

* * *

While dealing thus with the body we have necessarily to deal also with the Prana or life-energy. For practical purposes we have to make a distinction between the life-energy as it acts in the body, the physical Prana, and the life-energy as it acts in support of the mental activities, the psychical Prana. For we lead always a double life, mental and physical, and the same life-energy acts differently and assumes a different aspect according as it leads itself to one or the other. In the body it produces those reactions of hunger, thirst, fatigue, health, disease, physical vigour, etc., which are the vital experiences of the physical frame. For the gross body of man is not like the stone or the earth; it is a combination of two sheaths, the vital and the "food" sheath and its life is a constant interaction of these two. Still the life-energy and the physical frame are two different things and in the withdrawal of the mind from the absorbing sense of the body we become increasingly sensible of the Prana and its action in the corporeal instrument and can observe and more and more control its operations. Practically, in drawing back from the body we draw back from the physical life-energy also, even while we distinguish the two and feel the latter nearer to us than the mere physical instrument. The entire conquest of the body comes in fact by the conquest of the physical life-energy.

Along with the attachment to the body and its works the attachment to life in the body is overcome. For when we feel the physical being to be not ourselves, but only a dress or an instrument, the repulsion to the death of the body which is so strong and vehement an instinct of the vital man must necessarily weaken and can be thrown away. Thrown away it must be and entirely. The fear of death and the aversion to bodily cessation are the stigma left by his animal origin on the human being. That brand must be utterly effaced. [4]

* * *

...In others it is the vital self, the being of life, who dominates and rules the mind, the will, the action; then is created the vital man, concerned with self-affirmation, self-aggrandisement, life-enlargement, satisfaction of ambition and passion and impulse and desire, the claims of his ego, domination, power, excitement, battle

and struggle, inner and outer adventure: all else is incidental or subordinated to this movement and building and expression of the vital ego. But still in the vital man too there are or can be other elements of a growing mental and spiritual character, even if these happen to be less developed than his life-personality and life-power. The nature of the vital man is more active, stronger and more mobile, more turbulent and chaotic, often to the point of being quite unregulated, than that of the physical man who holds on to the soil and has a certain material poise and balance, but is more kinetic and creative: for the element of the vital being is not earth but air; it has more movement, less status. A vigorous vital mind and will can grasp and govern the kinetic vital energies, but it is more by a forceful compulsion and constraint than by a harmonisation of the being. If, however, a strong vital personality, mind and will can get the reasoning intelligence to give it a firm support and be its minister, then a certain kind of force formation can be made, more or less balanced but always powerful, successful and effective, which can impose itself on the nature and environment and arrive at a strong self-affirmation in life and action. [5]

* * *

There are four parts of the [individual] vital being—first, the mental vital which gives a mental expression by thought, speech, or otherwise to the emotions, desires, passions, sensations and other movements of the vital being; the emotional vital which is the seat of various feelings, such as love, joy, sorrow, hatred, and the rest; the central vital which is the seat of the stronger vital longings and reactions, e.g., ambition, pride, fear, love of fame, attractions and repulsions, desires and passions of various kinds and the field of many vital energies; last, the lower vital which is occupied with small desires and feelings, such as make the greater part of daily life, e.g., food desire, sexual desire, small likings, dislikings, vanity, quarrels, love of praise, anger at blame, little wishes of all kinds—and a numberless host of other things. Their respective seats are: (1) the region from the throat to the heart, (2) the heart (it is a double centre, belonging in the front to the emotional and vital and behind to the psychic), (3) from the heart to the navel, (4) below the navel. [6]

* * *

The function of [the vital] mind is not to think and reason, to perceive, consider and find out or value things, for that is the function of the thinking mind proper, *buddhi*,—but to plan or dream or imagine what can be done. It makes formations for the future which the will can try to carry out if opportunity and circumstances become favourable or even it can work to make them favourable. In men of action this faculty is prominent and a leader of their nature; great men of action always have it in a very high measure. But even if one is not a man of action or practical realisation or if circumstances are not favourable or one can do only small and ordinary things, this vital mind is there. It acts in them on a small scale, or if it needs some sense of largeness, what it does very often is to plan in the void, knowing that it cannot realise its plans or else to imagine big things, stories, adventures, great doings in which oneself is the hero or the creator. [7]

* * *

...The ordinary activity of the vital mind is always imagining and thinking and planning what to do about this and how to arrange that. It has obviously its utility in human nature and human action, but acts in a random and excessive way without discipline, economy of its powers or concentration on the things that have really to be done. [8]

* * *

[Talking mentally to another person] is very common with the vital mind. It is a way it has of acting on the subtle plane on things in which it is interested, especially if the physical action is stopped or restricted. [9]

The point about the emotional and the higher vital is a rather difficult one. In the classification in which the mind is taken as something more than the thinking, perceiving and willing intelligence, the emotional can be reckoned as part of the mind, the vital in the mental. In another classification it is rather the most mentalised part of the vital nature. In the first case, the term "higher vital" is confined to that larger movement of the conscious life-force which is concerned with creation, with power and force and conquest, with giving and self-giving and gathering from the world for further action and expenditure of power, throwing itself out in the wider movements of life, responsive to the greater objects of Nature. In the second arrangement, the emotional being stands at the top of the vital nature and the two together make the higher vital. As against them stands the lower vital which is concerned with the pettier movements of action and desire and stretches down into the vital physical where it supports the life of the more external activities and all physical sensations, hungers, cravings, satisfactions. The term "lower" must not be considered in a pejorative sense; it refers only to the position in the hierarchy of the planes. For although this part of the nature in earthly beings tends to be very obscure and is full of perversions,—lust, greed of all kinds, vanity, small ambitions, petty anger, envy, jealousy are its ordinary guests,—still there is another side to it which makes it an indispensable mediator between the inner being and the outer life.

...Psychic experience is in itself a quite independent thing and has its own characteristic forms. The psychic being stands behind all the others; its force is the true soul-power. But if it comes to the front, it can suffuse all the rest; mind, vital, the physical consciousness can take its stamp and be transformed by its influence. When the nature is properly developed, there is a psychic in the mental, a psychic in the vital, a psychic in the physical. It is when that is there and strong, that we can say of someone that he evidently has a soul. But there are some in whom this element is so lacking that

we have to use faith in order to believe that they have a soul at all. The centre of the psychic being is behind the centre of the emotional being; it is the emotional that is nearest dynamically to the psychic and in most men it is through the emotional centre that the psychic can be most easily reached and through the psychified emotion that it can be most easily expressed. Many therefore mistake the one for the other; but there is a world of difference between the two. The emotions normally are vital in their character and not part of the psychic nature.

It must be remembered that while this classification is indispensable for psychological self-knowledge and discipline and practice, it can be used best when it is not made too rigid and cutting a formula. For things run very much into each other and a synthetical sense of these powers is as necessary as the analysis. Mind, for instance, is everywhere. The physical mind is technically placed below the vital and yet it is a prolongation of the mind proper and one that can act in its own sphere by direct touch with the higher mental intelligence. And there is too an obscure mind of the body, of the very cells, molecules, corpuscles. Haeckel, the German materialist, spoke somewhere of the will in the atom, and recent science, dealing with the incalculable individual variation in the activity of the electrons, comes near to perceiving that this is not a figure but the shadow thrown by a secret reality. This body-mind is a very tangible truth; owing to its obscurity and mechanical clinging to past movements and facile oblivion and rejection of the new, we find in it one of the chief obstacles to permeation by the supermind. On the other hand, once effectively converted, it will be one of the most precious instruments for the stabilisation of the supramental Light and Force in material Nature. [10]

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ON THE WAY TO SUPERMANHOOD

Satprem

[This is a new translation, by Roger Toll, of the introduction to Satprem's book of the same title. In 1971 another translation of this introduction was published in the United States. A copy of the Ulster County (N.Y.) newspaper in which that translation appeared was sent to the Mother, and in response, Satprem wrote to the editor of *Collaboration*, who had been instrumental in getting it published, in part as follows: "Strangely enough (but perhaps not so strange) the first pages of this book are published in the States even before France, and in fact, some time ago, while I was reading this book to the Mother, she told me that the people of Europe were too old, too much bent on calculating every step they take and the consequences, while the American people were capable of enthusiasm and aspiration and of plunging into the Future. And she said that she expected much of this book for starting a new movement there." It is in this spirit that we offer this piece to our readers. While the book has been available for some time in French, an English translation has not yet appeared in the United States. Plans for its American appearance have not yet been finalized. Readers who wish to be notified when the book becomes available may write to Matagiri. Satprem is also the author of *Sri Aurobindo or The Adventure of Consciousness* and *By the Body of the Earth*, both available from Matagiri.

Or we may find when all the rest has failed
Hid in ourselves the key of perfect change.

—Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri*, X:II, p. 256

Secrets are simple.

Because the Truth is simple, it is the simplest thing in the world. Which is why we do not see it. There is only one Thing in the world and not two, as our physicists and mathematicians have begun to

realize, and as a child knows so well smiling at a wave on an open beach bathed by the same foam that seems to roll in from the depths of time to unite with a great rhythm that rises out of an ancient memory, that melts down the days and pains into one single story, so old that it's like an unchanging presence, so vast that its immensity is captured even upon a seagull's wing. And all, the totality of the ages and of souls, is contained in a second, in a simple point that shines for an instant on the wayward foam. But we have lost this point, as well as this smile, and this little second that sings. So then we sought to reconstruct this oneness with a sum: 1 plus 1 plus 1 ... just like our computers, as if the collection of all the knowledge possible at every possible point could yield the right note, the only note that makes the worlds sing and move, and the heart of a forgotten child. We sought to manufacture this Simplicity for our boardrooms and banks, but the more our calculators have spread, simplifying life, the more the bird has taken flight, and a smile, like the beautiful foam, has been polluted by our computations. We are not even certain if these bodies are ours—this fine Machine has eaten all.

