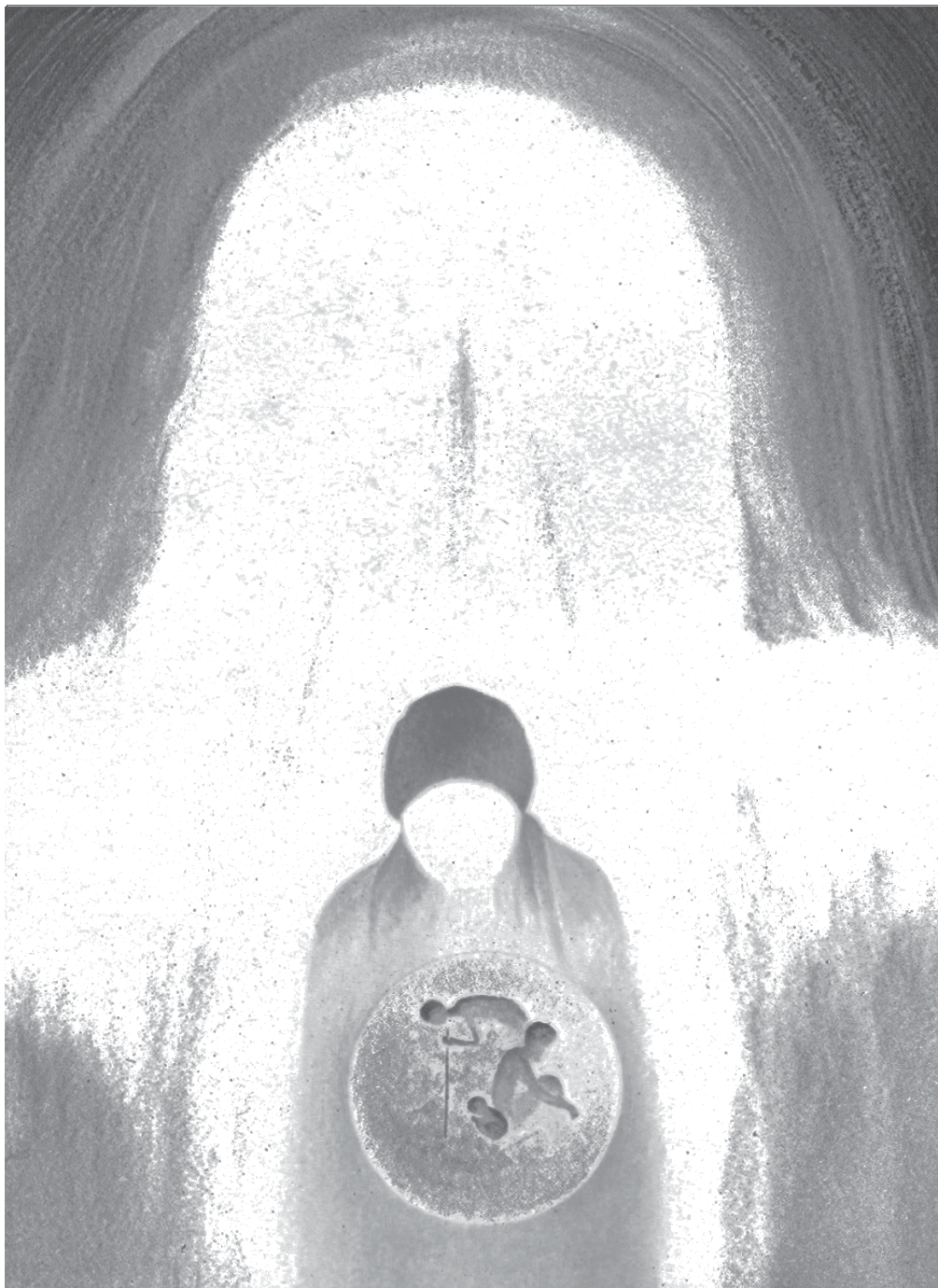


# Collaboration

Spring 2011

Journal of the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother

Vol. 35, No. 3



**Michael Miovic on Cartier-Bresson's photographs of Sri Aurobindo •  
M. Alan Kazlev on Sri Aurobindo, the Mother and the Integral Movement •  
Larry Seidlitz on spiritual activism, spiritual passivity and Integral Yoga •  
Current affairs • AV almanac • Source material • Poetry • Apropos**



## About the cover

This greyscale copy of a watercolor painting by the late Usha R. Patel, an Ashram painter, is from her book, *Love Treasures*, paintings based on Sri Aurobindo's book *The Mother*. The passage inspiring it is: "In all that is done in the universe, the Divine through his Shakti is behind all action but he is veiled by his Yoga Maya and works through the ego of the Jiva in the lower nature." It was published in 1985 by the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and is used with their permission.

## The authors and poets

**Dhyaanavati Ananda** ([hridalaya@gmail.com](mailto:hridalaya@gmail.com)) studied and worked in the field of psychology in both Croatia and California. She has also published two books of spiritual poetry. The poem selected here is from an unpublished collection called "The fire fount."

**Alan Baiss** ([alanbaiss@yahoo.ca](mailto:alanbaiss@yahoo.ca)) is the founder of *Integral Inspirations* (<http://www.integralinspirations.com>) and producer of the films "Integral Consciousness," *Conversations with Bina*, and "Conscious."

**M. Alan Kazlev** ([alankazlev@ihug.com.au](mailto:alankazlev@ihug.com.au)) is an esoteric philosopher, writer, amateur paleontologist, and aspiring sadhak. He is the webmaster and author of *Kheper.net*, and is working on a book on integral metaphysics and transformation.

**Michael Miovic** ([mmiovic@yahoo.com](mailto:mmiovic@yahoo.com)) is a psychiatrist currently working for the Cambridge Health Alliance, MA. He is particularly interested in integral psychology and geo-spiritual studies. He is a long-time student of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

The late **Nishikanto** (1909-1973) was a member of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram whose mystical poetry was highly regarded by Sri Aurobindo.

**Larry Seidlitz** ([lseidlitz@gmail.com](mailto:lseidlitz@gmail.com)) is on the faculty of Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced Research where he facilitates courses on Sri Aurobindo's yoga. He also edits *Collaboration*.

**K.D. Sethna** (aka Amal Kiran) was born in a Parsi family of Bombay on 25th November 1904. He came to the Ashram in 1930, where he was and still is editor of *Mother India*, in which he wrote many articles on Indian politics and society. He is a poet and the author of many books.

**Carel Thieme** ([carel@auroville.org.in](mailto:carel@auroville.org.in)), who worked as a corporate lawyer in the Netherlands, joined Auroville in 1986. He served in various Working Committees and as chairperson of the Planning and Development Council and the Funds and Assets Management Committee. Since 1988 he is member of the team that produces the monthly magazine *Auroville Today*. He recently joined the Auroville Fund Raising cell.

# Table of contents

Collaboration, vol. 35, no. 3, Spring 2011

## From the office of *Collaboration*

Notes on this issue ..... Larry Seidlitz 3

## Current affairs

Opening and mystery: Producing the documentary film *Conscious*  
..... Alan Baiss 4  
Briefs ..... 6

## AV almanac

What's happening with the Matrimandir lake? ..... Carel Thieme 6

## Chronicles

The decisive moment ..... Michael Miovic 9

## Essays

Sri Aurobindo, the Mother, and the Integral Movement ..... M. Alan Kazlev 12  
Spiritual activism, spiritual passivity and Integral Yoga ..... Larry Seidlitz 22

## Source material

The spiritualization of society ..... Sri Aurobindo 30  
On the world condition ..... The Mother 32

## The poetry room

The secret knowledge ..... Sri Aurobindo 34  
On the ash ..... Michael Miovic 34  
Our thoughts are not ours ..... Michael Miovic 34  
The divine self-assertion ..... Dhyaanavati Ananda 34  
The Mother ..... Nishikanto 35  
Savior storm ..... K.D. Sethna 35

Apropos ..... 36



## From the office of Collaboration

### The photographers

*Henri Cartier-Bresson (22 August 1908 – 3 August 2004) was a French photographer considered to be the father of modern photojournalism. He was an early adopter of the 35 mm format, and the master of candid photography. He helped develop the "street photography" or "real life reportage" style that has influenced generations of photographers who followed.*

We start off this issue with Current Affairs, which presents an account by Alan Baiss of his work in progress of creating the documentary film *Conscious*. This film includes interviews with a variety of individuals participating in the work of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in the U.S. and India about the possibilities of human evolution and transformation. Produced by Integral Inspirations, this project follows the 2008 documentary film "Integral Consciousness: Sri Aurobindo's Yoga and how Haridas Chaudhuri brought it to the West." The new film will bring out the deeper metaphysical and spiritual principles underlying the Integral Yoga, and how they are being manifested in the lives of people involved in practice and collective work. Alan focuses on his inspiration and efforts to implement these projects, together with his coworkers. Alan's article is followed by announcements about AUM 2011, which is being held this year in Lodi, CA, and about the 2011 Integral Yoga Retreat in Greenville, SC.

In AV Almanac, we have an article by Carel Thieme, one of the editors for AV Today, about the progress to date on the plans and preparatory work for constructing a lake around the Matrimandir. Carel has done an admirable job in investigating the past discussions and agreements concerning the lake, as well as the preparatory work that has been completed. It highlights how things have not proceeded as had been discussed and agreed, and considers different proposals about the size and nature of the lake.

In Chronicles, we have a thoughtful meditation by Michael Miovic about the Cartier-Bresson photographs of Sri Aurobindo in 1950. In addition to recounting some of the circumstances surrounding the photographs, Michael takes us deeply into the photographs themselves, contemplating the look of Sri Aurobindo that was captured, and its effects on the viewer.

In Essays, our first article which is written by Alan Kazlev is about the relation of Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's Integral Yoga with the larger Integral Movement that we see manifested in the world today. In this thoroughly researched work, we learn the history of a variety of integral philosophies that sprang up contemporaneously with Sri Aurobindo's, as well as a number of other integral philosophies and movements that have developed more recently, some of which have drawn upon Sri Aurobindo's ideas as well as other integral thinkers. The article helps us be more aware of the various thinkers and philosophies that have affinities with the Integral Yoga, and to contemplate how we may contribute to and benefit from this larger Integral Movement.

Our second article in Essays was written by Larry Seidlitz and focuses on the issue of spiritual activism, which is currently a hot topic in the New Age and Integral Movements, from the point of view of Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's Integral Yoga. The article structures its discussion by distinguishing between four possible inner poises: false spiritual passivity, true spiritual passivity, false spiritual activism, and true spiritual activism. It suggests that a true spiritual activism must be founded on a true spiritual passivity, and helps us to differentiate these states from false or unspiritual substitutes with which they can easily be confused.

In our Source Material, we have extended excerpts from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother concerning the relation of the individual with the world and its difficult transformation. The first, by Sri Aurobindo, stresses the need for a true spiritual transformation of the individual before this change can be spread to the collective. The second, written by the Mother in 1957, discusses the enormous challenges of world change, and suggests one useful individual response to these challenges.

We round out our issue with a collection of inspiring spiritual poetry from contemporary and classic Aurobindonian poets in the Poetry Room, and a fine selection of thought-provoking quotations in Apropos.

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**About SAA:** The Sri Aurobindo Association distributes information about Sri Aurobindo, the Mother, and Auroville, and supports projects related to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Auroville, and Integral Yoga activities in America. Current officers: Lynda Lester, president; Vishnu Eschner, vice president; John Robert Cornell, secretary; Kalpana Patel, treasurer.

**Contributions:** Donations for the work of the SAA, Auroville, and the Sri Aurobindo Ashram may be sent to SAA. Donations are tax exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code.





## Current Affairs

### Opening and mystery: Producing the documentary film *Conscious*

by Alan Baiss

I am a little astonished to find myself the steward of Integral Inspirations, which is a grass roots organization producing films that feature the meaning of our moment in time and humanity's evolutionary potential. I had no background in filmmaking or Integral Yoga when we began our first film, *Integral Consciousness: Sri Aurobindo's Yoga and how Haridas Chaudhuri brought it to the West*, released in 2008. This adventure began quite unexpectedly and I suppose it was naivety and the quest of an ideal that induced me to undertake a project that I had such little knowledge of.

We are now making our third and most ambitious documentary film, *Conscious* (working title). This film acknowledges the restlessness and dissatisfaction that many people experience in the contemporary world and it explores the potential lying dormant in each of us to realize a far greater future. *Conscious* asks if humanity is already racing toward a leap in consciousness that each one of us can intentionally participate in and that will advance nature's evolutionary impulse.

The process that kindled my involvement with these films began while I was a psychotherapist in private practice in British Columbia. I had graduated from the California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS) in 1991 and then pursued a good career in Psychotherapy for over a decade when three very personal challenges influenced me to follow a new direction.

The first challenge was my coping with my parent's passing within six months of each other in 2002. As an only child who had just lost his parents it was clear to me that my life would never be the same again. In my grief I contacted my longing for greater meaning and I realized that I didn't want to look back on my life and wonder what might have been if I had taken a chance. I continued my therapy practice, but under the surface something was brewing.

Less than a year after my parents passed, a friend and I travelled to Kansas to visit some friends. We were all asleep in our friend's house when, at about 2:00 in the morning, fire broke out in the kitchen. Thinking that others were trapped by the rapidly spreading flames I remained too long in the blazing building. The advancing inferno very quickly blocked my escape. Labouring to breathe and feeling terrified, I experienced an invisible presence imploring me to 'get out now.' Groping along the floor I fumbled for what I thought was a table lamp and with it I destroyed a nearby window. I scrambled through the shards of glass and once out-



Photo courtesy Alan Baiss

side I collapsed on the lawn. A moment later I looked up and standing before me were each of my friends, mercifully everyone had escaped. Although the fire hoses did their best, the house burnt for most of the night. In time I dealt with my trauma, but a burning need to create space in my life for some greater potential had been ignited and I started to seriously consider closing my practice.

