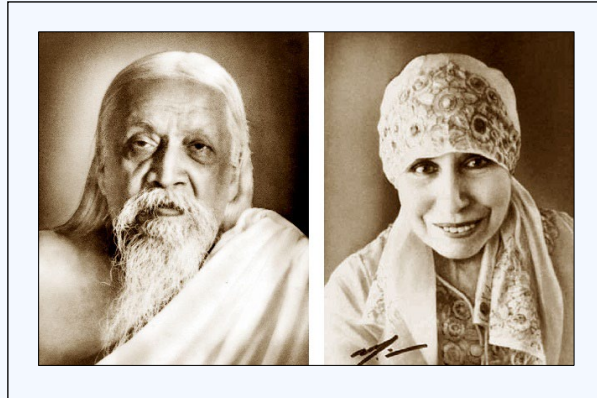


Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on Collective Yoga



A harmonious collective aspiration can change the course of circumstances.
—The Mother, *Words of the Mother II*, p. 184

Please read through these quotes from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother before you come to AUM 2022. Much of our focus, especially that of the Saturday workshop, will be on the potential of collective practice. We hope these quotes will inspire and inform.

The first necessity: Individual liberation

THIS THEN IS THE FIRST NECESSITY, that the individual, each individual, shall discover the spirit, the divine reality within him and express that in all his being and living.—Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, pp. 1059–1060

It follows that only as the individuals become more and more conscious can the group-being also become more and more conscious; the growth of the individual is the indispensable means for the inner growth as distinguished from the outer force and expansion of the collective being. This indeed is the dual importance of the individual that it is through him that the cosmic spirit organises its collective units and makes them self-expressive and progressive and through him that it raises Nature from the Inconscience to the Superconscience and exalts it to meet the Transcendent.—Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, p.720

The individual Yoga then turns from its separateness and becomes a part of the collective Yoga of the divine Nature in the human race. The liberated individual being, united with the Divine in self and spirit, becomes in his natural being a self-perfecting instrument for the perfect out flowering of the Divine in humanity.—Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 614

In the actual state of humanity, it is the individual who must climb to this height as a pioneer and precursor. . . . But if a collectivity or group could be formed of those who had reached the supramental perfection, there indeed some divine creation could take shape; a new earth could descend that would be a new heaven, a world of supramental light could be created here amidst the receding darkness of this terrestrial ignorance.—Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, p . 207)

The Power, the Light, the Bliss no word can speak
Imaged itself in a surprising beam
And built a golden passage to his heart
Touching through him all longing sentient things.— Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri*, p 312

Interdependence between the individual and the collective

SRI AUROBINDO TELLS US THAT A TRUE COMMUNITY—what he calls a gnostic or supramental community—can exist only on the basis of the inner realisation of each of its members, each one realising his real, concrete unity and identity with all the other members of the community, that is, each one should feel not like just one member united in some way with all the others, but all as one, within himself. For each one the others must be himself as much as his own body, and not mentally and artificially, but by a fact of consciousness, by an inner realisation.

That means that before hoping to realise this gnostic collectivity, each one should first become—or at least begin to become—a gnostic being. This is obvious; the individual work should go on ahead and the collective work should follow; but it so happens that spontaneously, without any arbitrary intervention of the will, the individual progress is controlled, so to speak, or held back by the collective state.

Between the individual and the collectivity there is an interdependence from which one can't totally free oneself, granting that one tries. And even a person who tried in his yoga to liberate himself totally from the terrestrial and human state of consciousness, would be tied down, in his subconscious at least, to the state of the mass, which acts as a brake and actually *pulls* backwards. One can try to go much faster, try to drop all the weight of attachments and responsibilities, but despite everything, the realisation, even of one who is at the very summit and is the very first in the evolutionary march, is dependent on the realisation of the whole, dependent on the state of the terrestrial collectivity. And that indeed *pulls* one back, to such an