Now, this one Thing is also the one Power, for whatever shines at one point shines at every other point as well. When you understand this, all the rest is understood. There is but one Power in the world, and not two. Even a child understands this very well—he is a king, he is invincible. But the child grows up, he forgets. And men have grown up, and nations, civilizations, each one in his own way

seeking the Great Secret, the simple secret—through arms, conquests, through meditation, magic, through beauty, religion or science. And to tell the truth, we are not so sure who is more advanced, a worker on the Acropolis, a priest in Thebes or an astronaut at Cape Kennedy, or even a monk at Citeaux, for some have rejected life in order to understand it and others have grabbed hold of life without any understanding, some have left a trail of beauty and others a white path in a similar sky—we are only the most recent on the list, that's all. And as for our magic, it is still not in our grasp. The point, the very little and powerful point, is still there on the beach of the wide world, it shines for those who want it, just as it did when we were not yet men beneath the stars.

Nevertheless, there are others who have touched the Secret. Perhaps the Greeks had it, the Egyptians as well, and certainly the rishis of Vedic times. But secrets are like blossoms on a flowering tree; they have their season, their secret sprouting, their sudden birth. For everything there is a "moment," even for the conjunction of the stars above our heads and the flight of a cormorant over a rock swept white with foam, and perhaps even for this foam cast upward for an instant in the rhythm of a wave, and all moves in accordance with a single rite. And for man it is the same. A secret, which is knowledge, which is power, has its own organic time; one separate little cell, more evolved than the others, cannot embody the power of its knowledge or change the world, in other words, it cannot accelerate the flowering of the great tree, unless all the rest of the evolutionary field is ready.

Now the time has come.

It has come, it is breaking out all over the Earth, even if the invisible flower is as yet like a festering pimple. The old gods are collapsing, the students in Calcutta behead Gandhi's statue, minds nourished on knowledge fire cries of destruction and, like the ancient Romans of the Empire, call to the Barbarians lying just across the border to come and shatter their self-made prison. And others call to artificial heavens. Which path does not matter, but no longer this path! And the Earth gasps and groans along all its faults, its innumerable faults, and in all the cells of its great body on the way to transformation. The so-called "evil" of our times is in disguise the birth of a child that we don't know by which end to grab. We are facing a new evolutionary crisis, just as radical as the first human aberration among the great apes must have been.

But since the body of the Earth is one, like the Truth, the remedy is one, and a single transmuted point will transmute all the others. But this point cannot be found in any amendments of our laws, in any of our systems, our science, our religions or our schools, or in any "isms" of whatever shade or smell—all that is a part of the old Machine. There is not anywhere a single bolt to tighten or to add or to improve, the suffocation that is upon us in all its force. And this point is not even found in our intellect—which is what devised this whole Machine—nor even in some improvement of the Human, which would still be nothing but a glorification of his failings and his former grandeur. "The imperfection of Man is not the last word of Nature," said Sri Aurobindo, "but his perfection too is not the last peak of the Spirit" [*The Life Divine*, American edition, II:XX, p. 680]. It is in a future still inconceivable to our intellects which, like the red flower of the flame tree when all its leaves have fallen, sprouts in the heart of a living thing.

At least there exists a lever of the future, if we go to the heart of the Matter. And where, what is this heart if it is not at all to be found in what we believe is fine and fair and noble according to our human norms? One day, the early reptiles that had emerged from the waters wanted to fly; the early primates that had emerged from the forest cast a strange regard upon the earth—the same incoercible thrust made them both look towards another state. And perhaps the entire force of transformation was contained in this simple regard TOWARDS the other thing, as if that regard and this call, this point of the unknown that cries out, had the power to unseal the

fountains of the future.

For in fact this point contains everything, it can do everything, it is a spark of the solar Self, innumerable one, which shines in the heart of men and things, in each point of space, each second of time, each flake of foam, and which tirelessly becomes the ever more that it saw in the fraction of a lightning flash.

The future is for those who give themselves entirely to the future.

And we declare that there exists a more marvelous future than all the electronic heavens of the mind. Man is not the end, no more than the arheoptryx was when he reached the reptilean summit—where then can the great wave of evolution end? And it is getting clearer and clearer: we seem to be inventing machines that are more and more marvelous, to be ceaselessly pushing back the limits of man, to be advancing towards Jupiter and Mars. But it only seems this way, and we are not pushing back a thing. Rather, we are throwing to the outermost ends of the cosmos a little pitiful being who does not even know how to care for his tribe nor whether his own cave is not hiding some dragon, or a crying baby. We are not advancing, we are inflating beyond measure an enormous mental balloon which could well blow up in our face. We have not improved man, we have only colossalized him. And it could not have been otherwise; the fault does not lie in a lack of virtue or intellect, for these, pushed to the extreme, can only create a supersaint or a supermachine: a monstrosity. A saintly snake in his hole would be no more a summit of evolution than a saintly monk. Otherwise, let's be done with the whole thing. In fact, the summit of man—or the summit of whatever it is—is not found in some perfection of the type in terms of degree, but rather in the "something else" it aspires to become which is not a part of the type. Such is the law of evolution. Man is not the end, man is a "transitional being," as Sri Aurobindo said long ago, he is on the way to supermanhood just as inevitably as the furthest twig on the furthest branch is imprinted in the seed of a mango tree. And our only real occupation, our only problem, the one question of all times to resolve, the one that rips apart our great tellurian vessel by all its painful limbs, is: how do we find the way?

Nietzsche said it also. But his superman was only a colossalization of man, as we saw when it broke upon Europe. This was not a progress of evolution but a return to the old barbarism of the blond or brown-haired brute of human egoism. We have no need of a super man, but of something else already in the heart of men which is as different from man as the cantatas of Bach are different from the early gruntings of the hominid. And in fact, Bach's cantatas grow pale when man's inner ear begins opening to the harmonies of the Future.

It is this opening, this passage—the *modus operandi* of the transition—that we want to study in the light of what we have learned from Sri Aurobindo and from Her who has continued his work, so that we ourselves may grasp the lever and work systematically on our own evolution—to create an experimental evolution—as others, who perhaps will only hear the echo of their own monstrosity, create embryos in a test tube.

The secret of life is not to be found in life, nor the secret of man in man, just as "the significance of the lotus is not to be found by analysing the secrets of the mud from which it grows," as Sri Aurobindo said; and yet both the mud and the ray of sunlight must join together to achieve another level of harmony. We must find this meeting place, this point of transmutation, and perhaps then we shall rediscover what a tranquil child upon a beach was seeing in a flake of foam—and in that flake, the supreme music that weaves the worlds, and the one Wonder that awaited its hour.

And what had seemed a human impossibility shall become a child's game.

[This is chapter 3 of an unpublished dissertation entitled "The Concept of the Soul in the Integral Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo," which the author has kindly allowed us to publish here. In the next issue we shall offer readers another chapter from the book dealing with the psychology of the soul.]

Were one to examine the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo and compare it with a crystal, perhaps like an exquisitely shaped diamond which is clear and unsullied, he might find a degree of perfection and development there that is relatively rare. Sri Aurobindo's philosophy is the modern formulation of ancient mysticism and yoga which may well be called the diamond of India. The philosophy itself breaks forth into a panoply of color and beauty as it sweeps majestically across the monoliths of man's life and thought, across the broad and vast stretches of human history and evolution to that point in the future which Sri Aurobindo envisions as the supreme goal, not only of the individual, but of the race as a whole. His philosophy is as exact and precise as a mathematical formula. It includes the pattern of the diamond and the delicacy of the snow crystal. It is as clear and lustrous as the diamond reflecting light in so many different colors that certain aspects may touch far more minds than a narrower view of man and the universe.

What exactly is this "diamond of India," this jewel of the emerging superconscious man? The philosophy is both simple and complex. Let us here dwell on the simplicity and beauty of the pattern rather than to dwell too long on the complexity, which really should be left to each individual to complexity for himself.

There are certain basic presuppositions:

1. There is the One and the One is all there is. [1]
2. One becomes multiplicity.

In its descent into manifestation, the One or Spirit becomes Matter. The world as we know it is based on and is the result of the duality of Spirit and Matter. "The two are one: Spirit is the soul and reality of that which we sense as Matter; Matter is a form and body of that which we realize as Spirit." [2]

This premise is the basis of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy. It is the rock-bottom foundation of the entire philosophical structure which rests upon it. In terms of man himself in relation to the descent of Spirit into Matter, Sri Aurobindo says:

"The affirmation of a divine life upon earth and an immortal sense in a mortal existence can have no base unless we recreate not only eternal Spirit as the inhabitant of this bodily mansion, the wearer of this mutable robe, but accept Matter of which it is made, as a fit and noble material out of which He weaves constantly His garbs, builds recurrently the unending series of His mansions." [3] That is to say, Matter is Brahman. [4]

3. Spirit and Matter have a tendency to movement. Spirit descends into Matter and Matter ascends into Spirit. The descent of Spirit Sri Aurobindo calls the involution, while he refers to the ascent of Matter into Spirit as evolution. These two movements or cosmic processes appear to work in inverse relation to one another. As Spirit descends, so also does Matter ascend in direct proportion. Spirit and Matter meet in the condition or state described as Life. Since Spirit inhabits Life, Life seeks to rise above itself to attain Spirit. But Life is also imbedded in Matter, so that the evolution of Life presupposes its involvement in Matter. Life exists because it is formed by the descent of Being in various grades and stages and through various veils into multitudinous beings. Therefore, Life is both involutionary since it is part of the descent of Spirit, and it is also evolutionary since it partakes also in the ascent of Matter into Spirit. [5] (See Figure 1.)