About a year after the fire the third challenge came when a dear friend's body began failing from AIDS. It felt deeply right for me to offer myself during his final months and this is when I closed my practice. For me my friend's dying was a painful and profoundly rich experience. He was anxious about death and consumed by his fight for life. I sense he may have only found peace during his last few hours. After my friend passed I had no clear plan, but having felt called to return to San Francisco ever since graduating from CIIS, I left my home in Canada and headed south.

One Sunday after I arrived in San Francisco, Hilary Anderson, former professor, dean, and founding board member of CIIS, offered a workshop at the Cultural Integration Fellowship (CIF) on CIIS founder Haridas Chaudhuri. I was interested because, although I had graduated from CIIS, I knew little about Dr. Chaudhuri. As the workshop unfolded I sat completely dumbfounded. Moment by moment a passionate discourse from those who had been Dr. Chaudhuri's students revealed a spirit that I had always felt at the core of CIIS, but that I had never been able to put my finger on. During the concluding moments of the workshop Hilary turned and asked if I would like to share. Still flabbergasted, but with the floodgates now unlocked, my enthusiasm spilled over and culminated with my pronouncement that this was amazing and needed to be filmed.

In short order Hilary and I assembled a small committee and received a grant from CIIS to make a film on Dr. Chaudhuri. After much planning and hours of filming interviews we all felt that something wonderful was happening. But before long we made the difficult decision to halt the project. It had become clear that a film on Dr. Chaudhuri needs a good explication of Integral Yoga, and a film featuring Integral Yoga must carefully and respectfully present Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. It was a very different film that wanted to be made and it would be deeper and broader than we had imagined. We would begin again, and this time much more talent and money would be needed.

While none of us were filmmakers we passionately believed that *Integral Consciousness* was an important film that needed to be made. We forged ahead and help trickled in from many sour-



es. Early on, CIIS made Bahman Shirazi available to provide archival and technical support, and little by little donations came in until the exciting moment when we were able to hire Academy Award nominated documentary filmmaker Mark Kitchell to direct the movie.

The money was always tight and on several occasions it looked like we would need to stop working. But each time we faced a seemingly insurmountable obstacle a new door would open and we carried on. *Integral Consciousness* was embracing some very sacred teachings and I began to sense that somehow the sacred was having a hand in its production. My challenge was in being receptive to a deeper wisdom and trusting the process that was unfolding. I did find comfort in Dr. Chaudhuri's words 'all in the fullness of time,' which were beginning to sound deeply profound.

The support continued and in time we were grateful for the gifts from dozens of individuals and several organisations, including CIIS, CIF, and the Foundation for World Education (FWE). We persevered until the moment when the first rough assembly of *Integral Consciousness* was finished and I knew that we had passed the point of no return, from here there was no turning back. The film would be made.

Pressing on we finished the 'first final' cut of *Integral Consciousness* just days before I departed on a trip to India in February 2008. In India it would be my honour to debut this cut of the film in Pondicherry and Auroville where we had previously conducted interviews for *Integral Consciousness*. I was quite apprehensive about these screenings but, thankfully for my nerves, the reception the film received in India provided me with considerable relief.

In April 2008, after I had returned from India, we celebrated *Integral Consciousness's* North American debut in San Francisco. With this release I thought we were done, but shortly after the San Francisco opening a surprise challenge to the film was launched and we stopped distribution. Originally we had released the film as *Integral Yoga: Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's vision of Supramental Consciousness and how Haridas Chaudhuri brought it to the West*, a very long title. Unbeknownst to us 'Integral Yoga' had been trademarked and our right to use these words was being contested. It was outside our scope to fight this challenge and so, after a return to the editing room, the current title *Integral Consciousness: Sri Aurobindo's Yoga and how Haridas Chaudhuri brought it to the West* came to be. Maybe in the end it's a better title. Since this setback distribution of *Integral Consciousness* has steadily climbed.

During the final months making *Integral Consciousness* I yearned to continue my relationship with Integral Yoga and I began wondering if we might be honoured with another film to make. Although Sri Aurobindo's powerful philosophy is well beyond my ability to consciously grasp, I sensed it was deeply resonating with an aspect of my being and, maybe a little selfishly, I wanted this to continue. I began to envision that a film showing Sri Aurobindo's yoga to be relevant and meaningful today would be im-

portant in a time that is so stuck for solutions and replete with despair for the future. This film would become *Conscious*, which is the working title of the film now in production.

I had my camera with me on the February 2008 trip to India, and as I had done on a previous trip for *Integral Consciousness*, I set about requesting interviews for a new film. With the very kind assistance of Aster Patel, Suneet Varma, and Kathir Radhakrishnan, we were granted many fascinating and inspiring interviews in Pondicherry and Auroville, and this began the journey with *Conscious*.

*Conscious* invites the viewer to consider that, even though nature has achieved conscious self awareness in humanity, a further development of consciousness and a far greater future may be humanity's potential. Haridas Chaudhuri said, "having created man, nature herself, the evolutionary spirit of nature, has risen to the level of consciousness." Could it be that nature is now on the cusp of a leap in her ongoing evolution of consciousness and humanity is poised to be her bridge? This future would be different from anything that our present consciousness can envision and is likely spiritual in its basis. Finally, the film asks if there is a role that each person can consciously take in this transformation and the realization of humanity's potential.

Eventually, with outstanding interviews, the film's treatment written, a sample beginning, an informative website, and once again the kind support of CIIS, CIF, FWE, and now the San Francisco Film Society, *Conscious* was on its way. Nevertheless the difficulties facing *Conscious* are at times daunting, and with every two steps forward there is frequently an occurrence that guides the project in a new and unexpected direction. In some mysterious way these challenges more often than not take the film to a deeper and richer place, and one of my greatest challenges is remaining calm and open to this potential.

The very serious controversy surrounding Peter Heehs's book, 'The Lives of Sri Aurobindo' is not at all the subject of *Conscious*, but nevertheless it has guided the film in a new direction. The Pondicherry and Auroville interviews were conducted just months before the release of Peter Heehs's book, and as it turned out, some of those interviewed would take very different positions on the book. When we began assembling clips from these interviews I was confronted by some well respected individuals whom we had interviewed. These interviewees made it very clear that if the clips or the new website gave voice to certain other individuals whom we had interviewed then they would ask to be left out.

The true depth and meaning of the dilemma I found myself facing is vastly beyond my ability to comprehend and, feeling entirely inadequate, I more or less gave in and searched for a deeper wisdom. Within a few days I had an experience that felt much like recognition as I sensed some clarity emerging into my consciousness. I became aware that including one group and excluding the other would see the film taking a position in a dispute that reaches beyond its scope, and including both would be provocative. The option that felt most in harmony with the clarity I had



experienced would include none of the interviewees who had confronted me or the ones they were concerned about.

But this stance would likely alienate me from a number of people and it would mean trashing much of the work already done on *Conscious*. What to do? I could not be sure if I had really experienced a deeper truth but, whether right or wrong, I felt I had to trust the best wisdom I had been able to contact. Anything else felt like I would be betraying myself and the film. This challenge has taken *Conscious* in a new direction and whether it is in cooperation with a greater consciousness may never be known.

I am a novice on this path and I cannot be sure if the deepest guidance I can sense is really truth, and I will still at times be seduced by easy temptations to disregard my best inner wisdom. Nevertheless, I sense that *Conscious* has the potential to contact something of the sacred and as long as I have the profound honour of being the steward of this project I must do my best to follow the deepest wisdom of which I am capable.

It was some years ago when I began wondering about my potential and in time circumstances led me to open some space so something new could develop. Very quickly the film projects filled that space and in due course they have transformed my life and my worldview. In some mysterious way I feel the film projects are inviting me to open to a vast consciousness and a deep wisdom that is beyond my comprehension. It strikes me as ironic that my work with the films is inducting me into a practice that, from my perspective, is itself very much the subject of the films.

## Briefs

**AUM 2011** will be held 30 June - 4 July in Lodi, CA. The theme of the conference is "A new world is born," inspired by the Mother's vision of a new world that has already been born and of which we are for the most part still unaware. This year we are aspiring for an experiential and interactive conference, with more audience-participatory formats for presentations and workshops as well as a balance of activities. Many speakers, facilitators, workshop guides, and activity leaders will contribute to the program. Attendees will stay at the Holiday Inn Express (1337 East Kettleman Lane, Lodi, CA) and experience the profound spiritual vibration of Sri Aurobindo Sadhana Peetham. See details at: <http://www.collaboration.org/aum/2011/index.html>

**The 2011 Integral Yoga Retreat** will be held 20-24 July 2011 at Furman University, Greenville, SC; it is hosted by the Sri Aurobindo Center South East. The conference offers people of all ages a valuable opportunity to learn about Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's Integral Yoga through activities, discussions and lectures. It will also include daily physical fitness, meditation and experiential sessions. With powerful speakers from India and the US, attendees will be richly rewarded with a better understanding of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo's teachings and their practical application to daily life. Visit their website for registration and details: <http://www.sriurobindoyogaretreat.com/> For questions, please call 864-248-1571.

## AV almanac

### What's happening with the Matrimandir Lake?

by Carel Thieme

Reprinted from *Auroville Today*, January 2011

*Author's Note: In September 2008, L'Avenir d'Auroville published in the Auroville News and Notes its intention to give site approval for a Matrimandir Test Pond. It described it as a research project to find out how a lake can be constructed in accordance with the parameters laid down by Roger Anger and causing minimum environmental damage. What has happened since then?*

Two months after the announcement, in November 2008, an elaborate Memorandum of Understanding was signed between L'Avenir d'Auroville and a Test Pond Project Team. It stipulated that L'Avenir d'Auroville would eventually commission the test pond; that a Test Pond Monitoring Group consisting of representatives of Auroville working groups and individual Aurovilians would advise on the project's direction; and that a Board of Experts of lake and water specialists would be appointed to provide advice and do independent technical auditing of the findings of the project.

The Memorandum also mentioned that three studies had to be delivered by the Test Pond Project Team: an environmental study, a Matrimandir lake feasibility study, and a study of the Matrimandir lake as an integral part of Auroville's water system. Three-monthly reports would be published on AV Net as 'the project asks for participation of the community.' The time frame of the test pond project was estimated to take between 3-5 years.

So far, so good. But what has happened since? No reports were published; the Monitoring Group has not started functioning; the Board of Experts was never appointed; work on the site never started; and the studies were not delivered.

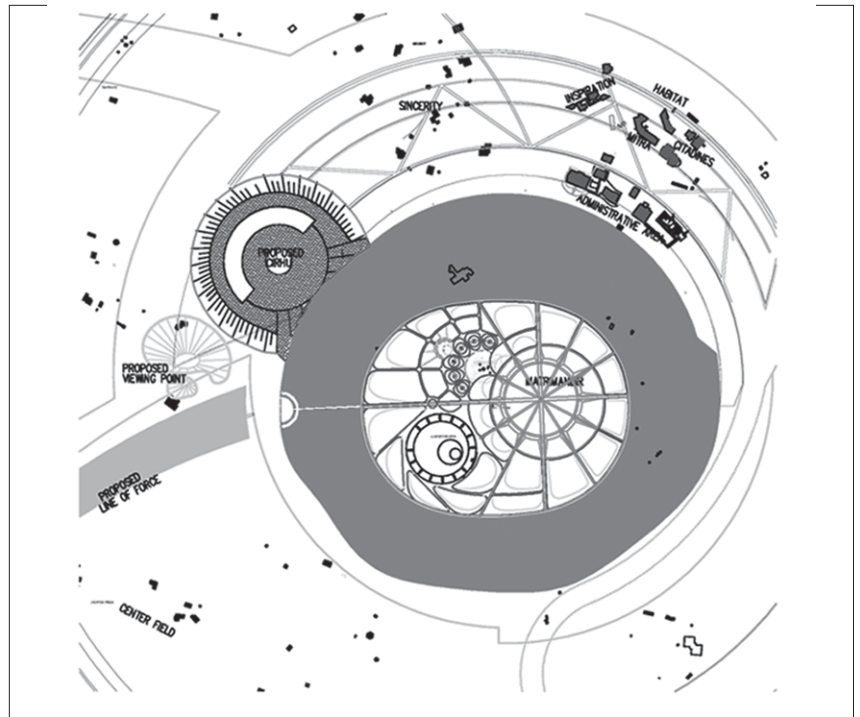
Nevertheless, in August 2009 the Test Pond Project Team, ignoring the Memorandum, applied for building permission to start the test pond. L'Avenir d'Auroville, instead of rejecting the application out of hand as the three reports mentioned in the Memorandum had not been delivered, also ignored the Memorandum and instead formed a sub-group to study the matter. It also appointed an expert to look specifically into the possible functions of the lake. But building permission was never given, as the expert stated that a lake should be considered only in the context of a regional water plan. Moreover, he considered that there was insufficient information available to start the test pond of the size proposed.





All this suggests that the Memorandum was little more than a lame duck and that the promised community participation was ignored. The Test Pond Project Team, meanwhile, continued studying the issues.

The main person in the Team is Michael Bonke, a friend of Auroville who has been heavily involved with the construction of the Matrimandir. He wants to manifest the Matrimandir lake for the sole reason that Mother said that “It has been decided and will remain decided that the Matrimandir will be surrounded with water.” For Michael, this is an imperative that indicates that without the lake, neither the Matrimandir nor the city of Auroville will be complete. Aware that the proposed lake has raised strong objections in sections of the community for ecological, environmental and logistical reasons, the Team explored solutions for three issues: to determine the function of the lake, determine the size of the lake, and last but not least, solve the question of where the water for the lake will come from.