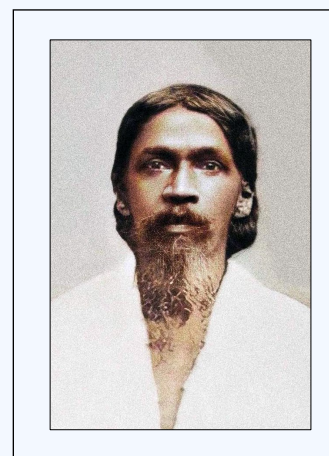
extent that at times one must wait for centuries for the Earth to be ready, in order to be able to realise what is to be realised.

And that is why Sri Aurobindo also says, somewhere else, that a double movement is necessary, and that the effort for individual progress and realisation should be combined with an effort to try to uplift the whole mass and enable it to make the progress that's indispensable for the greater progress of the individual: a mass-progress, it could be called, which would allow the individual to take one more step forward.—The Mother, *Questions and Answers 1957–1958*, pp. 141–142

Sri Aurobindo always spoke of two movements: the formation of the individual in order to be able to reach the goal individually, and the preparation of the world. . . . The individual movement is always much more rapid and more penetrating; it goes farther, more deeply and more quickly. The collective movement forms a sort of basis which both restrains and supports at the same time. And it is the balance between these two movements which is necessary. So, the more rapidly one goes individually, the more necessary it is to try to extend and strengthen the collective basis.—*Questions and Answers 1956*, pp. 263–264

The need for a new collective life

WHAT IS NECESSARY IS THAT THERE SHOULD BE a turn in humanity felt by some or many towards the vision of this change, a feeling of its imperative need, the sense of its possibility, the will to make it possible in themselves and to find the way. That trend is not absent and it must increase with the tension of the crisis in human world-destiny; the need of an escape or a solution, the feeling that there is no other solution than the spiritual cannot but grow and become more imperative under the urgency of critical circumstance.—Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, p. 1097



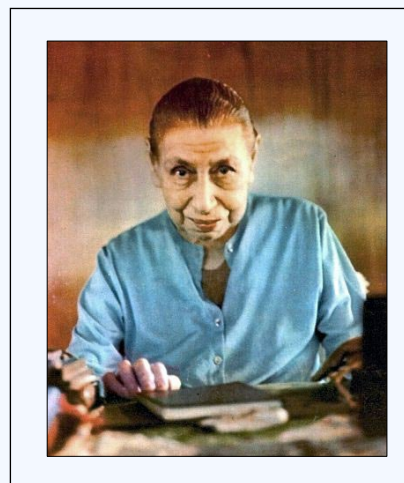
A life of unity, mutuality and harmony born of a deeper and wider truth of our being is the only truth of life that can successfully replace the imperfect mental constructions of the past which were a combination of association and regulated conflict, an accommodation of egos . . . It is such a change and such a reshaping of life for which humanity is blindly beginning to seek, now more and more with a sense that its very existence depends upon finding the way.—Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, p. 1092

[I]t is only quite recently that the need for a collective reality began to appear—which is not necessarily limited to the Ashram but embraces all who have declared themselves—I don't mean materially but in their consciousness—to be disciples of Sri Aurobindo and have tried to live his teaching. Among all of them, and more strongly since the manifestation of the supramental Consciousness and Force, there has awakened the necessity for a true communal

life, which would not be based only on purely material circumstances but would represent a deeper truth, and be the beginning of what Sri Aurobindo calls a supramental or gnostic community. . . .

He has said, of course, that, for this, the individuals constituting this collectivity should themselves have this supramental consciousness; but even without attaining an individual perfection—even while very far from it—there was at the same time an inner effort to create this “collective individuality,” so to speak. The need for a real union, a deeper bond has been felt and the effort has been directed towards that realisation. . . .