Because of the involutionary-evolutionary movement of Spirit in Life, which is based in Matter, Matter too must be considered spiritual, since it is also pervaded by the One. Thus Sri Aurobindo's philosophy is a world-affirming viewpoint.

Consciousness as Supermind is the force that acts as the creatrix of the world. [6] The creation moves between the One and the Many, between unity and multiplicity. [7] The faculty of the creation that moves between unity and multiplicity is what Sri Aurobindo calls "Supermind":

"It comprehends all things in itself as itself the One in its manifold aspects and it apprehends separately all things in itself as objects of its will and knowledge.... The Supermind is the divine Gnosis which creates, governs, and upholds the worlds." [8]

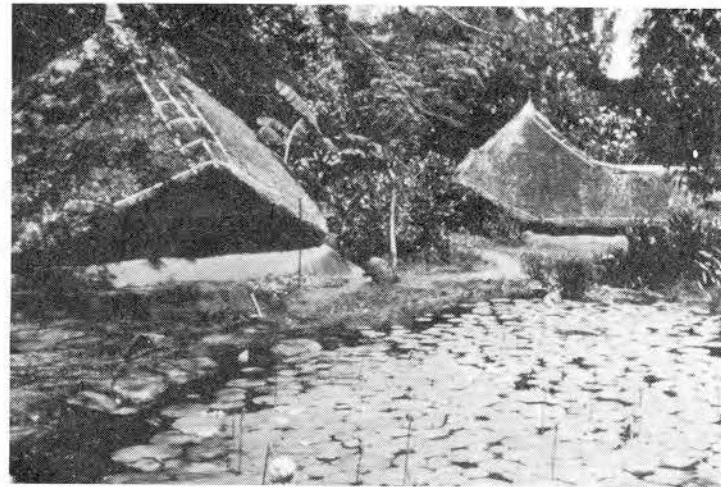
Since the One is also the triune principle of being (*Sat*), Consciousness-Force (*Chit*), and Bliss (*Ananda*), so also is it a mirror in the world of multiplicity or Nature as Mind, Life and Matter. "Mind is a subordinate power of Supermind.... Life similarly is a subordinate power of the energy aspect of Sachchidananda." [9] Matter is that lowest dimension of the One which is the form of substance. [10]

When body, life, and mind manifest in man, a fourth principle, called the soul principle, comes into play. The soul has a double edge, a two-sided appearance, since the lower part of it is called the ego, or desire nature, which is bound to ignorance and limitation. There is also the true soul, the psychic entity, which is projected by the Bliss (*Ananda*) aspect of the One. [11] For man in evolution the latter is the most important principle, and the one to which the entirety of this study is based. Thus Sri Aurobindo sees the One as the circle without center or circumference, as being simultaneously everywhere. Supermind is unified with the triune principle of Sachchidananda as soul is unified with its body, life, and mind. (See Figure 1.)

Man must rend the veil which separates the higher and lower hemispheres, and in so doing to realize the fact of his own divinity. The soul, or psychic entity, is the tool or the organ through and by which man may attain self-realization. Self-realization is the transfiguration for which man is destined. It is his most dynamic and positive potentiality. To attain self-realization as a being consciously cooperating with the soul is the opening of one's self to the eternal sun.

References

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2. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine* (New York: Sri Aurobindo Library, 1957), p. 51.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
4. S.K. Maitra, *An Introduction*.
5. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, pp. 171-72.
- 6-11. *Ibid.*, pp. 115, 241, 242.



Lotus Pond, Auroville. (Photo by Dominique Darr.)

I. Basic Principles

In Sri Aurobindo's *The Human Cycle* we find an explicit and luminous passage which is the key to his views on education. Apropos of the new trends evidenced by the experiments in education carried out in various countries, he says:

"The business of both parent and teacher is to enable and to help the child to educate himself, to develop his own intellectual, moral, aesthetic and practical capacities and to grow freely as an organic being, not to be kneaded and pressured into form like an inert plastic material.... The true secret, whether with child or man, is to help him to find his deeper self, the real psychic entity within. That, if we ever give it a chance to come forward, and still more if we call it into the foreground as the 'leader of the march set in our front,' will take up most of the business of education out of our hands and develop the capacity of the psychological being towards a realisation of its potentialities of which our present mechanical view of life and man and external routine methods dealing with them prevent us from having any experience or forming any conception. These new educational methods are on the straight way to this truer dealing. The closer touch attempted with the psychical entity behind the vital and physical mentality and an increasing reliance on its possibilities must lead to the ultimate discovery that man is inwardly a soul and a conscious power of the Divine and that the evocation of this real man within is the right object of education and indeed of all human life if it would find and live according to the hidden Truth and deepest law of its own being."

This passage throws considerable light on the forceful statement which Sri Aurobindo has given as the fundamental principle of education:

"The first principle of true teaching is that nothing can be taught. The teacher is not an instructor or task-master, he is a helper and a guide. His business is to suggest and not to impose. He does not actually train the pupil's mind, he only shows him how to perfect his instruments of knowledge and helps and encourages him in the process. He does not impart knowledge to him, he shows him how to acquire knowledge for himself. He does not call forth the knowledge that is within; he only shows him where it lies and how it can be habituated to rise to the surface. The distinction that reserves this principle for the teaching of adolescent and adult minds and denies its application to the child, is a conservative and unintelligent doctrine. Child or man, boy or girl, there is only one sound principle of good teaching. Difference of age only serves to diminish or increase the amount of help and guidance necessary; it does not change its nature." [From *A System of National Education*.]

It is quite clear that, according to Sri Aurobindo, the current idea that the teacher should impart *his* knowledge—what he knows about a subject—to the child is fundamentally wrong. He must show the child *how to learn* that subject by himself, help him in devising his own methods of learning and of organizing the knowledge which he gathers or discovers.

We can understand this better if we observe how a young child gains spontaneously the knowledge of his surroundings. He does it through a ceaseless activity which is natural to him whenever he finds interest in the objects at his disposal. He examines, touches, manipulates every object he can lay his hand upon, studies how he can use it for his own purposes (often very different from his parents' ends and views). He explores every nook and corner of the room, of the house, of the garden, sees how he can make use of them for his activities, his games (with little care for the purpose and the tranquillity of the grown-ups). All this is done and pursued in conformity with the needs of his stage of growth. It is the *learning by doing*, as named by Dewey. When we say that a child is amusing himself or playing (alone or with playmates), it is almost

always the purposeful activity (solitary or collective) of a growing being deeply engaged in the process of building up and perfecting his instruments of knowledge and action. We are indeed in presence of a genuine education, leading to discovery and invention—discovery of the world around and of its meaning (for the child's mentality), invention of the usage he can put it to (for the child's aims and interests)—and it is a self-education as it does not require lectures or books. An adult's intervention is in most cases not sought for, nor is it effective, as the adult's understanding is too remote from the child's mentality.

But the adult has an important part to fulfil. When a child is idle, restless or mischievous, it is either that his natural activity has been hampered or distorted, or that he has exhausted the opportunities given him by his surroundings and his activity has no outlet. It is for the adult—parent or teacher—to keep the environment supplied with elements of interest. These objects should act by their presence, not by their purpose. Their aim is to satisfy an immediate and actual need of the child, not a future need as anticipated by the parent or teacher (pass an exam, get a good job, raise a family). The purpose of a child is always immediate: the satisfaction of an actual need, which is one of the forms taken by the deep fundamental urge in him to grow physically, emotionally and mentally. He does not paint with the aim of becoming an artist (such an aim belongs to the adult mentality, and it is often unwisely and untimely instilled into the child's receptive mind), but for the satisfaction of the creative impulse in him. He does not try to solve a problem of mathematics to become a mathematician or a good engineer, or even to know geometry and algebra, but for the satisfaction of the discovery, the lightning that suddenly flashes into his mind when he "gets it," for the inner joy of having overcome a difficulty and succeeded. He does not play the mouth organ to have a large audience and be recognized as a musician (if he has these ambitions, he got them by the praises bestowed upon him by elders), but for the joy of self-expression and the pleasure he gives to his nearest mates and friends.

Therefore the foremost need of a child is that his environment be well supplied with all kinds of objects suited to his stage of development. The child will move freely among these objects and spontaneously display an activity through which, by observation and experiments, he will grow to the knowledge of the environment. The child judges, foresees, compares and reasons for himself in all that concerns him. The knowledge thus gained has already all the characteristics of a scientific knowledge and, what is more, it is acquired spontaneously in a scientific way, by trial and experiment, although (the adult will say) with much fumbling.

Child psychologists have distinguished in the child's activities various stages in relation with his surroundings. There is the stage of manipulation, the stage of construction, the stage of observation (truly all are parts of a single process of discovery). The child comes often across objects, the understanding of which is beyond his powers. This is particularly the case of man-made instruments and machines (from the timepiece, the sewing machine and the phonograph, to the motor car and radio and television sets); observation alone gives access only to a small part of their secrets. The child will therefore look for help from an elder, parent or teacher. Later the age comes when the child begins to open and react to stimuli from objects of a different nature; they are no more material objects, they are objects only in the philosophical sense: we may call them intellectual objects. Such are mathematics, history, geography, foreign languages, sciences, philosophy, in their various branches and aspects. At this time the help of the teacher becomes indispensable and assumes a more complex form, which we shall study presently as it is the true support of mental education.