Roger Anger's model of the Matrimandir lake. (Photo courtesy Auroville Today)

## The function of the lake

More than six years ago, in the June-July 2004 issue (#185-186), Auroville Today reported on three studies that had been done to ascertain if the Matrimandir lake could have a function in the water supply of the city. This idea was first mooted in the 1970s by chief architect Roger Anger, but was not actually researched till September 2003, when a pre-feasibility study by the office of water engineer Harald Kraft in Berlin showed that the lake, if it is large and sufficiently deep, could be part of the city's water supply.

Kraft's study, however, was heavily criticized by Auroville specialists. This led to two further studies by experts in Germany and The Netherlands, sponsored by Michael, who all concluded that the lake has no function to serve in the city's water supply.

So what is its function? On June 2<sup>nd</sup> 2010, Harald and Michael met to discuss the lake and signed a statement, “We believe that the Mother's vision for a lake around the Matrimandir was not exclusively aiming at particular practical functions of the lake, but that more subtle functions like the calmness that a lake radiates, its strength and stability or other even more subtle functions which were more decisive than practicalities. In nearly all cities today we have at the centre a crowded place with hectic traffic. In Auroville, Mother wanted at the centre a place of silence and concentration. She gave the name 'Peace' to the central area. The lake which she envisaged is supposed to function as an isolating zone between the Auroville Township and the Matrimandir area.” Few will disagree with the statement.

## The size of the lake

The size of the lake has been the second issue of contention. In 1999, a few years before the Kraft study, Roger Anger had decided to incorporate a big lake into the Auroville Master Plan. This led to a ferocious dispute with the then Matrimandir Coordination Group. For a lake this size would do away with the outer gardens situated between the lake and the city, which Narad, at the Mother's request, had started in the early 1970s.

The Governing Board of the Auroville Foundation intervened. Board member Dr. Subhash Kashyap mediated an agreement: a big lake would be created to the east side of the Matrimandir where no gardens had yet been planted, while on the west side a smaller water body would be created so that the existing outer gardens could remain. Mr. Bala Baskar, the then Secretary of the Auroville Foundation, explained a few months later that the actual dimensions of the lake would be according to an expert opinion, after detailed studies of the problem of water availability and storage feasibility had been made—studies that are yet to be presented.

However, it seems that Dr. Kashyap's solution will be ignored. Scale-models and maps of the Matrimandir area, on public display at the Town Hall, show without exception the large-sized lake.

Harald and Michael also opt for the large lake. In their statement they write, “It is our duty to construct the lake in such a way that it can serve all possible functions in the best way.” One of



the possible functions they mention is the lake being a component of Auroville's water supply system. Harald's original concept which had already been dismissed by the German and Dutch experts. Apparently, the wish to create a large lake has overruled expert opinion.

What is planned for the earth that needs to be excavated? Harald and Michael propose to use conveyor belts to move the earth from the lake bed to two sites so as to form two hills: a small one which will serve as a tourist viewing point [an idea the Mother once discussed with Satprem, eds.] and a big one in the greenbelt which could serve as an uphill power storage that interacts with the lake.

### Where does the water come from?

There are four possible water sources for the lake: ground water, harvested rainwater; treated waste water; and desalinated water. For social and ecological reasons groundwater will not be used. The Test Pond Team, together with a number of Indian specialists, studied each of the remaining options. Their conclusions are as follows:

**Harvested rainwater.** There is an acute threat of salt-water intrusion into the groundwater of Auroville's bio-region, mainly caused by agricultural over extraction. Specialists agree that Auroville should harvest rainwater as much as possible and let it penetrate into the aquifers to ward off salt water intrusion and so secure its groundwater supply. They conclude that it is

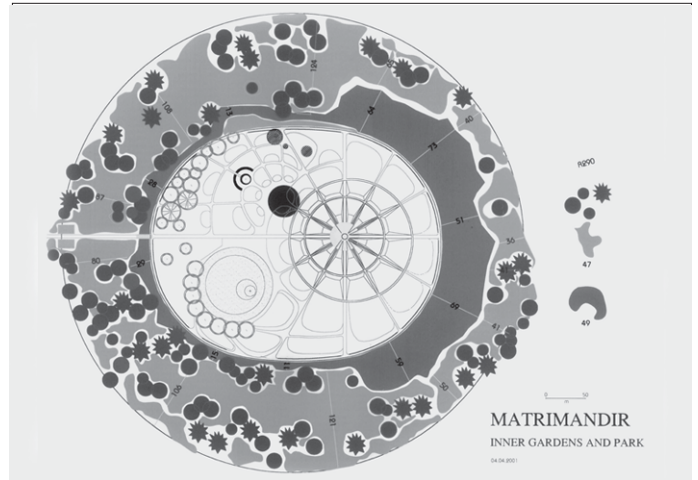
not advisable to use harvested rainwater to fill the lake, as this would deprive the aquifers of necessary recharge.

**Treated waste water.** It was once suggested to fill the Lake with treated waste water as the Pondicherry waster water treatment plant almost borders on Auroville. The city of Singapore relies for 30% of its water supply on treated sewage which has been purified using dual-membrane and ultraviolet technologies, in addition to conventional water treatment processes. This treated waste water is used for non potable applications.

The Test Pond Project Team has decided not to pursue this approach as it would imply a long-term cooperation with the Pondicherry Government, which has to meet its own water requirements, as well as being a high-technology and costly affair.

**Desalinated water.** The Test Pond Project Team considers desalinated sea water as the best option to fill the lake as this would ensure a good water quality and allow the lake water level to remain constant in all seasons, one of the conditions laid down by Roger Anger. [The use of desalinated sea water, by the way, was also approved the Mother in a discussion with Satprem, eds.]

Michael is convinced that desalination is the answer for the future, not only to fill the lake, but also to secure the drinking



Dr. Kashyap's model of Matrimandir lake (Photo courtesy AV Today)

water supply of Auroville and its surrounding villages when salt water intrudes into the aquifers. Two years ago he set up a company for the exclusive benefit of Auroville, called Varuna Water and Energy Ltd., which has already bought two wind generators to produce green energy. While part of the proceeds are used to subsidize electricity in Auroville, another part will be used to offset the operational costs of a planned 1000 cubic meters a day

desalination plant near the beach. The land for this plant has already been purchased and Varuna is in the process of obtaining the required permissions.

*It has been decided and will remain decided that the Matrimandir will be surrounded with water.*

*—Mother to Huta on 28 March 1970*

### The views of L'Avenir d'Auroville

In June 2010, the Governing Board of the Auroville Foundation appointed a new team to run L'Avenir d'Auroville. So far, this team has not discussed the future Matrimandir lake nor the findings of the Test Pond Project Team.

The new L'Avenir team will have to decide if and to what extent the 2008 Memorandum of Understanding has to be revived. It must also take a stand on desalinated water as a feasible option to secure the drinking water supply of Auroville and the nearby villages in case aquifers turn saline; and if it can be used for the Matrimandir lake. If any of these questions are answered in the positive, L'Avenir will have to find ways, together with the Test Pond Project Team, to bring desalinated water from the coast to the centre of Auroville.

The discussion in Auroville is yet to begin. The lake has over the years been the subject of much controversy. The work of the Test Pond Team, while not answering to all the concerns expressed, may be a basis for more informed discussions.





## Chronicles

### The decisive moment

by Michael Miovic

**H**enri Cartier-Bresson died on 3 August 2004, at his home in Paris, France. He was 95 years old. Widely respected as one of the founding fathers of photojournalism and a pioneer in the art of photography, his pictures are admired for their spontaneity and mastery of form. A painter both at the beginning and end of his career, Cartier-Bresson took up photography in 1930 and went on to shoot some of the most memorable photos of the 20th century.

Cartier-Bresson always said his aim was to capture “the decisive moment,” that is, the essence of a situation or event that was unfolding before his eyes. Using a small hand-held Leica camera, and as little artificial light as possible, for four decades he roamed the globe catching human beings in the midst of action. From historic events, such as the funeral of Mahatma Gandhi and the rise of China’s Mao Zedong, to the smaller moments of workers relaxing or a family picnicking by the river Marne, he had a knack for being in the right place at the right time, and seizing the spirit of the moment.<sup>1</sup>

There was certainly a yogic element to Cartier-Bresson’s art. He loved perfection, and his quest as a photographer was to glimpse eternity in the fleeting instant. Inspired by the philosophy of Zen Buddhism, he once said that his photographic method was to use his open eye to look through the viewfinder upon the outer scene, while with his other, closed eye he looked within.<sup>2</sup> It was, perhaps, this inward gaze that caught the Mother’s attention and led her to grant him permission to photograph the Ashram in 1950.

When Cartier-Bresson arrived



*Photo courtesy Michael Miovic*

in Pondicherry on April 23, in time for darshan on the 24th, he was in the midst of an extraordinary series of events. He had just come from Tiruvannamalai, where he had photographed Sri Ramana Maharshi leaving his body, and borne witness to the fireball that streaked slowly over Arunachala at 8.47 p.m., the exact minute of the sage’s absorption into the Self. On the 24th, Cart-



*Cartier-Bresson’s photo of the Mother distributing flowers. (Photo courtesy Sri Aurobindo Ashram)*

ier-Bresson was to obtain the only photographs ever made of Mother and Sri Aurobindo together at Darshan, and on the 25th he was destined to shoot the last living photograph of Sri Aurobindo, thus completing a remarkable trinity of final statements—Mahatma Gandhi, Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi, and Sri Aurobindo.

By what Grace or hidden design the Divine chose Cartier-Bresson to record India’s three greatest leaders/spiritual figures of the 20th century as they stood on the threshold of life and death, we can only speculate. But clearly the phenomenon has a profound inner meaning. When Cartier-Bresson arrived in Pondicherry in April 1950, Sri Aurobindo had been in retirement for over 20 years, and had repeatedly declined requests to be photographed. In retrospect, we also know that Sri Aurobindo had already decided to leave the body, and was deeply engaged in two Herculean tasks: completing Savitri, and preparing for the first fully conscious descent into Death in the history of life.<sup>3</sup> In a very real sense then, Sri Aurobindo was poised on the edge of his own decisive moment.

Initially, the Mother only gave Cartier-Bresson permission to photograph the premises of the Ashram, as well as ashramites engaged in their usual activities. However, soon she allowed him to take shots with Mother in the background, and as the trust grew, Mother even let Cartier-Bresson take portraits of herself. Cartier-Bresson’s diary shows that he felt the Mother’s sweetness and kindness, and his photos of her distributing flowers certainly express this quality.<sup>4</sup>

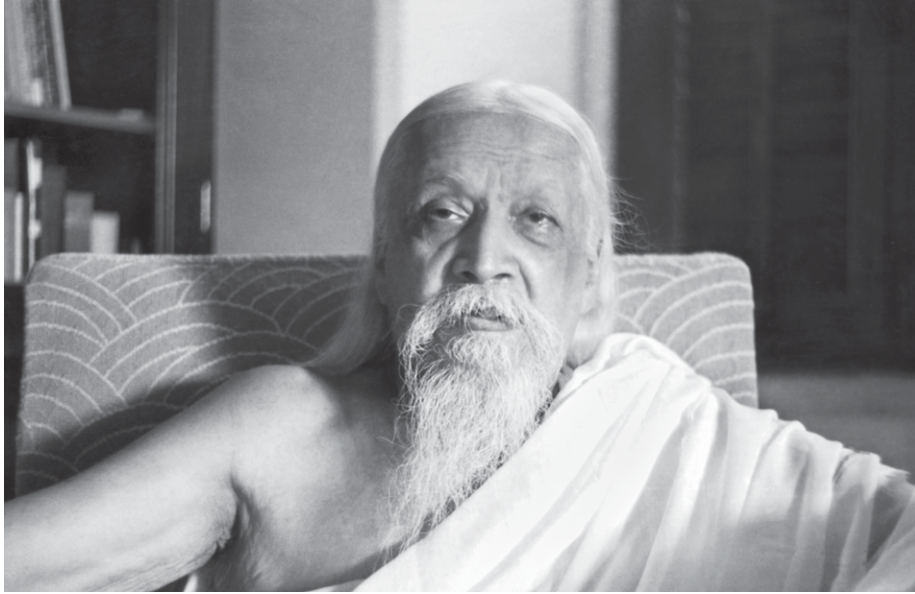
Yet the greatest photos were still to come. On the morning of April 25, 1950, the day after Darshan, Cartier-Bresson went to thank the Mother for the favours granted, and to ask for one more—permission to photograph Sri Aurobindo in his private quarters. According to Cartier-Bresson, he finally persuaded her with the statement, “I am only photographing the female aspect of the Divine. What about the male aspect?”