I intended, in fact, to explain to you one day that the effort you could make individually, instead of being for only an individual progress, will spread, so to say, or have very important collective results.—The Mother, *Questions and Answers 1957–1958*, pp. 173–175



Personal transformation not possible without collective progress

*I*S IT POSSIBLE TO ATTAIN A TOTAL PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION without there being at least a correspondence in the collectivity? . . . This does not seem possible to me. There is such an interdependence between the individual and the collectivity that, unless one does what the ascetics have preached, that is, escapes from the world, goes out of it completely, leaves it where it is and runs away selfishly leaving all the work to others, unless one does that.... And even so I have my doubts. Is it possible to accomplish a total transformation of one’s being so long as the collectivity has not reached at least a certain degree of transformation? I don’t think so. Human nature remains what it is—one can attain a great change of consciousness, that yes, one can purify one’s consciousness, but the total conquest, the material transformation depends definitely to a large extent, on a certain degree of progress in the collectivity.—The Mother, *Questions and Answers 1950–1951*, p. 382

I do not think that a single individual on the earth as it is now, a single individual, however great, however eternal his consciousness and origin, can on his own change and realise—change the world, change the creation as it is and realise this higher Truth which will be a new world, a world more true, if not absolutely true. It would seem that a certain number of individuals—until now it seems to have been more in time, as a succession, but it could also be in space, a collectivity—are indispensable so that this Truth can become concrete and realise itself.

Practically, I am sure of it.

That is to say, however great, however conscious, however powerful he may be, *one* Avatar cannot by himself realise the supramental life on earth. It is either a group in time, extending over a period of time, or a group spread out in space—perhaps both—that are indispensable for this Realisation.

I am convinced of it.

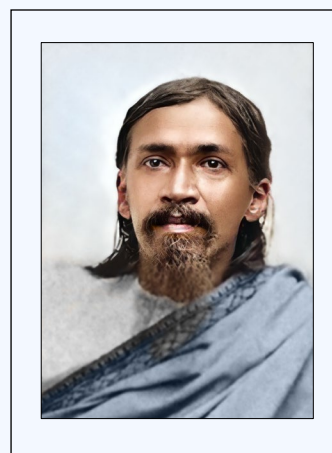
The individual can give the impulsion, indicate the path, *walk* on the path himself—that is to say, show the path by realising it himself—but he cannot fulfil. The fulfilment obeys certain group laws which are the expression of some aspect of Eternity and Infinity—naturally, it is all the same Being! They are not different individuals or different personalities, it is all the same Being. And it is all the same Being expressing Himself in a way which for us becomes a body, a group, a collectivity—The Mother, *On Thoughts and Aphorisms*, pp. 136–137

The difficulty and completeness of collective yoga

THE WORK IS MORE COMPLICATED, it is more complete, it asks for a greater power, a greater wideness, a greater patience, a greater tolerance, a greater endurance; all these things are necessary.—The Mother, *Questions and Answers 1955*, pp. 408-409

So in addition to your own personal difficulty you have all the frictions, all the contacts, all the reactions, all the things which come from outside. As a test. Exactly on the weak point, the thing that's most difficult to solve; it is there that you will hear from someone the phrase which was just the one you did not want to hear; someone will make towards you that gesture which was exactly the one which could shock you; you find yourself facing a circumstance, a movement, a fact, an object, anything at all—just the things which ... “Ah, how I should have liked this not to happen!” And it's that which will happen. And more and more. Because you do not do your yoga for yourself alone. You do the yoga for everybody—without wanting to— automatically.—The Mother, *Questions and Answers 1955*, p. 411

Evidently the realisation under the conditions of the community or the group is much more complete, integral, total, and, probably, perfect than any individual realisation, which is always, necessarily, on the external, material plane, absolutely limited, because it is only a mode of being, a mode of manifestation, a microscopic set of vibrations that is touched. —The Mother, *Questions and Answers 1956*, p. 388



All works cited by Sri Aurobindo are from *The Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo*
All works by the Mother are from *The Collected Works of the Mother*