It is certain that this spontaneous activity leading to a knowledge of the surroundings and to their right use and mastery is the most natural and efficient form of education. What we have to find are the ways and means to extend this form of education to the gradual discovery and knowledge, not only of the whole outside world but also of the inner worlds, the world of emotions and feelings, the world of thought. Above all, our education should induce the child to look quietly and persistently for the inner guidance, so that the soul may reveal its presence, assume the leadership and prepare the proper use and true mastery of both the outer and inner worlds. This will be fully in accordance with the injunction of Sri Aurobindo and it is the aim we place before us.

We can already see that, at every stage of the child's development, the first task of the educator—parent or teacher—will be to keep the environment of the child adequately furnished with all that is capable of arousing the stimuli which the child needs at this stage for a natural and continuous growth.

Sri Aurobindo has further stated another fundamental principle of education:

"The second principle is that the mind has to be consulted in its own growth. The idea of hammering the child into the shape desired by the parent or teacher is a barbarous and ignorant superstition. It is he himself who must be induced to expand in accordance with his own nature. There can be no greater error than for the

parent to arrange beforehand that his son shall develop particular qualities, capacities, ideas, virtues, or be prepared for a prearranged career. To force the nature to abandon its own *dharm*a is to do permanent harm, mutilate its growth and deface its perfection. It is a selfish tyranny over a human soul and a wound to the nature which loses the benefit of the best that a man could have given and is forced to accept instead something imperfect and artificial, second-rate, perfunctory and common. Everyone has in him something divine, something his own, a chance of perfection and strength in however small a sphere which God offers him to take or refuse. The task is to find it, develop it and use it. The chief aim of education should be to help the growing soul to draw out that in itself which is best and make it perfect for a noble use." [From *A System of National Education*.]

Therefore the work proposed to a child must be suited to his mental age and outlook, and he must be allowed to do it according to his own capacity and speed. A child who is given a work corresponding to his needs as a growing being, accepts it readily and does it with attention and joy.

From this it follows that the child must be given individual attention and be allowed to proceed independently. It is the child and not the teacher that sets the pace.

[To be continued. Taken from *Mother India* December 1968. Adapted from Pavitra's *Education and the Aim of Human Life*.]



A view of the flower show prepared by the Matrimandir Gardens workers for the Mother's birthday. (Photo by the Matrimandir Gardens staff.)

The movement of love is not limited to human beings and it is perhaps less distorted in worlds other than the human world. Look at the flowers and trees. When the sun sets and all becomes silent, sit down for a moment and put yourself into communion with Nature. You will feel, rising from the earth, from below the roots of the trees and mounting upward and coursing through their fibres, up to the highest outstretching branches, the aspiration of an intense love and longing—a longing for something that brings light and gives happiness for the light that is gone and they wish to have back again. There is a yearning so pure and intense that if you can feel the movement in the trees, your own being too, will go up in an ardent prayer for the peace and light and love that are unmanifested here.

Some Messages

Callistephus chinensis (China aster, annual aster), semi-double to double compositae flowers)—**Transparency.**
Calonyction aculeatum (*Ipomoea bona-nox*, moonflower), large fragrant white salverform flower—**Entire self-giving.**
Dianthus chinensis (Chinese pink, rainbow pink), single rotate flower with smooth or cut and fringed petals, plain-colored or variegated—**Obedience.**
Impatiens (Balsam, touch-me-not, snapweed), single or double flowers with delicate recurved petals and long spurs—**Generosity.**
Ipomoea carnea, pale pinkish-white shaded mauve with center a deeper mauve—**Gratitude.**

Rosa (Rose)—**Love for the Divine.**

Rosa, white roses tinged pink—**Affection for the Divine.**

Rosa (Old China rose, fairy queen rose), tiny pink roses—**Detailed surrender.**

Rosa, red roses—**Human passions changed into Love for the Divine.**

Rosa, solitary pure white roses—**Integral love for the Divine.**

Sporobolus capillaris (dropseed), airy panicles of branching spikelets bearing minute flowers, green changing to maroon—**Humility.**

Verbena hybrida (perennial verbenae), small salverform flowers in full terminal heads—**Thoroughness.**

Wisteria sinensis (Chinese wisteria), spectacular lavender papilionaceous flowers in long, pendulous clusters, slightly fragrant—**Poet's ecstasy.**

Zephyranthes (zephyr lily, fairy lily, flowers of the western wind), funnel-shaped flowers with pointed petals, borne on a short scape—**Prayer.**

Zinnia, bright coral—**Joyous endurance.**

Zinnia, dark red—**Physical endurance.**

Hoya carnea (wax plant, wax flower), small pale pink waxy star-shaped flowers in full umbels—**Power of collective aspiration.**
 A harmonious collective aspiration can change the course of circumstances.

[From *Flowers and Their Messages*, Auroville: Auropress Trust, 1973.]

EXPRESSIONS OF AUROVILLE

THE ASPIRATION TALKS (3)

Disciple: Sweet Mother, why is it so difficult to carry on a physical activity, sports or any other kind, in Auroville in general and particularly in Aspiration?

Mother: Difficult? Why is it difficult?

Disciple: It is difficult, Sweet Mother, to be steady, to go on with an activity, sports or anything else, which we have started. So I am asking you why?

Mother: Don't you have any students?

Disciple: We have started Judo classes. There were 8 of us two months ago, but now we are 2 or 3. And for lots of activities it is like that.

Mother: What reason do they give? Is it laziness, indolence or because they feel superior?

Disciple: I don't know, Sweet Mother.

Mother: If it is laziness, you must begin with a little and go on increasing as the body becomes used to it. If it is because of a sense of superiority, that is a *serious disease*! [Laughing.] It must be cured!

We have been given a body not to reject it but to make it into something higher. And that is precisely one of the goals of Auroville. The human body must be improved, perfected and it must become a superhuman body capable of expressing a being higher than man, and this certainly cannot happen if we neglect it: this can be by an enlightened physical education and by using physical activities—the activities of the body—not for little personal needs and satisfactions, but to make the body more capable of expressing a higher beauty and consciousness. And for that, physical education has an important place, which should be given it.

And this physical education must be done with an enlightened

sense, not to do eccentric or marvellous things, but to give the body the possibility of being strong and supple enough to express a higher consciousness. [2 June 1970]

Disciple: Divine Mother, there is great confusion concerning Auroville's organisation, inner as well as outer. How can we work together towards the realisation of a higher consciousness? In order to realise a greater sense of unity, would it be possible for all the inhabitants to work together one day a week on a communal garden, perhaps the garden of Truth? Or on a communal farm for the production of food for Auroville?

Mother: Yes, the idea is good, but this is how I see it. We want to build the Matrimandir, everyone who wants to work there will be able to do so. And that would really be working on the central idea.

And it should be soon. It should have been already. We have been thinking of beginning the Matrimandir for a long time. It is the centre of the town, isn't it? It is like the Force, the central Force of Auroville, the Force of cohesion in Auroville.

There will be gardens, everything, all possibilities: engineers, architects, all kinds of manual work; there will be work for all. In fact everyone should go and work there except of course those who have work somewhere else. A person would have to say, "No, I don't want to," and have his reasons.

We want it to be truly symbolic. And when we start to build the Matrimandir, we will set everybody to work there. Not every day and all the time, but it will be organised. [7 July 1970]

* * *

Mother: There are people who live in Auroville and who insist on keeping to all the old habits—the old ones and the new ones,

too—which damage and lower the consciousness, things like smoking, drinking and, of course, drugs.... If they ask my advice, I tell them: All that is as if you were cutting pieces out of your being. I advise you not to drink because it diminishes the consciousness and spoils your health.

I can affirm from experience that all that drugs bring by way of experiences, all that contact with the invisible world can be had in a much better, much more conscious and controlled way without drugs. Only one must control oneself.

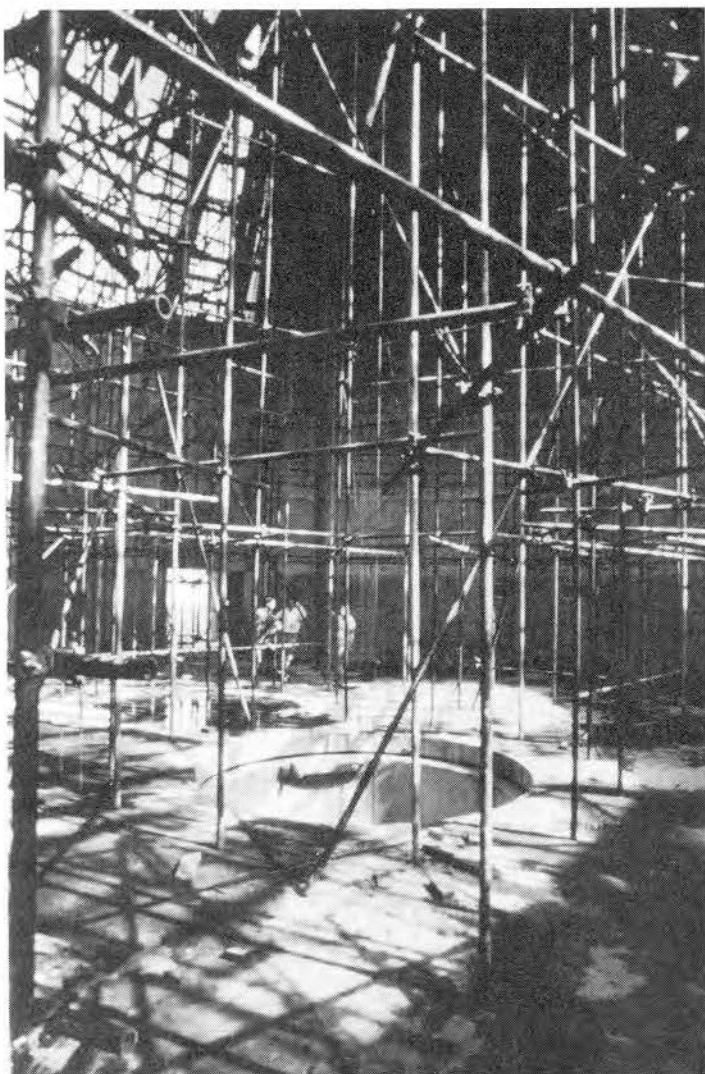
Some people believe that smoking, drinking, etc., will form part of the life of tomorrow. They will realise that they are imprisoning themselves in their own desires. But anyway, I am not a moralist, not at all, at all, at all. That is their business. If they want to go through this experience let them do it. Only, the Ashram is not the place for that. Thank God, at the Ashram we have learnt that life is something different. True life is not the satisfaction of desires.