In any case, the Mother consulted with Sri Aurobindo and—surprisingly—consent was given.<sup>5</sup>

From the mechanical perspective, the session was quick and quiet. Cartier-Bresson took about 10 minutes, during which time Sri Aurobindo impressed the photographer with his complete immobility. In his diary from the time, Cartier-Bresson wrote “The room was so neat and tidy and imper-

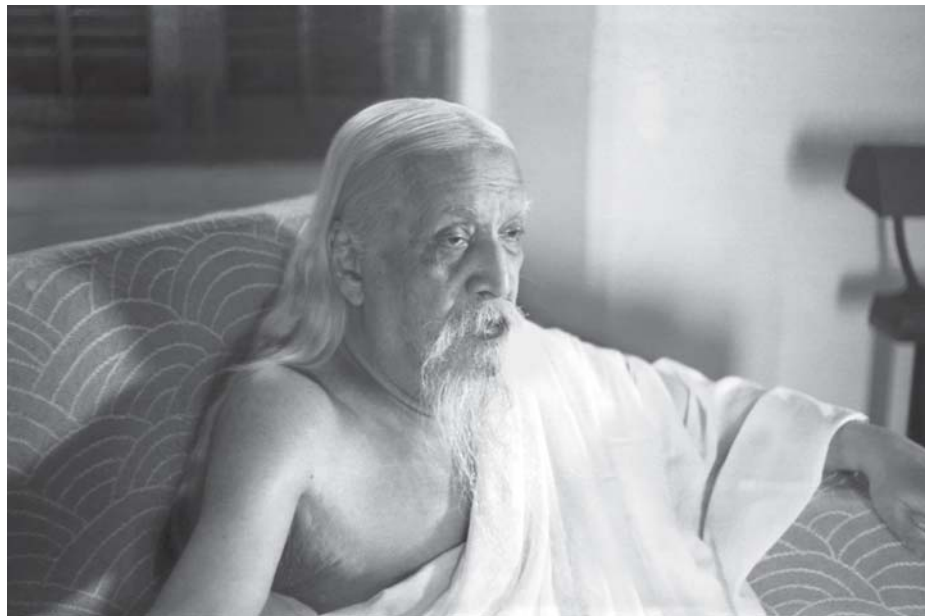
sonal. Sri Aurobindo did not wink an eye during the entire ten minutes I was watching him, he did not seem to belong to that impersonal setting.” During an interview in Paris, 40 years later to the day (25 April 1990), Cartier-Bresson recollected thus: “My impressions of the Mother—a power woman. Sri Aurobindo was very remote. I



*This is a cropped close-up view from one of Cartier-Bresson's photos of Sri Aurobindo in his room. (Photo courtesy Sri Aurobindo Ashram)*

had ‘a tremendous meditation’ far away.”<sup>6</sup>

From the spiritual perspective, on the other hand, Cartier-Bresson’s portraits of Sri Aurobindo sitting in his armchair stand among the most substantial documents in human history. The side shots, in which Sri Aurobindo’s face is less prominent, are unproblematic, so we shall review these



*This is one of several side-shots of Sri Aurobindo by Cartier-Bresson. (Photo courtesy Sri Aurobindo Ashram)*

quickly. What one sees in these photos is a meditating sage who seems to have materialized on the film from the future. Sri Aurobindo barely appears to belong to this time and place: in the inner eye, one sees him as bolt of frozen lightning on the verge of striking, or perhaps striking so continuously that one can no longer distinguish rest and motion; outwardly, it seems as if the chair itself is about

to launch forward and fly. Time has ceased, and the Timeless is radiating out of Sri Aurobindo’s figure with diamond intensity....

However, the frontal compositions are more perplexing, especially the head-on portrait, so we shall dwell on it further. The first and most obvious feature of Sri Aurobindo’s last portrait is that he is not smiling. Also, he gives no revealing gesture or motion of note, and the composition seems rather static. There is nothing here to suggest transcendent bliss, not even that distantly tender smile from the Beyond that Welling captured in his famous bust of Sri Ramana Maharshi, shot only a few years earlier.<sup>7</sup> On the surface, at least, Sri Aurobindo seems almost the antithesis of the jivanmukti that he was: his face is lined, his expression serious, and the atmosphere grave. This is not the delightful face of Krishna, rather the physiognomy of a warrior who has marched thousands of miles on foot and has yet, to borrow Frost’s famous line, miles to go before he sleeps. Even the Mother later commented that she was surprised by Sri Aurobindo’s look, for it was not the ever-patient and sweet visage she had come to know and love. “He... he let go...” she said poignantly.<sup>8</sup>





And yet, I feel, there is a deeper message and a divine purpose behind Sri Aurobindo's solemnity, and artistically the inner dynamism of this photo is only accentuated by the composition's seemingly static weight. For what we do see in Sri Aurobindo's bare, frank look is the face of the supramental Avatar preparing to confront Death, to plunge into the very heart of Darkness and sow there the first seeds of the Life Divine. Sri Aurobindo looks grave here because the moment literally is grave. Make no mistake, this is no light lila of a God who does not feel the pain of human clay, it is the fully conscious surrender of the God-head who has become the death-bound suffering that we are. Truly, this last photograph of Sri Aurobindo is the modern expression of Christ on the Cross, only the passion is inner not outer, and the Lord is dying in order to secure for us life everlasting on earth, not in some hereafter.

Speaking for myself, I feel that Sri Aurobindo's last portrait has a unique power of spiritual healing. It is not an easy photograph to live with, granted, and during my lighter moods and in the midst of my quotidian concerns I cannot bear to contemplate it deeply, for it is a profoundly serious testament. But when I am down, when I am feeling defeated, when I have reached the utmost limit of my endurance, then this photograph comes to me. Especially it speaks to me in my absolutely darkest passages, during those dire and decisive inner moments when it feels my very soul is on the verge of relinquishing the battle because the world's burden is too great and my own failings unfixable.

When I look to Sri Aurobindo's last portrait in such times of critical need, then suddenly he looks different: I see that his face is my face, is every human face, is the Divine who has taken birth on earthly soil. I feel that his fatigue is my fatigue, is all human fatigue, is the Divine who has assumed the burden of human toil. I look into



Cartier-Bresson's photo of the darshan on 24 April 1950.  
(Photo courtesy Sri Aurobindo Ashram)

Sri Aurobindo's left eye, and am taken in by the soft, receptive compassion of the divine Friend who understands my pains and errors because he shares them, whose sympathy is boundless because he walks right at my side and knows intimately every rock and pitfall on the Path. I look into his right eye, and am met by the steady gaze of Wisdom that looks dispassionately upon the labour of ages and fills me with a calm knowledge that the final fruits of evolution are as certain as the failures of the moment now seem. I look again upon the lined visage of the great Warrior who has fought so much, endured so much, and a new resolve enters my soul. I think "well, since He has borne so much for me, I must give something small in return. I will go one more step forward on the path—in honour of Him." And so my heart warms again, and my will returns. I feel the arm of the great Protector around me, and the

grim predator of darkness that was stalking my soul recedes, banished by a diamond Light that shines out from behind one human face.

This, for me, is the significance of Cartier-Bresson's final portrait of Sri Aurobindo. It extends to struggling mortals the helping hand of an Avatar who otherwise might have remained forever impersonal and distant to us. For though Savitri and The Life Divine bring us glowing intimations from a brighter future, the weaker parts of us needed something else, too—this visual reminder that the supramental Avatar was also human like us. He is not only above and beyond us, He is also with and inside us, feeling our feelings, fighting our battles, facing the same mortality we face. Evidently, Sri Aurobindo knew exactly what he was getting in Cartier-Bresson, and he decided the French photographer was the right instrument to convey the Avatar's parting gift to a suffering humanity—a gift made all the greater by its very humanity.

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## Essays

### Sri Aurobindo, the Mother, and the Integral Movement

by M. Alan Kazlev

*I would like to consider here the relation between Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's Integral Yoga, the Integral tradition of thought, and its newest incarnation the (for sake of a better word) Integral movement. Because Integral Yoga is a tradition that engages in the world, some observations are offered of ways that Sri Aurobindo, the Mother, and the Integral Yoga community might be able to contribute to the contemporary Integral movement, and conversely what, in a spirit of collaboration, the current academic and grass roots initiative within Integral philosophy might have to offer the Integral Yoga community.*

Beginning in 1912,<sup>1</sup> Sri Aurobindo discovered through his own exploration in consciousness a new yoga or spiritual path, which later became known as Integral (*purna* – full or complete) Yoga. It was and is a synthesis of all the previous yogas,<sup>2</sup> an all-inclusive approach that encompasses all of life,<sup>3</sup> a psychology that incorporates all aspects of the being,<sup>4</sup> and a philosophy that brings together the insights and wisdom of traditional India (Vedas, Vedanta, and Tantra), the non-sectarianism of the Bengali Renaissance, Western classicism, and the secular evolutionary understanding of 19<sup>th</sup> century European thought. All of these elements, and Sri Aurobindo's own original yogic experiments,<sup>5</sup> converged in a radical new approach, a means by which the whole Earth can be transformed, through the bringing down of the Divine Truth-Consciousness, the Supermind, and establishing it here.

When Sri Aurobindo was joined by



Alan contemplates the world's integral thinkers. (Photo courtesy Alan Kazlev)

Mirra Alfassa, who he would appoint the Mother of the new ashram,<sup>6</sup> she brought her own contributions: French and Japanese aesthetics through her interest in art and culture,<sup>7</sup> her strong practical organization in areas such as education, and her knowledge of Kabbalistic and Hermetic occultism via Max Theon, and practical occultism through his English spiritualist wife Madame Theon.<sup>8</sup> Amazingly, Theon had arrived at his own discovery of the Divinization of the material body (the *corps physique glorieux*) that paralleled Sri Aurobindo's.<sup>9</sup>

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's yogic partnership was thus also a profound integral union of different cultures, practices, and realities that shared a common aim, the transformation of the Earth through the establishment of a new Divine species, the supramental race.<sup>10</sup> The life and work of these two great Teachers, considered to be two equal Divine incarnations,<sup>11</sup> became the foundation of the Integral Yoga community. It is a community that has no leaders apart from the inner presence of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. In this sense, every Integral Yoga sadhak equally continues, both in the outer world and on the inner dimensions of sadhana, the mighty work established by the two Founders.

Yet while Integral Yoga constitutes one tradition, an intensely spiritual and yogic one, there has developed in the

West (specifically in America) in the last fifteen or so years a quite distinct tradition, also called Integral,<sup>12</sup> that similarly integrates East and West, academia and spirituality, in a universal framework. Like Integral Yoga, it proposes an evolutionary model that envisages a collective ascent and transformation of consciousness,<sup>13</sup> a psychology concerned with all aspects of consciousness,<sup>14</sup> and a spiritual practice that addresses all aspects of the being.<sup>15</sup> And although the many important conceptual differences should not be glossed over, the similarities are such that at times it seems like a single multi-faceted intellectual and spiritual tradition is being described. Western integralism even counts among its main founders Sri Aurobindo,<sup>16</sup> although more often he is only considered one among many.<sup>17</sup>

How did this strange state of affairs, the similarities between Indian and Western Integral philosophy, come about? And what opportunities are there for cooperation and dialogue between such "evolutionary allies?"<sup>18</sup> For the answers we need to backtrack a little.

#### Intellectual and cultural context of Integral Yoga

To begin with, I do not believe it is accurate to say that in developing their yoga, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother were working in a vacuum. Nature (*prakriti*) was already developing these ideas, unfolding the collecting consciousness of humanity. Thus, when Sri Aurobindo chose the word Integral to designate his system of yoga, and as the translation for the Sanskrit *purna*, he was selecting a term that had and would also be independently chosen by a number of innovative European scholars and visionaries in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in quite similar contexts. The implication being that, rather than being totally unique, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother emerge as the most profound representatives of a larger evolutionary tendency in human consciousness, which for the sake of convenience is called here "Integral consciousness."<sup>19</sup> And if phrases like "Integral consciousness" or "Integral move-



ment”<sup>20</sup> are felt to be unsuitable because they are contemporary terms less than a decade old, their equivalent, much better known terms such as “New Age” (Alice Bailey), “New Paradigm” (Fritjof Capra and others), or “Planetarisation” (Teilhard de Chardin) can just as adequately be employed.<sup>21</sup> What they all have in common are at least several of the following themes: an evolutionary, developmental, or progressive understanding of consciousness or even the cosmos as a whole; a universal, “big picture” approach which includes rather than rejects more one-sided perspectives; transcending dichotomies such as spirit and matter, and logic and imagination, awakening to trans-rational spiritual awareness, and a new socio-cultural or collective integral consciousness. But because each particular stream of “integral,” or “New Age,” or “planetary” consciousness considers itself and its own representatives or founders the highest and most paradigmatic, and at times tends to misinterpret rival streams, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother relevance re-

remains little known outside the Integral Yoga community. It may be helpful therefore to provide a bit of historical background (a more detailed coverage will appear in a forthcoming issue of *Sraddha*).

Among the many roots and prequels of Integral yoga and philosophy in its various forms could be mentioned the yoga of the Tamil siddhas such as Turumular and Ramalingam;<sup>22</sup> the Bengali Renaissance of Ram Mohan Roy, Ramakrishna, and Vivekananda<sup>23</sup> with its rejection of cultic exclusivity (“only my religion is true”) and integration of European and Indian thought; the Lurianic-Hassidic tradition of Kabbalah, which first proposed that man can participate in the redemption of the cosmos (*tikkun olam*), from which milieu Max Theon came; the German idealism and *Naturphilosophie* of Goethe, Kant, Hegel, Schelling, and Oken; the Russian Cosmism<sup>24</sup> of Nikolai Fyodorov, Konstan-

tin Tsiolkovsky (the Russian father of rocket science), Peter Ouspensky, and Vladimir Vernadsky, who foresaw things such as planetary consciousness (Vernadsky’s Noosphere) and the future role of technology and the possibility of a perfected immortal human existence (Fyodorov, Tsiolkovsky); the East-West synthesis of Madame Blavatsky’s Theosophy, from which the New Age movement would later develop; the 19<sup>th</sup> century Russian philosopher Vladimir Solovyov<sup>25</sup> founder of the Sorbost (Russian for “Integral”) movement, and Sergei Bulgakov, whose theology like Solovyov’s includes the principle of Sophia (Wisdom) as the female polarity of the Divine,<sup>26</sup> with obvious parallels to the Supreme Mother in Sri Aurobindo’s spiritual philosophy; and the process philosophy of Henri Bergson, whose philosophy has many parallels with Sri Aurobin-

*In view of the fact that there were and are so many parallel and converging themes and philosophies floating around, only a few of which are mentioned here, it is not so surprising to discover parallelism between Integral Yoga and integral philosophy in the West.*

do.<sup>27</sup> Bergson’s theory of creative evolution exerted a strong influence on later evolutionary philosophers such as Teilhard de Chardin and Alfred North Whitehead (Process philosophy).