We want to grow in consciousness, we don't want to go down into the pit of desires. To those who refuse to understand, I say, "The aim of Auroville is to discover a new life, deeper, more complete, more perfect, and to show the world that tomorrow will be better than today." [28 July 1970]

[From *The Mother on Auroville*, Auropublications, 1977.]

NEWS OF AUROVILLE

Matrimandir



The inner chamber of the Matrimandir. (Photo by Dominique Darr.)

Work continues steadily on the erection of the second spiral ramp leading from the second level up to the main chamber. Also extensive preparations (support scaffolding, loading areas) are being made for the upcoming testing of the first ramp (by loading it with sandbags and monitoring the ramp's sag). The first ramp has been entirely welded in place.

A letter from an Aurovillian gives this picture:

"I wish all of you there could experience the Matrimandir at its present stage of harmony and beauty with the two ramps spiraling upward. The last section of ramp was pushed into place on 2.2.79 (also Fraternity's 7th birthday), and the section in the north pillar—Mahakali—was concreted into place on the Mother's Birthday (the day the wonderful flower exhibition opened in the Nursery). That evening with the lights still on from the concreting, the structure was very dramatic, and how grateful we feel to be participating so closely in its developments. There will be concretings in the other pillars/ribs for the ramp, and then we start the scaffolding for the frame of the outer covering."

The Matrimandir Gardens opened a flower show on 21 February which lasted through 24 February. The show was opened by Dyanman of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram at the Matrimandir Gardens Nursery in Auroville, and it was well attended by both Aurovillians and Ashramites. A wide variety of plants and flowers were shown, the result of years of work by Narad and other Matrimandir Gardens workers.

Program for Integrated Rural and Educational Development

Interim Progress Report September 1978

A. Expenditures 1 January to 31 August 1978:

by Auroville internal sources	Rs 212,700
by External donors	253,400
by Mother's Institute of Research (MIRA)	118,100
Total	Rs 584,100

This amount represents PIRED expenditure directly on research and development. Indirect expenditure on food, housing, and maintenance of Aurovillians involved in the program represent a further input from Auroville internal sources of Rs 511,300.

The accounts of expenditure of funds received through MIRA up to 31 March 1978 were audited by a certified chartered accountant and a copy of the certified statement is available with MIRA.

B. Works Completed in 1978

PIRED is a continuous ongoing development of a selected rural area with present emphasis on environmental reclamation and stabilisation. The major work undertaken, that of creating a healthy ecosystem capable of adequately supporting the existing local population without further deterioration of the land resources, is one not easily appraised in short terms.

However, a brief note of the environmental activities undertaken through the program in 1978 so far indicates the scope and validity of the progress achieved:

- 1,200 acres under active organic reclamation and erosion control. Two earthfill dams with masonry spillways constructed. Four causeway/minor dams/gully plugs constructed. Three major water-storage ponds excavated and substantially improved.
- 43,000 forest trees planted; 20,000 seedlings and pits prepared for 1978 monsoon planting (October-November); 2,000 fruit-bearing trees planted; 250,000 trees of previous year's plantations maintained and healthy.
- 15 additional borewells established; 2 wind-power water pumps installed; 1 wind generator installed.

4. 8 kilometers of rural roads maintained; 3 kilometers of additional roads constructed; electrical power network expanded by 3 kilometers of new lines and 22 new service connections directly related to PIREd work.
5. Experimental structures built using indigenous materials. 92 project workers are permanently based and active in the more critically depleted locations in this area.

C. Economic Development

It is important to understand that a healthy ecosystem embraces not only plant and animal life of the area but also the human population. To develop in isolation any single aspect of either the environmental or the human social structures in a selected area can never result in a balanced, stable solution of any permanence.

The most urgent to develop, because the most fragile and slowest to heal, must be the land and plant resources, without which man cannot survive. However, PIREd is undertaken by man for man and the development of quality of life becomes an increasing emphasis of the program as the environmental work successfully begins to halt and reverse the desertification of the area.

The development of the local economic base continued during 1978 with the emphasis on labor-intensive, low-capital handicrafts activities such as hand embroidery of garments, tailoring, weaving, incense production, woodcrafts, with the guiding concept of high-quality aesthetic products and the training of the local population in basic cottage-industry skills.

In addition, the construction of innovative buildings, dams, etc., and the fabrication and maintenance of equipment necessary to the program involves the training and attracts to this area craftsmen and workers of high skills.

The attraction to or retention in a rural area of people having both the ability to appreciate the concepts necessary and also the energy and aspiration to work for a real improvement in the general quality of life is a vital aspect of an integral rural development.

D. Conclusion

An evaluation by quantification of progress in a program of such scope as PIREd is beyond the feasibility of a brief report such as this one. However, if one wishes to judge on the basis of demonstrable statistics such as unit cost of trees planted and surviving, a self-evident example of real and meaningful investment for future generations, PIREd stands out as worthy of continued support and encouragement in a world of narrow, wasteful and myopic policies.

[PIREd is a project of Auromitra—Friends of Auroville Research Foundation, a tax-exempt public trust in India. Donations may be sent to Auromitra at 28 Gurudwara Rakab Road, New Delhi 110001, India, or Auromitra Centre, Aspiration, Kottakuppam, 605104, India.]

Envelope Report

Since last November Auroville has been experimenting with a new financial organization whereby a set of 9 envelopes is available to each community, corresponding to precise categories of needs, with the understanding that monies received into one envelope cannot be transferred into another (except, of course, "Unspecified" donations): what is there is shared. In this way there is hope that no more debts will be incurred and the 9th envelope, "Debts," is there to begin to pay back little by little the most pressing debts from the old functioning of Pour Tous. (Briefly, the 9 envelopes are Food; Community maintenance; Services; Children; Matrimandir; Greenwork; Personal expenses; Unspecified donations; Debts.)

During the "envelope meetings" each Friday at Abri, the contents of the envelopes are brought by one or two persons of each community participating in this attempt, which for the moment involves nearly 400 Aurovilians (some have decided to remain self-

supporting); the money is then pooled, the total amount in each category is calculated, and the sharing is done among the communities according to the basic needs, which are reexamined each week, often requiring a reduction. This process has in particular introduced a true working collaboration among many communities. The role of "unspecified donations" is to cope with the priorities of the moment: since for the time being they are living with the bare minimum, it goes mainly to wages, electricity bills that have to be paid monthly before a fixed date.

The figures for receipts shown below speak for themselves. A few months ago the monthly budget of Pour Tous was around Rs 100,000! It is reduced to half now, but with the significant difference that debts have stopped accumulating and there is greater consciousness of needs, costs, production. Contributions from centers and friends outside have maintained approximately the same proportion of the total income (about one third) as in the previous system, but within Auroville there has been a much greater sharing of individual money than before; the area of diminished contributions has been the productive units.

The budget allows survival but not significant development. Nor is there the possibility to undertake certain "big" works of maintenance (roofs, electricity installations, etc.). But it has provided a good opportunity to learn how to do the maximum with the minimum: when, for example, there is Rs 38 left for the market of food in Pondicherry (all wages, milk and bread having been paid), it means that Auroville is producing some food. This production is increasing in Auroville itself, thanks to the development of farms, orchards and vegetable gardens, and this relieves a bit the burden on the food envelope (which at the same time, however, directs one third of its contents for agriculture wages).

Electricity is also a heavy burden with its almost Rs 10,000 bill to be paid each month, often at the last minute. And this is where the centers can really help Auroville: for example, a center in the U.S. is trying to send each month the money for the wheat, which assures we will at least have bread: it represents Rs 6,000, which Auroville then doesn't have to worry about. Any regular contribution, large or small, specified or not, on which Auroville can really count is the best help. [All contributions from abroad should be sent to the order of "Auroville Pour Tous Fund" by registered post along with a covering note indicating for which envelope(s) the contribution is given. Tax-deductible contributions for any of the envelopes may be sent to Matagiri Sri Aurobindo Center, Inc., Mt. Tremper, NY 12457.]

Community life thus fluctuates according to the rhythm of the contributions. But there is a strong feeling of confidence and steadiness prevailing over the limits of the budget.

Budget for Nov.-Dec. 1978 (figures in rupees; divide by 8 for dollars)

Item	11/3	11/10	11/17	11/24	12/1	12/8	12/15	12/22
Food	6430	5834	3866	2979	8930	3399	2977	4643
Community main.	608	794	901	108	795	148	465	295
Services	230	162	300	50	1161	355	310	235
Children	473	322	1780	215	605	115	90	445
Matrimandir	1245	515	339	80	3820	5	255	1616
Greenwork	355	257	1323	1065	1150	950	1075	853
Personal Money	222	82	395	252	405	0	150	0
Unspecified	2690	1234	5084	2969	7997	1257	6035	2902
Debts	0	0	0	0	1200	50	0	0
Totals	12253	9200	13988	7718	26063	6279	11357	10989

La Boutique d'Auroville

On 12 November 1978 La Boutique d'Auroville opened in Pondicherry. It supercedes Lotus and is displaying more exclusively Auroville-originated handicrafts in its new and commercially better location at 12 Nehru St. A sudden need to change location seems to have brought not only a new shop but a new name and more participation by the productive units. Meantime, another Boutique d'Auroville has opened in Fraternity. Profits of both go directly to Pour Tous.

Bunding

Bunds are 1- to 2-foot mounds of earth piled in long lines usually between fields, which hold rainwater so it doesn't run down the slope to the sea, carrying the topsoil with it. Not only is the topsoil saved in this way, but the water has time to percolate down through the earth to the watertable.

Quite a bit of bunding has been done over the years on Auroville land, especially in the Green Belt, with a noticeable increase in the level of the watertable in the wells. This year has been a sort of "year of the bund" as the idea caught on in other areas and bunds are now seen checkering the landscape. The Centre area has recently seen the sudden development of a comprehensive set of bunds woven in a spider's web pattern, around the high point of Auroville, which is a few hundred meters from the Matrimandir.

Problems of bunding include the difficulty of compensating for the acres and acres of unbundled village land, destruction of bunds by cattle, and the ever-present shortage of cash to pay the labor to do it. Bunding is carried on in conjunction with tree-planting and husbanding, as part of an overall program in Auroville to restore health to the land.

"Aurofree"

What is called in Auroville the "Free Store" is based on the very simple idea that there should be a place in Auroville where anything which is sitting somewhere in a corner and not being used could be put at the disposal of anyone who happened to need it. From that basic principle the Free Store started to exist about 7 years ago, first for clothing only, and has slowly grown into a much more comprehensive free market where one can give and find almost anything.

Up to now the Free Store has been limited to internal resources—what individuals and productive units felt to give; and it was happening in a rather irregular, unformal, and unpredictable way. It was all right as long as most Aurovilians still had some personal money; the Free Store was not then an all-Auroville necessity.

But more and more Aurovilians are choosing now to share with others all the money they have, either by giving it to the "envelopes" or in other ways. And so more and more people now depend entirely on the collective resources to meet their basic needs. In this situation the Free Store, as it functions now, is unable to provide all that people need, even at the most elementary level for day-to-day life: soap, shampoo, towels, other toilet products, blankets, light bulbs, lampshades, clothing, shoes, cycles or cycle parts, umbrellas, raincoats, watches, etc.

It seems urgent that the Free Store starts to function in a much more organized way, as a collectively recognized channel for internal sharing of resources. Some productive units have already started working on a kind of permanent basis with the Free Store, by contributing to it financially and/or in kind. And thanks to them, some of the needs are at least partly covered for the time being. If this could be extended little by little to all the other units, the situation would be greatly improved.

Below is a list of the detailed needs and the corresponding amounts as a target for the Free Store envelope (a sub-envelope of the Maintenance envelope):

Items	Weekly Need
Toilet & housekeeping (soaps, toothpaste, cotton, shampoo, camphor, buckets, brooms, laundry soap, doormats, etc.)	Rs 400
Monsoon & winter articles (raincoats, umbrellas, rubber boots, warm clothes, sweaters, blankets, etc.)	50 & in kind
Fabric & tailoring (new clothes, cushions, etc.)	50 & in kind
Underwear	50 & in kind

Special "Tamils of Auroville" (saris, dhotis, lungis, sari blouses, petticoats, etc.)

50

Furniture

300

Cycles

400/cycle

But for becoming able to provide really everything which is needed—and this can be considered urgent—it is obvious that Auroville is not yet ready to be totally self-supporting, and that help is needed. To help bring and keep the necessary clarity in the functioning of the Free Store, everything and all money received will be entered into proper account and stock books, and what has happened to it will also be carefully recorded.

Centers and friends abroad have been helping. Everything can be helpful; only rags need not be sent. The address is

Aurofree, Auroville Free Store

Aspiration, Auroville

Kottakuppam 605104

India

[Items for the Free Store can be sent directly to the address given above and marked "Gift Parcel; No Commercial Value," or sent to Matagiri, Mt. Tremper, NY 12457, for forwarding.]

Maison d'Auroville, located in the old Nourishment building at 33 rue Lolly Tellendall in Pondicherry, has opened to provide refuge and sustenance to Aurovilians in Pondicherry for the day. Beverages and light snacks are available all day, and a reasonably priced lunch is offered at midday.

Forecomers

As the name suggests and as most people conscious of Auroville's history are aware, Forecomers was Auroville's first, pioneering settlement. It's still a "pioneering" settlement in many ways, and likely to remain so for a long time to come, as its very existence and *raison d'être* has always been intimately connected to the land on which it is sited. The total area encompasses some 127 acres, but of this only 3 acres has any topsoil! The remainder was in an advanced state of desertification when the community began, with extensive canyons more than 30 feet deep; nearly 100 acres of sun-baked clay plains with almost no groundcover or trees; and 25 acres of stony laterite, devoid of virtually all life-supporting materials.

Now the situation is dramatically different, though a massive amount of work remains to be done for many years to come. In the last 3 years alone some 80,000 trees, shrubs, and fencing-cum-wind-break plants have been planted, mainly of a leguminous nature, although only an estimated 50,000 have survived. Huge areas have been planted with trees as close as 3 to 10 meters apart; a stone causeway has been built and more than 6 miles of bunds have been dug to prevent further erosion of the topsoil, and to hold water long enough for it to penetrate the clay; canyon walls have been planted to prevent further crumbling; and a fruit orchard has been established, consisting of some 100 papaya, 50 chiku, 200 mango, 11 custard apple, 12 guava, and 4 lemon trees. Extensive cashew nut groves already exist and provided some 30 sacks of nuts (value today Rs 18,000) two years ago, although recent leasing of the cashew plantation outside Auroville has reduced that to only 6 sacks in 1978. Also of a productive nature, Forecomers represents an important source of firewood for places such as the Bakery, which took over 50 tons this year (value approximately Rs 8,000). It also contributes large quantities of palmyra leaves to those needing them, and will supply another form of palm leaf to a small handicraft unit being set up by Meenakshi with Tamil Fund assistance.

The population of Forecomers has varied considerably, from the original two (Bob and Deborah) to 25 in 1975 and now back to two again in the original settlement: Obi (Canadian) and Ingo (German), plus 5 others in Success, the former tree nursery for Forecomers. Five Tamil workers are also employed.

Although there has been a high turnover of people, Forecomers seems to have been mainly a positive experience for those who stayed. Many have gone on to build places of their own, e.g., Charlie now at Aurogreen, or else have continued to supply energy to Forecomers by sending financial help. In fact, everything built in recent years and much of the major bunding and afforestation work has been achieved through donations from the people who lived there plus a small contribution from the Tamil Fund in 1977.

For those seeking peace and beauty as well as rewarding work, Forecomers has much to offer. It has the only two consistently running streams of clear water, with pools deep enough to swim in. Bird life also abounds and plays an important part by means of the seeds they bring into the area, which should germinate with ever improving chances of survival. The only difficulties, apart from a relatively simple life-style, come through misunderstandings with villagers who have yet to learn that not all trees represent firewood, particularly in freshly planted areas.

Those who remember Forecomers as it used to be and see it now cannot fail to be impressed by the enormous changes in the landscape—best expressed perhaps by the beautiful avenue of trees now lining the last half-kilometer of track leading down from Abri. The trees are those called "Transformation."



Lunchtime at the cafeteria in Auroville. (Photo by Dominique Darr.)

Harmony

Harmony (now directed by Bobby and Gerhard) was begun in 1974 by Gerhard as a small silkscreen printing enterprise located in Kottakarai. The first products were a range of cards featuring kolams (ancient Dravidian symbols traditionally drawn by the women of South India on the doorsteps of their homes or a temple each morning). These later led to production of a book of kolams, sponsored by the Tamil Fund, and mainly marketed in Germany. The cards are still produced to order, though since May 1977 they have been gradually surpassed in importance by a range of incense, incense gift packages, boxes and stick holders, which are marketed through outlets in Pondicherry and Madras and overseas in the U.S. and Germany. Attractive stationery items are also being produced.

Altogether Harmony employs some 30 people, of whom 10 are Kottakarai villagers who roll the stocks and produce the wooden gift-pack boxes, while the remaining 20 work in Pondicherry in the main office premises where the incense is packaged and other goods are finished for sale.

Harmony, like other Auroville handicraft ventures, is therefore successfully managing to provide a measure of local help, through employment, to villagers and others. It also channels money regularly into Auroville. However, of greatest interest and potential at the present time is their recently commenced project to assist chil-

dren from the nearby Harijan (untouchable) colony. Since October last year more than 30 children have been enjoying the benefit of a small school built and run by Ivar (working with Harmony), where they have been taught by a fellow Harijan and given a good protein-based lunch each day. Already there have been dramatic improvements in the health of the children, who no longer seem to suffer from the sores and other ailments they had at the outset of the project. It is hoped that Tamil Fund assistance may be forthcoming to expand and carry on this work. If it is, then Harmony plans to rechannel its resources into a second such project based in another nearby village, and so on, gradually helping to improve the lot of these people.