In addition to all of the above, there seem to have been at least half a dozen independent, and only later converging, developments of Integral thought in the opening decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: the Cosmic philosophy of Max and Alma Theon (with which the Mother became involved), the Anthroposophy of Rudolf Steiner, the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo, the integral sociology of Pitirim Sorokin, the evolutionary theology of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and, several decades later, the historical phenomenology of Jean Gebser. This is not even to mention the already referred to Cosmist and Sorbost movements that developed in Russia around this time. And whilst some groups

such as the Theons and their cosmic initiative are now very little known, others have been much more successful. Steiner’s ideas have been very influential in continental Europe, Teilhard has become one of the central influences of the New Age movement, and Sorokin and Gebser have recently been rediscovered by the Integral movement. All four therefore deserve a brief coverage here, especially in view of similarities with each other and with Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy, and their convergence in a new emerging Integralist academic tradition (more on which a little later).

The Austrian esotericist and Goethean scholar Rudolf Steiner established a body of teaching which also conformed to the integral pattern. In 1906 Steiner contrasted “integral evolution” with “Darwinian evolution”, using the word integral in a similar manner to Sri Aurobindo and others.<sup>28</sup> He refers to the trilogy of thinking, feeling, and willing (or head, heart, and hands), which correspond to the mental, vital, and physical of Integral yoga. Steiner’s

etheric Christ is the guiding principle in cosmic evolution that reverses the fall into materialism and introduces a new mode of consciousness as the force of this transformation, and references the transmutation of the astral, etheric and physical body.<sup>29</sup> Here there is a parallel with the transformation of the gross and subtle body in Tantra and in the Tamil siddha tradition,<sup>30</sup> hinting even at the supramental transformation of Integral Yoga, although Steiner did not envisage a transformation of inconscient matter of the sort that Sri Aurobindo and Max Theon did.

Independently of Sri Aurobindo, the Russian-born American emigre and Harvard sociologist Pitirim Sorokin who developed an integral sociology, referring to the need for a complementary relationship between these three channels, physical, mental, and spiritual, as each provides its own unique form of knowledge and pre-



dicting the emergence of a future idealistic or integral society that will replace the current, sense-orientated society.<sup>31</sup> It was only later that he discovered Sri Aurobindo and spoke very highly of him.<sup>32</sup>

The French Jesuit paleontologist and evolutionary theologian Pierre Teilhard de Chardin taught that evolution and human consciousness are tending towards an “Omega Point,” a state of collective transcendence in the Divine consciousness,<sup>33</sup> which he identifies with Christ. Teilhard’s ideas have been compared with those of Sri Aurobindo.<sup>34</sup> Both Sri Aurobindo and Teilhard describe the Divine hidden in and emerging out of material evolution. Both considered the cosmos itself in a process of realizing or making manifest and external its own inherent divinity. But for Teilhard, the Omega Point meant a divinized humanity transcending the Earth and the material bases of evolution for a collective spiritual existence.<sup>35</sup> This is contrary to the more world-affirming approach to nature and its transmutation that Sri Aurobindo’s and the Mother’s statements on the supramental transformation suggest.

The Swiss phenomenologist and cultural historian Jean Gebser developed a similar theory of collective stages of consciousness, both associating the evolution of consciousness not only with socio-cultural change but even a transformation of physical reality itself. Gebser describes five distinct “structures” or “mutations” of consciousness, the archaic, the magical, the mythic, the mental-perspectival, and the Integral-Aperspective. This latter is a new, currently emerging structure that he predicted would replace the current mental-perspectival mode, and which will include and be transparent to all previous stages of consciousness. Like Sorokin, he came upon the word “Integral” independently of Sri Aurobindo.<sup>36</sup>

In view of the fact that there were and are so many parallel and converging themes and philosophies floating around, only a few of which are mentioned here, it is not so surprising to discover parallelism between Integral Yoga and Integral philosophy in the West. It seems that both stem from a common zeitgeist.

## Ken Wilber’s Integral Movement

Perhaps the most influential contemporary Western figure here is Ken Wilber, a prolific writer on psychology, spirituality and philosophy who is more of a synthesizer of the ideas of others than an original visionary like Steiner, Sri Aurobindo, Teilhard, or Gebser. I tend to use the term “Wilberian” to refer to this specific strand of Integral thought, and the same word has also more recently been officially applied to the academic movement that developed from Wilber’s writings.<sup>37</sup> I should point out here that in referencing the Wilber-inspired Integral movement alongside the Integral Yoga community, I am not implying any close similarity or even natural connection. These are simply two evolutionary streams I have been associated with for many years, one more intimately and spiritually, the other less so. So the reason for this essay is more an accident of circumstances than a deliberate thematic association.

The Wilber-inspired Integral community dates to 1998, when Wilber and some of his students founded the Integral Institute,<sup>38</sup> bringing together a large number of intellectual, artistic, new paradigm, and New Age “thought leaders.” Thanks to an aggressive marketing approach, the institute was able to associate “Integral” in the New Age/New Paradigm memesphere with his philosophy, especially with his inclusive typology of “all quadrants and all levels” or “AQAL.”<sup>39</sup>

The coincidence of name, the universal approach of the Integral Institute initiative, and the shared theme of evolutionary spirituality and global transformation, were to inspire my own interest in this movement back in 2004, when I stumbled upon one of these websites. Up until that time, I had only associated “Integral” in a spiritual context with the transformative yoga and philosophy of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Hence it was not surprising that I had mixed feelings here; on the one hand I was pleased to see that these insights were being taken up and popularized by a successful new paradigm writer, on the other, the marketing hype of the early

Integral Institute left me uneasy, there was a sense of Wilber and his associates trying to appropriate the Integral brand as their own. It turns out that I was not alone in these concerns,<sup>40</sup> and I admit it soured my appreciation of Wilber’s achievements.

I had first become acquainted with Wilber’s work in 1979 or 1980, about the same time that I discovered Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. At that time he was still associated with transpersonal psychology, and was the author of a model of “spectrum of consciousness” involving zones of fragmentation or unity, depending whether one moves “up” or “down” the scale.<sup>41</sup> Over the years his work progressed through a number of iterations, becoming increasingly complex, until the development of “AQAL” in the mid 1990s, and “post-metaphysics” circa 2002. His appeal lies in his enthusiastic and accessible presentation of a single framework that can encompass all human knowledge, although his treatment of original sources is often unreliable, and there is a tendency in his more recent work to privilege the concerns of secular academia over both traditional and contemporary esoteric insights.<sup>42</sup>

Although a great admirer of Sri Aurobindo,<sup>43</sup> Wilber’s primary influences and interests were always in the fields of humanistic, transpersonal and developmental psychology, cognitive science, non-dual Vedanta and Mahayana Buddhism, and, more recently, contemporary academic philosophy. Because Wilber comes from such a very different spiritual tradition and practice to Sri Aurobindo,<sup>44</sup> it is not surprising that his interpretation of Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy and yoga would be less than accurate.<sup>45</sup> As a result, a very large part of the Western Integralism’s understanding regarding this topic tends to be filtered through the lens of Wilber’s second-hand interpretations, rather than through original source material or dialogue with representatives of the Integral Yoga community. It is not surprising therefore that such essential teachings as the psychic transformation, supramentalization, and the central role of the Mother and the Supreme Shakti remain almost





totally unknown in the Integralist community, although it is hoped that this latter situation can change with future co-operation and dialogue.

For the first six or eight years of its existence, the Integral community was an enthusiastic but insular collective based around uncritical adoption and application of Wilber's own ideas. But as scholars, intellectuals, and general readers and internet authors became acquainted with Wilber's philosophy, they noticed more and more problems. Many of these were posted on a website called *The World of Ken Wilber*, later very unfortunately renamed *Integral World*, thus reinforcing the belief, rejected even by Wilber's most enthusiastic supporters, that "Wilber = Integral." The website was and is maintained by Wilber's biographer and former theosophist Frank Visser, who originally was among those defending Wilber from criticisms, but then became more sympathetic to the critics' arguments. Inevitably, there was a very acrimonious falling out between Wilber and his loyal supporters (called "fans," reinforcing the American pop culture setting) on the one hand, and Visser and other critics who nevertheless still support an Integral worldview, on the other.<sup>46</sup> This was in 2006, coincidentally at the same time I was first working on material for submission to *Integral World*. At the time it was my intention to show the superiority of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's Integral teachings to the more secular and anti-metaphysical approach of Wilber, as well as pointing out other problems such as the abusive guru phenomenon.<sup>47</sup> Unfortunately, like others involved in this faction fight, my emotions took over, and hence the material I wrote at the time includes some that was more polemic and aggressive in tone than it should have been. Nevertheless, I did receive favourable feedback from it, although my taking such a partisan approach probably also served to help reinforce the schism and general sense of "judgmentalism."

After a year or two, the culture of criticism had died down, but so had much of the activity in the grass roots Wilberian community. This may have been due in

part to an imbalance of mental and lack of an authentic yogic presence (more on this shortly), and in part to a reduction in Wilber's output in recent years; with less new material there was less intellectual stimulation. Yet at the same time, the academic side of the Integral initiative continued to grow. This academic Integralism, based on commentary, critique, and pragmatic application of Wilber's writings and to a lesser extent those of other mainstream Integralist authors by students and "scholar-practitioners," led to the emergence of an entire new academic discipline, called Integral Theory,<sup>48</sup> and a community of scholars and academics who are slowly gaining recognition in mainstream academia.

This new initiative involves neither Wilberian literalism nor blanket criticism, but a "Second Wave" of Integral critiquing and inquiry that has emerged from the "First Wave" associated with Wilber and his early co-workers.<sup>49</sup> And especially as academia tends to be suspicious of initiatives or movements based around only a single individual, this community has, starting in 2008, begun hosting biennial conferences<sup>50</sup> featuring a wide range of participants, papers, panels, and speakers (including both supporters and critics), and establishing Integral Theory as an authentic academic tradition in its own right.<sup>51</sup> This has been accompanied even in the mainstream Wilberian movement by a broadening out and acknowledging of other "integral pioneers," and a shift of integral discourse from an earlier "Wilber-centric" to a more liberal "Wilber-based" approach.<sup>52</sup> Another positive development of Wilberian academia is a shift from an obsession with mental categorizing in terms of quadrants and levels that dominated the earlier, AQAL-based, Integral Theory,<sup>53</sup> to the more dynamic and interactive "post-metaphysical" enactment approach.<sup>54</sup>

This new academic Integralism is already contributing to the establishment of a more holistic and spiritual culture by chipping away at the hegemony of mainstream intellectual conservatism. In the last few years the respected State University of New York (SUNY) Press has part-

nered with the Integral Institute both to distribute the *Journal of Integral Theory and Practice* (a peer-reviewed Wilberian journal) and to publish a new book series on Integral Theory, with four volumes published in 2010 and more planned or on the way.<sup>55</sup> The books are edited by Sean Esbjörn-Hargens, perhaps the foremost academic in the Wilberian tradition, and one of the main advocates of a more open approach and dialogue, leaving behind the self-limiting fan-critic dichotomy of the earlier Integral community.

### Potentials for collaboration

This brings us to the second part of this essay. In view of the spirit of openness and intellectual honesty in Wilberian academia, an opportunity presents itself for collaboration. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's teachings and the Integral Yoga community have much to contribute to the current Wilberian academic initiative, which conversely has much to offer as regards the Integral Yoga community's interaction with modernity. At the same time, there are many in each group, perhaps a majority, who are happy in following their respective particular approach, and there is absolutely nothing wrong with them continuing to do so. In other words, while neither of the two traditions *needs* the other, each has something it can contribute or share. In this regard I have greatly broadened my position relative to four to five years ago, when I argued simplistically and dogmatically (and I am sure counter-productively) on the *Integral World* website for the superiority of the Integral Yoga approach over the AQAL/Integral approach. As the Mother says: "Take all...(a)nd then you will begin to understand."<sup>56</sup>

A starting premise can be that each tradition has both strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, each can gain something from the other, as well as contribute something to the other. This applies of course not only in the Wilberian and Aurobindonian contexts, but in the context of all New Age, New Paradigm, Evolutionary spiritual, and Planetary Ascendance



visionaries and teachings past and present. I am only considering Integral Yoga and Integral Theory here because these are two groups I am familiar with, not because they are the most alike. Indeed, there is much more similarity between Teilhard and Sri Aurobindo, or Russian Cosmism and Integral Yoga, than there is between Sri Aurobindo and Wilber. So in a sense the present comparison is taking the teachings of two of the *least similar* visionaries, rather than the two most. Perhaps were these two approaches less radically different, any dialogue between them would not be as radical, just as Sri Aurobindo's Integral philosophy gains its power from its integration of the "two negations" of this-worldly materialism and other-worldly asceticism and mysticism<sup>57</sup> in the higher synthesis of Integral Yoga.

Some of Integral Theory's shortcomings include:

(a) an imbalance of mental classification and neglecting of other activities and faculties. An attempt at correcting this unbalance has been made with "Integral Life Practice,"<sup>58</sup> and this worthy endeavor can only be greatly enhanced by incorporating elements and insights of the far more profound Yoga developed by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

(b) a simplistic representation of Reality, generally in terms of a single evolutionary series, into which all psychological, sociological, and spiritual and yogic models are forced. Here we find Sri Aurobindo's levels of being included with little or no understanding. This schema is still accepted uncritically in the field of Integral Theory.<sup>59</sup>

(c) a predominantly secular worldview that rejects both traditional and contemporary metaphysical and esoteric insights as unnecessary metaphysical "pregivens."<sup>60</sup> This is an area that not only Integral Yoga philosophy, but perennialism<sup>61</sup> and esotericism<sup>62</sup> can restore valuable understanding that the secular West has unwittingly or deliberately discarded.

(d) Finally, a lack of authentic yogic techniques and realizations, which means a reliance on the poor insights and half-lights of Western narcissistic New Age

spirituality, as popularized by the human potential movement and Rajneesh, with the inevitable slide into abusive behavior by some (although by no means all!) prominent figures and leaders of the western Integral movement.<sup>63</sup> I would even go so far as to suggest that the whole problem of the authoritarian self-appointed guru mode of leadership, endemic in the Western New Age / New Paradigm movement, including the mainstream Integral community, can be traced back to a lack of psychic receptivity.