Note: We inadvertently gave an incorrect address in our last issue for the Auroville Information Service. The correct address is

Auroville Information Service
Aspiration, Auroville
Kottakuppam 605104, India

This is also the address for Auroville Visa Service. Those interested in information on Auroville or on visiting Auroville should write to the Information Service.

INTERFACE VIDEO PROJECT: THE FIRST YEAR

Cheryl Kasdorf

[We thought our readers would be interested in the following excerpts from a report written by a resident of Arcosanti in Arizona concerning the videotape linking project undertaken by the Karass Project of the Interface Foundation of Somerville, Mass. We are grateful to David Voremberg for supplying us with the report.]

Almost a year has gone by since David Voremberg, representing Karass, brought us the one-half-inch black and white port-a-pack video equipment. Arcosanti's use of it has included producing 7 video letters to Findhorn and Auroville, as well as dance, construction and festival tape footage. Various residents have had their hands, eyes and ears in making the letters under the guidance of the caretakers of the equipment, Cheryl Kasdorf and David Goodwin.

Recently David and Cheryl encountered the complexities of the wider world of video when they used sophisticated editing equipment at Cre-8 (our Phoenix connection for technical advice and repairs) to produce a statement about the Karass video networking project consisting of self-defining statements by the communities at Findhorn, Auroville and Arcosanti. Sequences were taken from the various video letters and juxtaposed to create a compact statement about the progress of the project. The immediate purpose was to show the tape at the Video Fair celebrated at Cre-8 on 2 December 1978, a gathering of video craftpersons to exchange and share technical information. The contribution from Arcosanti demonstrated an alternative use of the medium that is opening a global awareness. Peter Calloway, the initiator of Karass, was very excited to have a copy of the tape to show to his sponsor, Interface....

In February 1978 Arcosanti received its equipment and has produced 8 letter tapes. Findhorn received its video system in April and has sent out 4 tapes. Auroville received its equipment in September and has made 2 tapes.

The tapes have provided a good forum for each community to examine its identity and to respond creatively to that image by putting it into a presentation. Video, being the medium that it is, allows for communication through electronic visual and audio images to bring across a sense of each community. This sense could not come just from written words because the viewer's eye picks up other information: expressions on faces, movements of bodies, the natural and designed environments, and people in daily activity. Since everyone has different sensitivities, each viewer can pick up subtly different information.

Arcosanti has identified its stress on the physical through its approach to the presentation as well as through the sounds and images of the site. Building is the major priority at Arcosanti, with the Foundry, Ceramics Studio, daily tours, and Cafe helping to finance construction. The approach in the tapes is to portray ideas and images of Arcosanti from many different viewpoints by including many individuals in the creative process. There has been little self-evaluation or effort to state questions requiring responses on the tapes, the entire experience to be taken into consideration to formulate a response. Findhorn has approached their productions as a group process, and at the end of every tape has evaluated their efforts and asked questions, commenting that the most fulfilling experience they have had was to partake in group process at Findhorn....

Since Auroville received their equipment much later, we haven't had time to develop a dialogue. However, it appeared they were influenced by the tapes from Arcosanti and Findhorn because their style and content paralleled much of what had been done. Auroville's tapes included original music, the agricultural program (ox-drawn plows!), recreation (Europeans playing baseball, volleyball, swimming), the surrounding terrain (extensive fields, trees, even the ocean), and the workshops (welding, forging, grinding). There were just islands of spoken explanation, but the music, faces, physiology and interaction with Indian villagers show what a totally non-European, non-American context the project is in. Just because of the physical unfamiliarity, those tapes were fascinating.

If Arcosanti identifies itself by its physicality and goal of creating an urban container, then it may be one side of a triangle of physical-social-spiritual communities. In that light, it would do well to consider how to integrate these concepts when the container we are building is finished enough to fill. Findhorn offers the emotional, social workings through its experiments in group process, family living and emphasis on human relationships. Auroville represents a transcultural undertaking which is oriented to spiritual matters.

By networking these three communities, we support each other in that we recognize we are working for the same goals, though in different ways. The interaction with and supplementation of each community provides a richer process and product as we bring to life the "New Age."

Karass is also sponsoring the **Hexiad Project**: two residents of each of the communities linked through the video letters travel to each of the other communities and explore them. Dee and Frederick represented Auroville, spending time at both Findhorn and Arcosanti this spring.

NEWS OF SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM

On 22 January 1979 there was a general strike in Pondicherry, India, protesting the proposed merger of Pondicherry with the neighboring state of Tamil Nadu. A disciple gave the following account:

"The Ashram kept its departments closed and the inmates viewed the event [the protest] with sympathy because they believed that centuries of history had given Pondicherry a distinct personality and it would be crude and unimaginative to ignore the healthy peculiarities of this territory for administrative pragmatism. In this context, it is important to remember what the Mother had said: 'Externally, the provinces of India are very different in character, tendencies, culture, as well as in language, and any attempt to unify them artificially could only have disastrous results.'

"While this was their attitude, the Ashramites were surprised to see groups of people, mostly consisting of boys, running in a disorganised manner and beginning to stone Ashram buildings.... They were followed by other groups of people who could no more be

described as boys and who too repeated what the younger lot had done....

"...The Ashram sustained considerable loss through damage to its buildings."

Among properties destroyed or heavily damaged were the Nandanam gardens and orchard, the Autocare workshop (including autos under repair), the Wood Working Unit with its stock of furniture, a school established by the Hand-Made Paper factory for children of its employees, and a number of residences.

Included in the statement was the following declaration made by the Mother on the occasion of a similar attack on the Ashram which took place on 16 February 1965 during the anti-Hindi riots:

"Some people looking at things superficially might ask how is it that the Ashram exists in this town for so many years and is not liked by the population?

"The first and immediate answer is that all those in this population who are of a higher standard in culture, intelligence, goodwill and education not only have welcomed the Ashram but have expressed their sympathy, admiration and good feeling. Sri Aurobindo Ashram has in Pondicherry many sincere and faithful followers and friends.

"This said, our position is clear.

"We do not fight against any creed, any religion.

"We do not fight against any form of government.

"We do not fight against any social class.

"We do not fight against any nation or civilisation.

"We are fighting division, unconsciousness, ignorance, inertia and falsehood.

"We are endeavouring to establish upon earth union, knowledge, consciousness, Truth; and we fight whatever opposes the advent of this new creation of Light, Peace, Truth and Love."

GENERAL NEWS

• **M.P. Pandit** of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram will be in the United States again this year speaking and giving seminars. His tentative itinerary is as follows:

Last week of June, first week of July: Europe

July 10-13: England

July 14-30: New York area, including trips to Pennsylvania.

August 1-5: Boulder, Colo.

August 6-30: San Francisco area.

September: Seattle, Wash.; Missoula, Mont.; Casper, Wyoming; Detroit, Mich.

October, first week: Chicago, Ill.; second week: Purdue and Columbia Universities; third week: Atlanta, Ga.; third and fourth weeks: Arizona.

November, first week: Los Angeles area.

He will return to England by the middle of November and be in New Delhi, India, before 20 November for the Triennial Conference of World Union, which will be held there.

This was all the information available at press time; for addresses where Mr. Pandit can be reached in each of the areas, write to Matagiri. (In Boulder he can be reached at Sri Aurobindo's Action Center, P.O. Box 1977, Boulder, CO 80306.)

• **Ideal Child**, a booklet by the Mother, portions of which we published in the last issue of *Collaboration*, is being distributed throughout the world by Sri Aurobindo Books Distribution Agency during this United Nations International Year of the Child (IYC). The booklet was brought to the attention of the IYC Secretariat in New York by Keshavji of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. The IYC Secretariat is announcing the availability of the booklet in its *IYC Report*, which has a worldwide circulation of some 75,000. The *Ideal Child* is available in several languages and may be also obtained from Matagiri (in English).

• Auroville is cited in Theodore Roszak's new book *Person/Planet* (Anchor/Doubleday Books). Roszak explores two topics which have become of primary importance in the last few years: human potentiality and growth, and approaches to ecology. In this context a number of different communal groups are studied or cited.

• Seyril Rubin participated in a panel discussion on spiritual communities at the Theosophical Society on May 12 in New York City. Seyril presented the concept of Auroville.

NEWS OF CENTERS

• East-West Cultural Center (2865 W. 9 St., Los Angeles, CA 90006; telephone 213-480-8325) offered a series of programs in February in observance of the Mother's birthday. Participating in the programs were Dr. Frank Mathur, professor of computer science; Robert Dane, Frederic Ross, Mitra, Tom, Joey, Prem and Jyoti, Trudy, Suzanne, Suhrid, Madeleine, as well as Jyotipriya, founder of the center.

Other programs offered at the center included Dr. Donald H. Yott, who spoke on Karmic Astrology, and Christopher Wayne Miller, who spoke on the "Mystery of Christ Jesus and Synthesis with Eastern Wisdom."

Call the center for a schedule of its regular meetings, classes and other activities.

• Dr. Joan Price reports that the Valley Center for Studies in Sri Aurobindo and the Mother (a new name) (8409 Via Del Parque, Scottsdale, AZ 85258; telephone 602-991-2072) holds meetings every Thursday at 7:30 p.m. Currently the group is discussing *The Synthesis of Yoga* chapter by chapter. This study group has been meeting for 14 years.

• Auroville, U.S.A. Let's manifest the principles of unity, mutuality and harmony in village life. The first step is to gather together the people who are ready. If we can take the first step, the Mother will guide us the rest of the way. Please contact Janis Coker, 2035 Philippe Parkway, No. 152, Safety Harbor, FL 33572; telephone (813) 726-2205.

• Auroville International Quebec (4461 rue St. André, Montreal, Que. H2J 2Z5, Canada; telephone 514-524-7445). Thursday evening programs developed for the needs and suggestions of members. Call for current programs.

The center office is open Saturdays between 1:00 and 5:00 p.m. for those interested in the work of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, and in Auroville. Also available from the center are copies of the first 2 volumes of the *Agenda de Mere* and cassette recordings of many of the talks published in the *Agenda*. Write the center for further details.

• Casa Sri Aurobindo has a new address: Casa Sri Aurobindo, Secretaria Geral, Rua Joao Mesquita 2560, Boa Vista, 15.100 Sao Jose do Rio Preto, Sao Paulo, Brazil. In February the center offered a series of seminars and courses on movement, concentration, karma, Sufism, reincarnation and the Bhagavad Gita. Rolf Gelewski of the center, a well-known dancer, gave two concerts.

• Auroville International U.K. (92 Bell St., London NW1, England) has continued with the reconstruction of the top floor of its premises. The work has been done by David Daniels, Rod Hemsell and others. Regular meetings are held at 6:30 p.m. on Tuesdays and 5:30 p.m. on Saturdays.

The center was also participating in the Festival for Mind, Body and Spirit scheduled to be held at Olympia 21-29 April, and a Yoga Forum sponsored by the Albion Yoga Movement in association with *Yoga Today*, at the Friends House in London, 31 March.

• Johannes Vloothuis (Apartado Postal 405, Manzanillo, Colima, Mexico) may be contacted by people in Mexico interested in the vision and work of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

• We have received the following announcement from Micheline Aiguier in France:

"A long time ago, with my children, we were pushed by an irresistible force toward the Roc, in Dordogne, a very beautiful place with its little chateau. During numerous visits we lived multiple intense experiences, and we discovered meditation. It was perhaps the preparation for the Yoga of Mother and Sri Aurobindo into which I entered, led by my two Aurovilian sons, ten years ago; and the Roc has played an important role in my evolution through this yoga.

"It's necessary to hasten to do one's work here," says the Mother, 'for it's here that one can do it truly. Expect nothing from death; life is our safety, it is in it that you have to be transformed, it's on this earth that you progress, it's on this earth that you realise. It's in the body that the victory is won.'

"And Satprem says to us: 'Here and there we are a few like small points of ardent thirst, and what is to be done to help this new species to be born among us?... A species develops together.... It's necessary to do something concrete, practical to link consciousness... everyone is not called to run off to India.'

"All these words have germinated in my heart since then, little by little the Roc seemed to me very much designed to become a 'House of Mother' where she could receive her present children and those to come; where they could meet, work, spend their vacations, collaborate in all possible ways for the diffusion of the 'work' of Mother and Sri Aurobindo; and to which I am looking forward to consecrate myself henceforth with the help of those who are ready to participate according to the diverse possibilities of each."

An invitation was extended to aspirants to inaugurate the Roc 28 April to 1 May.

Anyone interested in further details should write Micheline Aiguier, Chateau du Roc, Creysse, 24100 Bergerac, France; or Auroville International France, 67 rue de Rome, 75008 Paris, France.

Bonne aventure de conscience à nos soeurs et frères en France, de Matagiri!

• Integral Yoga Centre (% J.I. Patel, 139 St. John's Rd., Colchester, England; telephone 865222) has been offering a series of seminars in January, March and May, including Hatha Yoga as therapy, the Future of Man, Integral Education, and Auroville. Mr. Patel, who conducted the seminars, also spoke on *Savitri* in April at the British Wheel of Yoga annual conference in Birmingham.

For a schedule of other activities of the center or details for the August 15 observance of Sri Aurobindo's birthday, call Mr. Patel at the above number or Mrs. Caroline Davies at 43148 (in Colchester).

• Auroville International Sweden has a new address: Ravlunda 29, S-270 57 Kivik, Sweden; telephone 0414-74122 or 0414-73517. The center is preparing a cultural festival for 20-24 August 1979: Sangham-79, Scandinavian study days for art and consciousness. It will include exhibitions of painting and sculpture, lectures, poetry, music. Visitors are welcome, and information on accommodations may be obtained from Atelje Sol, N. Björsorp 7, 270 44 Brösarp, Sweden; telephone 0414-73717.

• Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Delhi Branch (Sri Aurobindo Marg, New Delhi 110016, India) is engaged in a construction program and needs the assistance of architects. Transportation and salaries cannot be paid, but living expenses for anyone with qualifications can be paid if they can spend about a year at the Ashram helping with their building program. If interested, write to Tara Jauhar.

The school is also in need of clothing donations, especially all sizes of children's clothing, sweaters, coats, men's and women's clothing. Clothing may be sent to Matagiri for forwarding, or sent directly addressed to the Ashram and marked "Used clothing, no value, Gift parcel."

NEWS OF MATAGIRI

15 August 1979

Matagiri will observe Sri Aurobindo's birthday on 15 August (Wednesday) with a special meditation beginning at 10:00 a.m. Anyone who wishes to attend may do so but should notify Matagiri two weeks in advance. There will be an afternoon program as well, and lunch will be served.

Integral Education, Psychology and Philosophy courses are being offered by Matagiri this summer. The courses will be taught by Dr. Chitta R. Goswami, Charles Maloney, and Gopal Bhattacharyya. The fee is \$75.00 (which includes one meal per day) and final registration date is 7 June 1979. For further details please contact Gopal Bhattacharyya, Matagiri, Mt. Tremper, NY 12457; telephone 914-679-8322 (between 1 & 7 p.m.).

Sanskrit classes, both beginner and advanced, are offered by Matagiri. Anyone interested should write or call the instructor, Gopal Bhattacharyya, at Matagiri.

TOWARDS By an Aurovilian

Towards the Sun
Towards the One
Towards the Light
No more darkness, no more night
No more struggle, no more fight
Towards the summit of the hill
Only Thy love our hearts shall fill.

Aspiration for Unity
Hope for Fraternity
Meditating about Oneness
Brought us here...
Now
It's time to do another step
Let's get up from our lotus seats
To work for our daily needs
Go further than the books and scriptures
And live the written words
Come to the body of this earth
Meditate with eyes unclosed
With a heart embracing
to see
to feel
the me in you
the you in me.

BOOK REVIEW

To Live Until We Say Good-bye by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, with photographs by Mal Warshaw. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1978. 160 pp.

Our birth and death, entrance to and exit from life, are shrouded in mystery and dipped in sorrows. The two physicians and great humanitarians of the current times who have made us conscious of the problems and offered alternatives are Dr. Frederick Leboyer of France and Dr. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross currently of America. While Leboyer has shown how cruel practices related to the birth of a child can be altered, Kubler-Ross has shown how alternatives to hospital care can make death acceptable and even desirable for peace and freedom of the being and its transition to further growth.

Kubler-Ross, a psychiatrist and world-renowned counselor particularly on thanatology, started her career in Poland during relief work in post-World War II Europe. Since then she has been attending the problems of death and dying and counseling doctors, nurses, clergymen, and members of the families of dying patients; giving seminars and holding workshops on life, death, and transition; and has now become an authority on the subject. She has published a number of books to narrate her experiences, of which *On Death and Dying* is the most popular.

Her latest book, *To Live Until We Say Good-bye*, is based on a few case studies which reveal how Kubler-Ross's counseling work and alternatives to hospital care changed the very attitude of the dying patients to death and how they overcame fear and anger and lived happily every moment of their life until death, and when death came, embraced it with peace and bliss. Beth, 42, a poet and philosopher; Jamie, a 5-year-old child, and her mother Linda; Louise, 57, a dedicated social worker; and Jack, a 71-year-old construction worker changed through the humane treatment, empathy, loving care for and affectionate attention given them.

Kubler-Ross's observation reveals that terminally ill patients are not kindly looked after in hospitals and other institutions. She therefore suggests that such patients should preferably be taken

home, if possible. Statistics, however, show that 75% of the population of America die in hospitals. As an alternative, she recommends a hospice, which takes care of dying patients. She herself has opened one growth and healing center, named Shanti Nilaya, (Final) Home of Peace, in California. She believes "Shanti Nilaya will be a place of peace for those who seek answers about the meaning and purpose of life and death, of suffering and pain not only of the physical body but of the whole person." She also hopes that in the next ten years there would be at least one such "Home of Peace" in every state in America and abroad, where people will learn how to face life in living and dying, how to love oneself and each other without fear and anxiety and with hope for the future.

To Kubler-Ross death is not a "negative, destructive force" but a positive force of life leading to new growth or, we might add, death is a means of evolution of the psychic or spiritual being in us. As it is said in the Bhagavad Gita, "Just as a man, casting away his worn-out garments, puts on others, so too the embodied Spirit, casting away old and worn-out bodies, goes over to other new ones." According to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, "Death is an indispensable means to awaken the need of perfection and progress in the consciousness of matter." If we believe in the evolution of spiritual consciousness and reincarnation or the continuity of the journey of the soul, the problem of death becomes easy and an adventure.

Kubler-Ross has indeed been brilliant in her writing about death and dying, and her present book is still more attractive in the sense that it gives an intensely personal and moving insight into her work. The life stories presented in this volume have become more vivid perhaps because of the beautiful photographs taken of the subjects and added to it by Mal Warshaw, a distinguished photographer. We trust, with Kubler-Ross, that her book will encourage people to understand death and expose themselves to fears and maladies centering around death, and become brave enough to face life with love and hope and cheer for themselves and for others, both in living and in dying. —Gopal Battacharyya