In this regard it is not unusual that, in referencing Sri Aurobindo's teachings, Western Integralist thought leaders do not acknowledge the role of the Mother, or the psychic transformation. Because of this, when Sri Aurobindo is addressed, it is only from an intellectual perspective, and even then only certain aspects of his philosophy. The Mother is almost totally unknown in the Integral movement (only the followers of Andrew Cohen acknowledge her,<sup>64</sup> albeit as simply one evolutionary visionary among many), or for that matter in the New Paradigm or New Age movement. In this context, the New Paradigm is an initiative of mental or spiritualized mental reform, and the corresponding New Age is its vital and vital-mental aspect (and vice-versa).

The above four points are likely to be obvious to anyone coming from an Integral Yoga perspective. Yet just as Integral Yoga can contribute to Integral Theory and the Integral movement in general in all of the above areas, so Integral Theory is able to address certain shortcomings in the current Integral Yoga community. These include a tendency towards religionism and hagiography, and insufficiently addressing 21<sup>st</sup> century Western academic concerns. I should mention here that the Western academia and Integral Theory that is being referred to here is not related to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century eurocentric analysis of Indian culture that Sri Aurobindo and others critiqued,<sup>65</sup> but rather to methodologies that incorporate interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary, and cross-cultural studies, a sensitivity to historical and cultural contexts, academic rigor, and, in

the case of Integral Theory, full recognition of transpersonal and mystical states of consciousness. And if I have fewer criticisms regarding the Integral Yoga community than I do for Integral Theory, this may simply reflect my own greater compatibility with the former.

(a) The danger of excessive religionism is well known, but less acknowledged is the reluctance among many sadhaks to understand Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in any but the most idealized terms, as if they had no human weaknesses and never existed in a historical and human context. Yet clearly it was this latter that was responsible for the extremely negative reactions by several members of the Integral Yoga community towards Peter Heehs' ground-breaking academic biography of Sri Aurobindo.<sup>66</sup>

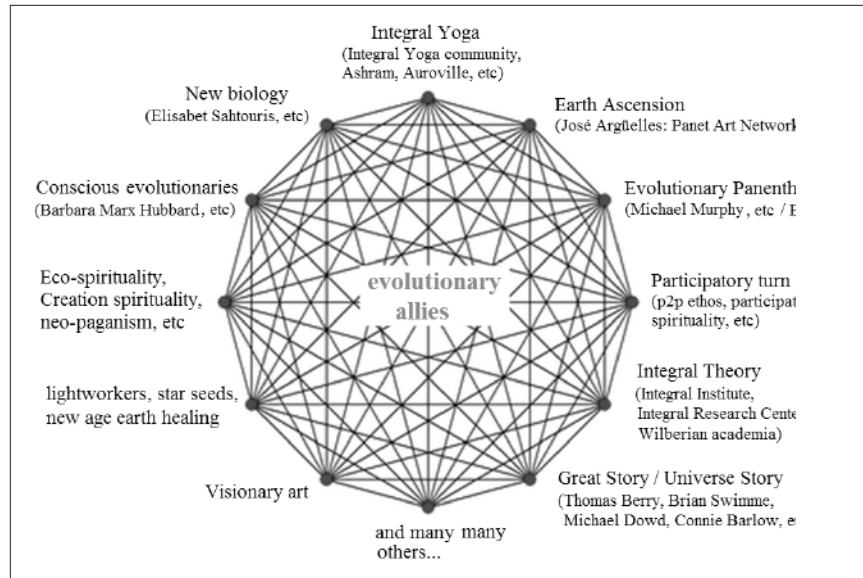
I am certainly not saying here that the Integral Yoga community (or any other spiritual or yogic group) has to buy into historical reductionism. Nor that Peter Heehs' biography gives the total picture (obviously by its very nature it can only deal with the external material reality, not inner occult events),<sup>67</sup> or that it is free of criticism. But just as on the esoteric and transcendent level every great avatar and prophet accesses and embodies universal Truths and uses these as a force for transformation, so it is equally the case that on the exoteric or outer level they are still human beings embedded in history and circumstances, and conditioned by personal and socio-cultural factors. This exoteric view of history is something that the Western academics emphasize a lot, and in this regard Integral Theory and similar approaches can provide a counterpart to the esoteric approach of Integral Yoga, both being totally valid in their own right. An integral perspective and broad and adaptable mentality can incorporate both exoteric and esoteric, historical and mystical, empirical and occult; as it recognizes each aspect supporting and enhancing the other. And a truly integral, psychic surrender to the Mother's Presence is able to accommodate all rational historical analysis without being in the least perturbed, as these can only add to, rather than reduce, the



infinity of the One to which Surrender is offered. In this way even the most skeptical academic methodologies and insights can be taken up by the Integral Transformation. This is in contrast to religious-based devotion where they are simply rejected and denied. All of which leads us to the second point of discussion.

(b) A failure for the most part to address Western academic concerns may seem irrelevant from the perspective of Integral Yoga, and those who pursue only the inner life do not have to concern themselves with the turnings of the physical mind. But because Integral Yoga seeks to transform the entire world, it has to address everything in the world, and that includes secular and skeptical academia. It is significant that Sri Aurobindo, in his philosophical masterwork *The Life Divine*, devotes so much care and attention to all manner of intellectual arguments and philosophical hypotheses; this is not the work of someone not interested in addressing the rational or “mental mind!”<sup>68</sup> In the more than nine decades since *The Life Divine* was written, many new philosophical schools and arguments have been developed, especially those that fall under the rather ambiguous rubric of “postmodernism,”<sup>69</sup> as well as many new discoveries as regards psychology, sociology, science, and other fields. And while the transcendent and occult truths presented in *The Life Divine* are not affected by the dualistic reasoning and exoteric discoveries of the surface mental being, a comprehensive account should still incorporate the insights, and refute the errors, of all of these contemporary approaches.<sup>70</sup>

As Integral Yoga is concerned with transmuting the world as a whole, it makes no sense to deny the concerns of Western science and academia, or recoil from the



extreme reductionism and skeptical materialism that it often displays; this is just reacting, it changes nothing. By paying attention to the insights and concerns of modernity, and working with like-minded initiatives, the Integral Yoga community can powerfully contribute to and help shape the emergence of a new global academic and spiritual tradition and culture.

In this way we may see the development of a new phase of Integral philosophy and spirituality, growing out of the convergence of various streams of evolutionary, planetary, and integral insight, and transcending the limitations of earlier and more sectarian and secular approaches. This will allow the integration of progressive Western academia (represented in the New Paradigm, Consciousness movement, and Integral community), grass roots planetary and evolutionary spirituality, Hermetic and New Age “lightworkers,” and advanced Integral Yoga and other forms of theurgy and self- and planetary-transformation. This will pave the way for the emergence of potent and novel expressions of Divine transformation, and further advance to the Divine victory, the supramentalized world of the future.

### Endnotes

1. Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press,

Pondicherry, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 1999, pp. 41ff.

2. “All life is yoga” became the motto of Sri Aurobindo’s sadhana, Heehs, p. 238; *The Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 1.

3. Sri Aurobindo, *Letters on Yoga*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Pondicherry, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. 1971, pp. 1243ff.

4. Sri Aurobindo, *Record of Yoga*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Pondicherry, 2 vols., 2001.

5. This being on 24 November 1926, “Siddhi Day,” the descent of the overmental Krishna, pp. 236ff; Georges Van Vrekhem, *Beyond the Human Species: The Life and Work of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother*, Paragon House, St. Paul, MI, 1998, pp. 143ff.

6. Nolima Das (ed.), *Glimpses of the Mother’s Life*, vol. 1, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1978, pp. 173ff; Sujata Nahar, *Mother’s Chronicles Bk. 2. Mirra the Artist*, Institut de Recherches Evolutives, Paris & Mira Aditi, Mysore, 1986.

7. Sujata Nahar, *Mother’s Chronicles, Bk. 3. Mirra the Occultist*, Institut de Recherches Evolutives, Paris & Mira Aditi, Mysore, 1989.

8. *Mother’s Agenda*, Institute for Evolutionary Research, New York, 1982 vol. 3, p. 45; Sri Aurobindo, *Mother India*, May 1974, pp. 349-50; A.B. Purani, *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Pondicherry, 1982, p. 140; and diagram at <<http://www.kheper.net/topics/Theon/Materialisms.html>>.

9. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Pondicherry, 10<sup>th</sup> ed., 1977, pp. 971ff; *Mother’s Agenda*; Satprem, *The Mind of the Cells*, Institute for Evolutionary Research, New York, 1982.

10. Van Vrekhem, *Beyond the Human Species*, pp. 103ff. While the principle of





the avatar or Divine incarnation is central to Viashvanite and other forms of Hinduism, equivalents are found in Jainism (tirthankaras), Buddhism (bodhisattvas and buddhas), Sufism (the Qutb or cosmic pole), and, albeit in once-only form, Christianity. I prefer to use the term Great Realizer, or Realized being, as the popular New Age, New Paradigm, and Integralist term Enlightenment (sambodhi) has been cheapened by Eastern self-appointed gurus and equivalent Western pretenders to the extent that it has become equivalent to fake spiritual teacher. By the very fact that he or she has transcended egotism and self-striving, the Realizer transparently embodies the Supreme in human form. Of course, there are also degrees of Realization: Sri Aurobindo for example had four progressive realizations of brahman, vasudeva, parabrahman, and supermind (Heehs, *The Lives of Sri Aurobindo*, p. 232) and refers to five stages—higher mind, illumined mind, intuition, and overmind—intermediate between the ordinary mental consciousness and the Supermind (*The Life Divine*, pp. 938ff).

11. Various called the Integral approach, consciousness, culture, paradigm, philosophy, society, and worldview. See for example Steve McIntosh, *Integral Consciousness and the future of evolution*, Paragon House, St. Paul, MI, 2007, p. 2 (henceforth abbreviated to *Integral Consciousness*).

12. Compare for example Ken Wilber's *Up from Eden: A Transpersonal View of Human Evolution*, Shambhala Publications, Boston, 1981 and *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality: The Spirit of Evolution*, Collected Works of Ken Wilber, vol. 6, Shambhala, 2nd rev. ed., Boston & London, 2000, pp. 210-325, with Sri Aurobindo's *The Life Divine* and *The Human Cycle*.

13. Ken Wilber, An Integral Theory of Consciousness, *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 1997, 4 (1); Allan Combs, *The Radiance of Being: Understanding the Grand Integral Vision; Living the Integral Life*, Paragon House, St. Paul, MN, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 2002; A. Combs & S. Krippner, "Process, structure, and form: An evolutionary transpersonal psychology of conscious-

ness," *The International Journal of Transpersonal Studies*, 2003, 22, pp. 47-60.

14. G. Leonard, and M. Murphy, *The Life We Are Given: A Long-Term Program for Realizing the Potential of Body, Mind, Heart, and Soul*, Putnam, New York, 1995; Ken Wilber, Terry Patten, Adam Leonard, and Marco Morelli, *Integral Life Practice: How to Design Your Own Training Program for Body, Mind, and Spirit*, Integral Books, Boston, 2008.

15. Historical Integral Thinkers: Aurobindo, his Integral Yoga and Integral Vision, retrieved 11 February, 2011 <[http://integralism.com/origins-of-integralism\\_historical-integral-thinkers-aurobindo-his-integral-yoga-and-integral-vision\\_55.html](http://integralism.com/origins-of-integralism_historical-integral-thinkers-aurobindo-his-integral-yoga-and-integral-vision_55.html)>.

16. Michael Murphy, "On Evolution and Transformative Practice: in Appreciation of Ken Wilber," in Donald Rothberg & Sean Kelly (ed.), *Ken Wilber in Dialogue: Conversations with Leading Transpersonal Thinkers*, Theosophical Publishing House, Wheaton, IL, 1998, pp. 56-57) points to Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, Henry James srn, Bergson, Teilhard de Chardin, Jean Gebser, Alfred North Whitehead, Charles Harsthorne, Sri Aurobindo, and Ken Wilber as representatives of "evolutionary emanationism" or "evolutionary panentheism." Wilber himself (*Integral Psychology: Consciousness, Spirit, Psychology, Therapy*, Shambhala, 2000, p. 78) gives a similar list of what he terms "Integral pioneers," also including Goethe, Gustav Fechner, William James, Rudolf Steiner, James Mark Baldwin, Jürgen Habermas, and Abraham Maslow. Steve McIntosh (*Integral Consciousness*, pp. 160ff) gives a somewhat similar list (see also Paul Marshall, *Integral Consciousness and Academia Presentation* at the 6th Spanish Integral Conference Barcelona, October 2008, pp. 7-8. Retrieved 15 February, 2011, <<http://www.slideshare.net/asociacionintegral/integral-consciousness-and-academia-presentation>>). Perhaps the most comprehensive list is provided by Tom Huston, A Brief History of Evolutionary Spirituality, *What Is Enlightenment?* no. 35, Jan.-Mar. 2007, pp. 82-83, this being also the only Western Integralist reference

to also mention the Mother. "Integral" Defined, at the Integral Research Center [http://integralecolgy.org/integralresearchcenter/sites/default/files/INTEGRAL\\_Defined.pdf](http://integralecolgy.org/integralresearchcenter/sites/default/files/INTEGRAL_Defined.pdf) provides a few foundational quotes by Ken Wilber, Jean Gebser, and Sri Aurobindo, regarding the meaning of integral, these being considered, in a sense, the big three of the Integral worldview.

17. The phrase "evolutionary allies" was used at the AUM 2007 conference "Integral Yoga in Dialogue with the World," sponsored by the California Institute of Integral Studies and held at the Institute of Noetic Sciences (IONS) in Petaluma, California during 20 June to 24 June 2007 <<http://www.art-cohort.collaboration.org/aum/2007/index.html>>. See also my essay Evolutionary Allies: An Integral Approach, *Integral World*, Nov 2007, retrieved 18 February 2011, <<http://www.integralworld.net/kazlev15.html>>.

18. Adopting the term from McIntosh, *Integral Consciousness*, p. 2.

19. The term "Integral Movement" appears in Brad Reynolds, *Embracing Reality: The Integral Vision of Ken Wilber: A Historical Survey and Chapter-by-Chapter Guide of Wilber's Major Works*, J. P. Tarcher/Penguin, 2004, p. 302. Simultaneously, but quite independently, I began informally using the same words, for want of a better term, on my web pages in 2004 and 2005, and in my essays, written a year or two later, on the Integral World website.

20. Mark Woodhouse, *Paradigm Wars*, Frog Ltd., Berkeley, 1996, provides an excellent overview of the New Paradigm worldview. His book should be read in conjunction with Wouter Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1998. For an integral/academic perspective see also M. Molz & J. Gidley, A transversal dialogue on integral education and planetary consciousness: Markus Molz speaks with Jennifer Gidley. *Integral Review: A Transdisciplinary and Transcultural Journal for New Thought, Research and Praxis*, 2008, 6, and J. Gidley, An Other View of Integral Futures: De/re-



constructing the IF Brand, *Futures: The Journal of Policy, Planning, and Futures Studies*, 2009, vol. 42, no. 2. Terms such as New Age, New Paradigm, Integral, and Planetary are more or less synonymous and interchangeable, being different variations of the same consciousness shift.

21. T.R. Thulasiram, *Arut Perum Jyothi and Deathless Body*, University of Madras, India, 1980.

22. On the role of Paramhansa Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda in the development of Integral Yoga, see K. Singh, "Sri Ramakrishna: The Initiator of Integral Yoga," *The Journal of Conscious Evolution*, vol. 2, retrieved 1 February 2010 <<http://www.cejournal.org/GRD/Ramakrishna.htm>>, and *The Evolution of Integral Yoga*, Saarbrücken, Germany: VDM Verlag Dr. Mueller, 2008.

23. R. Djordjevic, Russian Cosmism (with the Selective Bibliography) and its Uprising Effect on the Development of Space Research, *Serbian Astronomical Journal*, 1999, Vol. 159. pp. 105-9.

24. S. Esbjörn-Hargens & M. Schwartz, eds., "Vladimir Solovyov and the Russian Tradition of Integral Knowledge," in *Dancing with Sophia: Integral Philosophy on the Verge*, SUNY, Albany, NY. (in process).

25. S. Bulgakov, *Sophia, the Wisdom of God: An Outline of Sophiology* (Library of Russian Philosophy), Lindisfarne Press, Hudson, NY, 1993.

26. Sisir Kumar Maitra, Sri Aurobindo and Bergson, *Sri Aurobindo Mandir*, 1942. Reprinted in *The Meeting of the East and the West in Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1956; A.C. Bhattacharya, *Sri Aurobindo and Bergson: A Synthetic Study*, Jagabandhu Prakashan, Gyanpur, 1972.

27. M. Molz & J. Gidley, A transversal dialogue on integral education and planetary consciousness: Markus Molz speaks with Jennifer Gidley. *Integral Review: A Transdisciplinary and Transcultural Journal for New Thought, Research and Praxis*, 2008, 6, p. 51.

28. Rudolf Steiner, *The Reappearance of the Christ in the Etheric*, Anthroposophic Press, Spring Valley, NY, 1983.

29. T.N. Ganapathy, The Concept of the Human Body in the Tirumandiram, in T.N. Ganapathy & K.R. Arumugam (eds.) *The Yoga of Siddha Tirumular (Essays on the Tirumandiram)*, Babaji's Kriya Yoga and Publications, St Etienne de Bolton, Quebec, 2006, pp. 323-363.

30. Lawrence T. Nichols, Integralism and Positive Psychology: A Comparison of Sorokin and Seligman, *The Catholic Social Science Review*, 2005, 10, pp. 21-40.

31. "(F)rom the scientific and philosophical standpoint, the works of Sri Aurobindo are a sound antidote to the pseudo-scientific psychology, psychiatry, and educational art of the West" quoted in *Mother India* (30 April 1949), 5, cited in Heehs, *Lives of Sri Aurobindo*, p. 404.

32. Pierre Teilhard De Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man*, Harper & Row, New York and San Francisco, 1955.

33. R.C. Zaehner, *Evolution in Religion: A Study in Sri Aurobindo and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1971; K. D. Sethna, *Teilhard de Chardin and Sri Aurobindo—A Focus on Fundamentals*, Bharatiya Vidya Prakashan, Varanasi, 1973; and *The Spirituality of the Future: A Search Apropos of R. C. Zaehner's Study in Sri Aurobindo and Teilhard de Chardin*. Fairleigh Dickerson University Press, Rutherford, NJ, 1981; and Beatrice Bruteau, *Evolution Toward Divinity: Teilhard de Chardin and the Hindu Traditions*, Theosophical Publishing House, Wheaton, IL, 1974. I have mentioned a few points and included some quotations at "The Evolution of Consciousness—Teilhard and Sri Aurobindo compared" <[http://www.kheper.net/topics/Aurobindo/Teilhard\\_and\\_SriAurobindo.htm](http://www.kheper.net/topics/Aurobindo/Teilhard_and_SriAurobindo.htm)>.

34. *The Phenomenon of Man*, Harper Perennial, pp. 270ff.

35. Gebser claims not to have been influenced by Sri Aurobindo in his use of the word "integral," and that their similar usage was a "coincidence." See *The Ever-Present Origin*, Ohio University Press, Athens, OH, 1985 p. 102, note 4.

36. Sean Esbjörn-Hargens specifically defines "Wilberian" in terms of an integral approach built on the foundation provid-

ed by Wilber, his proponents and critics (Introduction, in Esbjörn-Hargens (ed.) *Integral Theory in Action: Applied, Theoretical, and Constructive Perspectives on the AQAL Model*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 2010, p. 8, chapter online at <<http://www.sunypress.edu/pdf/62114.pdf>>).

37. <<http://www.integralinstitute.com>>. Wilber first used the word "integral" the previous year.

38. *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality*, pp. 197-8; *A Brief History of Everything*, Shambhala, 2nd ed., pp. 63ff; *Integral Spirituality*, pp. 18ff; Mark Rentschler, AQAL Glossary. *AQAL: Journal of Integral Theory and Practice*, 1(3), pp. 1-39, 2006; <[http://aqaljournal.integralinstitute.org/public/Pdf/AQAL\\_Glossary\\_01-27-07.pdf](http://aqaljournal.integralinstitute.org/public/Pdf/AQAL_Glossary_01-27-07.pdf)>.

39. See for example, Jennifer Gidley, An Other View of Integral Futures: De/reconstructing the IF Brand, *Futures: The Journal of Policy, Planning, and Futures Studies*, 2009, vol. 42, no. 2, pp. 125-133. More often such concerns are expressed informally. Integralist academic Sean Esbjörn-Hargens, however, denies that there is any such sinister plot, and points instead to the predominance of use and application of the term by Wilberian scholarship as a systematic intellectual theory (Esbjörn-Hargens, Introduction, in *Integral Theory in Action*, pp. 10ff). In the present paper and elsewhere therefore I contrast Integral Theory (Wilberian-based) with Integral Yoga (Sri Aurobindo and the Mother), and understand them as non-contradictory and ideally mutually supportive aspects of the Integral endeavor.

40. Ken Wilber, The Spectrum of Consciousness, *Main Currents*, vol. 31, no. 2, Nov-Dec 1974; *Psychologia Perennis: The Spectrum of Consciousness*, *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, vol. 7, no. 2, 1975; and *The Spectrum of Consciousness*, Quest Books, Theosophical Publishing House, Wheaton, IL, 1977.

41. For my initial critique of such "crypto-materialism" see my essay "Towards a Larger Definition of the Integral Part 2: The Wilberian Paradigm: A Fourfold Critique," *Integral World*, July 2006, part 2a, Physicalism, <<http://>



[www.integralworld.net/kazlev2.html](http://www.integralworld.net/kazlev2.html)>. For a more recent, comprehensive, and updated critique, as well as a suggested solution to the contradiction between the secular and the mystical approach, see M.A. Kazlev, *Integral Theory and Gnosis: Going beyond the “sceptical turn” to a more inclusive Integral Meta-Theory*. In review, *Journal of Integral theory and Practice* (Manuscript on request).

42. “India’s greatest modern philosopher-sage,” *Integral Psychology*, p. 83. See also for example Ken Wilber, Foreword to A. S. Dalal (ed.), *A Greater Psychology: An Introduction to the Psychological Thought of Sri Aurobindo*, Tarcher/Putnam, New York, 2000.

43. Essentially, a Buddho-Vedantic “yoga of ascent” (nonduality) rather than a supramental “yoga of descent.” I explain the difference in my essay *Towards a Larger Definition of the Integral*. Part Three: An Aurobindonian Vision. July 2006, *Integral World*, retrieved 21 October, 2009, <<http://www.integralworld.net/kazlev3.html>>.

44. See for example Brant Cortright, *Psychotherapy and Spirit: Theory and Practice in Transpersonal Psychotherapy*, SUNY 1997, p. 78; Garry Jacobs, *Response to Ken Wilber’s Integral Theory of Consciousness* (October 2001), <<http://www.integralworld.net/jacobs.html>>, and Rod Hemsell, *Ken Wilber and Sri Aurobindo: A Critical Perspective* <[http://www.infinityfoundation.com/mandala/i\\_es/i\\_es\\_hemse\\_wilber.htm](http://www.infinityfoundation.com/mandala/i_es/i_es_hemse_wilber.htm)>.

45. Frank Visser, *The Wild West Wilber Report: Looking Back on the Wyatt Earp Episode*, July 2006, *Integral World*, retrieved 12 October, 2009, <<http://www.integralworld.net/visser15.html>>.

46. Because my essay was of some length, it was divided into four parts. M.A. Kazlev, *Towards a Larger Definition of the Integral*; Parts 1 to 4, *Integral World*, 2006, <<http://www.integralworld.net/kazlev1.html>> to <<http://www.integralworld.net/kazlev4.html>>

47. Esbjörn-Hargens, Introduction, in *Integral Theory in Action*.

48. R.M. Fisher, *Historical Lament: Integral Initiatives*, Posted 20 March 2010 on *World’s Fearlessness Teachings*,

retrieved 6 August 2010 <<http://fearlessnesssteach.blogspot.com/2010/03/historical-lament-integral-initiatives.html>>. In creating distinctions such as “First” and “Second” waves it is important to realise how arbitrary and misleading such categorizations can be, and how easily prone to what the psychologist Jung would refer to as shadow projection (“first wave bad, second wave good”).

49. Esbjörn-Hargens, Introduction, in *Integral Theory in Action*, pp. 5-6; <<http://www.integraltheoryconference.org>>.

50. M.D. Forman & S. Esbjörn-Hargens, Prologue: The Academic Emergence of Integral Theory: Reflections on and Clarifications of the 1st Biennial Integral Theory Conference. In Esbjörn-Hargens (ed.) *Integral Theory in Action: Applied, Theoretical, and Constructive Perspectives on the AQAL Model*. State University of New York Press, Albany, 2010.

51. D.M. Zeitler, M.D. Forman & S. Esbjörn-Hargens, *Enacting an Integral Future*, PowerPoint presentation, 2010; Frank Visser, *A New Phase of Integral Theory? Impressions of the 2nd Biannual Integral Theory Conference at JFK University*, 29 July - 1 August 2010. Posted August 2010, *Integral World*, retrieved 17 August, 2010, <<http://www.integralworld.net/visser35.html>>.

52. Despite its many practical applications (S. Esbjörn-Hargens, *An Overview of Integral Theory—An All-Inclusive Framework for the 21st Century*, Integral Institute Resource Paper No. 1. 2009, pp. 18-22), AQAL remains a purely abstract notation, a sort of integralist Dewey Decimal System. And while many see an AQAL approach as central to Wilberian philosophy, it has also been criticized even by orthodox Wilberians as detracting from other, equally important elements of Wilber’s thought (H. Martin & K. Martin, *The Tyranny of AQAL: Report on the JFKU Integral Theory Conference*, July 2010, *Integral World*, posted August 2010, retrieved 24 August, 2010, <<http://www.integralworld.net/martin15.html>>).

53. The second Integral Theory Conference reflects this shift with its theme of “Enacting an Integral Future.” Sean Esb-

jörn-Hargens’ essay, *An Ontology of Climate Change: Integral Pluralism and the Enactment of Multiple Objects*, *Journal of Integral Theory and Practice*, 2010, vol. 5, no. 1, originally a paper presented at the conference, employs enactment-based Integral Pluralism to social issues around climate change.

54. Esbjörn-Hargens, Introduction, in *Integral Theory in Action*, pp. 6-7; SUNY Press blog *Integral Theory* posted 29 March 2010, retrieved 15 February, 2011, <<http://sunypress.blogspot.com/2010/03/integral-theory.html>>; *Integral Theory* at SUNY Press, retrieved 15 February, 2011, <[http://aqaljournal.integralinstitute.org/public/IT\\_SUNY.pdf](http://aqaljournal.integralinstitute.org/public/IT_SUNY.pdf)>; Publications : Enact Integral, “Books in Process”, retrieved 15 February 2011, <<http://www.enactintegral.com/publications>>.

55. *Mother’s Agenda*, vol. 1, Institute for Evolutionary Research, New York, 1979, p. 163.

56. *The Life Divine*, pp. 6ff.

57. Wilber, *Integral Spirituality*, pp. 201ff; Wilber et al. *Integral Life Practice*.

58. The oft-reproduced color diagram can be found in Wilber, 2006, *Integral Spirituality*, fig. 2.4, Esbjörn-Hargens & Zimmerman, *Integral Ecology: Uniting Multiple Perspectives on the Natural World*, Integral Books, Boston & London, 2009, color plate 2, and at various places online. Although Wilber is aware of the basics of Integral Yoga psychology (*Integral Psychology*, pp. 83-84) he has not attempted to use these insights to go beyond the one dimensional orientation (called “altitude”) of his own psychological schema, or indeed to correct the errors in the Integral post-metaphysics color diagram.

59. e.g., *Integral Spirituality*, p. 49. Wilber’s main inspiration here would seem to be W. Sellars, *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1997. For a synopsis of Sellars’ refutation of classical empiricism (and by implication metaphysics as well) see R. Audi, (ed). *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999, p. 828. Sellars’ position is inspired by that of





Kant. Wilber frequently references Sellars' concept of the "myth of the given" in both in the context of traditional metaphysics and contemporary spiritual and New Paradigm works.

60. Huston Smith's synthesis (*Forgotten Truth: The Primordial Tradition*, Harper & Row, New York, 1977) being perhaps the clearest exposition.

61. Esotericism, theosophy, and theoretical gnosis are overlapping or synonymous terms. Although esoteriological scholars so far come from a mostly European tradition (e.g., A. Faivre, *Access to Western Esotericism*, State University of New York Press, 1994; W. J. Hanegraaff, & J. Pijnenburg, (eds), *Hermes in the Academy*, Amsterdam University Press, 2009) there are also various forms of oriental esotericism (Tantra, Sant Mat, Taoist Yoga).

62. Be Scofield, Andrew Cohen and the Culture of Evolutionary Enlightenment. Posted 27 April 2010 on *God Bless the Whole World*, retrieved 12 August 2010, <<http://www.godblessthewholeworld.org/integral-abuse-andrew-cohen-and-the-culture-of-evolutionary-enlightenment.html>>; Justin Lehmann How to respond??? Genpo Merzel. Posted 7 February 2011 at Integral Life, retrieved 14 February 2011, <<http://integrallife.com/member/justin-lehmann/blog/how-respond-genpo-merzel>>. Note that Andrew Cohen, against whom there have been some serious allegations of abusive behaviour made by former devotees (I mentioned the implications of this for the Wilberian Integral community back in 2006 (Kazlev, Towards a Larger Definition of the Integral Part 2: The Wilberian Paradigm: A Fourfold Critique, Integral World, July 2006, part 2b Non-Integral Spirituality, retrieved 15 February 2011 <<http://www.integralworld.net/kazlev2.html>>), others, however, have reported seeing no such signs of abuse (e.g., Steve McIntosh, speaking in Boston, Lenox, and New York City, posted 31 January 2008, retrieved 15 February 2011 <[http://blog.stevemcintosh.com/2008\\_01\\_01\\_archive.html](http://blog.stevemcintosh.com/2008_01_01_archive.html)>), is the only leading figure in the mainstream Integral

movement who acknowledges the Mother.

63. Tom Huston, A Brief History of Evolutionary Spirituality, *What Is Enlightenment?* no. 35, p. 83; and A History of Evolutionary Spirituality, retrieved 15 February, 2011, <<http://www.andrewcohen.org/teachings/history-evolutionary-spirituality.asp>>. Sri Aurobindo's academic biographer Peter Heehs has also been published in Andrew Cohen's magazine; see Heehs, The Mother's Evolutionary Vision, *Enlightenment-Next*, no. 47, 2011.

64. Sri Aurobindo's *Is India Civilized?* followed a book of the same name by Tantric scholar John Woodroffe (whose scholarly works on Shaktism and Kundalini Yoga even today are still among the most important sources of Tantric studies in the West). Both were responding to a 1917 essay by the Scottish literary critic William Archer. (Manoj Das (ed.), Sri Aurobindo, *The Hour of God: Selections from His Writings*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, 1995, 2000, p. 187; Heehs, *The Lives of Sri Aurobindo*, pp. 294ff); although Heehs points out that Archer's essay was advanced for its time, insisting that Britain give India self-government.

65. See for example Fundamentalism and the Integral Yoga—Interview with Debashish Banerji, *Auroville Today*, February 2010 (online <[http://www.auroville.org/journals&media/avtoday/Feb\\_2010/Feb\\_2010\\_Page\\_2.pdf](http://www.auroville.org/journals&media/avtoday/Feb_2010/Feb_2010_Page_2.pdf)> and Raman Reddy, Reader's response (and Debashish's response), *Auroville Today*, March 2010 (online <[http://www.auroville.org/journals&media/avtoday/March\\_2010/Page%206.pdf](http://www.auroville.org/journals&media/avtoday/March_2010/Page%206.pdf)>). The pro-Heehs website is IY Fundamentalism <<http://iyfundamentalism.info/>>; the anti-Heehs website is The Lives of Sri Aurobindo <<http://www.thelivesofsriurobindo.com>> (the title here being misleading). A letter by Raman Reddy <[http://www.mirroroftomorrow.org/blog/\\_archives/2008/12/21/4029920.html](http://www.mirroroftomorrow.org/blog/_archives/2008/12/21/4029920.html)> gives examples of occult aspects of the Mother's life not considered by Heehs, although it is obvious that such material would not be accepted by mainstream academia, hence

it is not surprising it was excluded. In any case, from an integral point of view this disagreement is pointless, because each side presents a valid truth, and arguments only become harmful when one side claims a monopoly on truth and tries to censor the other.

66. Thus Sri Aurobindo wrote to Dilip (Bengali musician, novelist, poet, essayist, and disciple of Sri Aurobindo), "Neither you nor anyone else knows anything at all about my life; it has not been on the surface for men to see" (K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, *Sri Aurobindo: A Biography and a History*, Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, 1985, p. 19), although he was not altogether against such efforts as he sometimes made corrections to accounts by biographers (Sri Aurobindo's Life <<http://www.sriurobindosociety.org.in/sriuro/aurolife.htm>>).

67. Jyoti & Prem Sobel, *The Hierarchy of Minds*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1984, pp. 63ff.

68. The reference here is to Postmodernism as applied to philosophy rather than architecture or cultural studies. *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* defines postmodern philosophy as "relating to a complex set of reactions to modern philosophy and its presuppositions... (It typically opposes foundationalism, essentialism, and realism..." (R. Audi (ed.), *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1999, p. 725). Current Integral Theory is strongly influenced by this sceptical form of Postmodernism and its rejection of metaphysics, and attempts to reconcile it with mystical experience.

69. It should also be mentioned here that there is already an approach being made to a postmodernist-informed Integral Yoga philosophy, in the form of the Posthuman Destinies blog / website maintained by Rich Carlson and Debashish Banerji (Posthuman Destinies: Science, Culture, Integral Yoga <<http://www.sciy.org/>>). This blog is not in any way associated with the Wilberian movement.



## Spiritual activism, spiritual passivity and Integral Yoga

by Larry Seidlitz

Spiritual Activism has recently become a popular movement in the New Age spiritual literature and community, having received strong impetus from the work of Andrew Harvey, author<sup>1</sup> and founder of the Institute for Sacred Activism;<sup>2</sup> Deepak Chopra, author, and founder of the Chopra Foundation<sup>3</sup> and member of the evolutionary leaders network;<sup>4</sup> Michael Lerner, author<sup>5,6</sup> and founder of the Network of Spiritual Progressives;<sup>7</sup> Claudia Horwitz, author<sup>8</sup> and founder of Stone Circles;<sup>9</sup> Will Keepin, author and cofounder and director of Satyana Institute;<sup>10</sup> Carla Goldstein, director of the Women's Institute,<sup>11</sup> a unit of Omega Institute, as well others. It has also been an increasingly important topic in academics with influential books and papers by such writers as Barbara Marx Hubbard,<sup>12,13</sup> AnaLouise Keating,<sup>14,15</sup> Alastair McIntosh,<sup>16,17</sup> Roger S. Gottlib,<sup>18-23</sup> Ken Jones,<sup>24</sup> David Loy,<sup>25</sup> Donald Rothberg,<sup>26</sup> and many others.<sup>27</sup>

As AnaLouise Keating put it,

...spiritual activism is a visionary, experientially-based epistemology and ethics—a way of life and a call to action. Spiritual activism is spirituality for social change, spirituality that recognizes the many differences among us yet insists on our commonalities and uses these commonalities as catalysts for transformation... The spiritual/material, inner/outer, individual/collective dimensions of life are parts of a larger whole—interjoined in a complex, interwoven pattern. This synergistic synthesis of apparent opposites distinguishes spiritual activism both from mainstream “New Age” movements and from conventional organized religions. Whereas “New Age” belief systems focus almost, if



(Photo courtesy Larry Seidlitz)

not entirely, on the personal and thus leave the existing oppressive social structures in place, spiritual activism requires both the personal and the structural; it starts with each individual but moves outward as we challenge and transform unjust social structures.

Although spiritual activism begins at the level of the individual, it does not result in egocentrism, self-glorification, or other types of possessive individualism. Rather, spiritual activists combine self-reflection and self-growth with outward-directed, compassionate acts designed to bring about material change.<sup>28</sup>

As Harvey puts it, an impending perfect storm of crises facing the world, including overpopulation, global warming, environmental pollution, corporate greed and corporate controlled media is leading towards a catastrophe that can be averted only through a large-scale spiritually-based activism.<sup>29</sup> Harvey described the essence of his vision for confronting this storm as follows: “It is my prayer that this book and the vision of sacred activism it embodies will inspire the spread of interlinked cells of ‘Networks of Grace’ all over North America and the world. The time has come, in Teilhard de Chardin’s words, to “harness the energies of love, and so for the second time in the history of humanity discover fire”—in this case a grassroots

movement of the sacred fire of sacred activism organized through ‘networks of grace.’”<sup>30</sup> The Institute for Sacred Activism’s website is designed to facilitate the formation and spread of such activist networks.<sup>31</sup>

Various key principles for spiritual activism have been advanced by different proponents. Some emphasize compassion and related emotional and attitudinal underpinnings, others focus on the practicalities of effecting change on the ground. For example, the first of the Satyana Institute’s principles of spiritual activism cites the transformation of negative emotions such as fear, anger and despair to positive emotions of love, compassion, and purpose.<sup>32</sup> The Humanity Healing Network website emphasizes the role of compassion in several of its key principles.<sup>33</sup> The Integrative Spirituality website cites the values of love, forgiveness, inner connection with God and others, and equanimity as its first four principles, but then discusses other practical components such as mindfulness, creativity and strategy.<sup>34</sup> The Activist.org website, based on Horwitz’s work, focuses on practical strategies that have been used successfully in a variety of contexts. These methods include the “mapping of the range of people and groups who would be affected or connected to a particular issue, campaign, strategy;” “SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats);” “storytelling and ‘case studies;” and the “six-stage campaign framework, as developed and used by MLK [Martin Luther King] and the [American] Civil Rights movement . . . gathering info, doing education and leadership development, negotiate, increase motivation for struggle, direct action, new relationship with opponent;” “scenario work;” and “tableaus, that allow us to reconnect with a particular moment in time (from our activist work) and the visceral impact of success or transformation or pain.”<sup>35</sup>

### Spiritual activism and Integral Yoga

Sri Aurobindo’s and the Mother’s Integral Yoga provides a natural and strong



basis for spiritual activism, and can contribute a greater depth of insight to its spiritual dimensions. The aim of Integral Yoga embraces a spiritual transformation, a radical divinization of individual and collective life. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother continually contrasted their Integral Yoga with the traditional yogas of the past in India which they argued focused on an inner individual realization and neglected the transformation of the outer life of the individual or of humanity as a whole.<sup>36</sup> The transformation they envisaged is of a thorough-going nature, and would necessarily take within its sweep the more limited political, social, or environmental aims of spiritual activism. They argued that it was only by a radical change of the consciousness that this transformation of the outer life of humanity could be realized, starting with individuals, but progressively spreading to others and into communities.<sup>37</sup> While concentrating on effecting this transformation within themselves,<sup>38</sup> they worked tirelessly to guide and materially and spiritually assist others to this change,<sup>39</sup> laid out a detailed teaching and practical method for humanity to follow,<sup>40</sup> and acted inwardly through spiritual means on the world at large to assist it in its progressive change and transformation.<sup>41</sup>

Nevertheless, Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga and philosophy should not be taken as a full endorsement of spiritual activism as it is presently articulated. Integral Yoga is a discipline aimed at an integral union with the Divine, the Divine both in its passive aspect as the underlying ground of all existence, and in its dynamic aspect as the conscious Force which drives all energies in the universe; something far more profound than an activism motivated by spiritual as well as social justice and environmental concerns. It aims at the realization of a spiritual and supramental consciousness, a divine consciousness vastly superior to the ordinary human consciousness, involving a long and difficult discipline to achieve. It aims at a spiritual and supramental transformation of individual and collective life, not simply at social change based on moral or idealistic principles. The realization of the Self

and Spirit—silent, immobile, immutable—was seen as a necessary prerequisite to the realization of the dynamic supramental consciousness and force and its transformation of life.

Sri Aurobindo did not view outer social activism as a necessary or a primary outer activity that was to flow out of the inner spiritual realization. Indeed he suggested that during the development of this spiritual consciousness, the inner life would take precedence over the outer life, so that it would not be over-flooded and submerged by the ignorance, but as the spiritual consciousness developed further to the supramental consciousness, this vulnerability of the inner consciousness would be overcome, enabling a natural and full outflow of the established inner spiritual peace, love and power in a full engagement with the world. As Sri Aurobindo wrote:

The peace of God within will be extended in the gnostic experience of the universe into a universal calm of equality not merely passive but dynamic, a calm of freedom in oneness dominating all that meets it, tranquillising all that enters into it, imposing its law of peace on the supramental being's relations with the world in which he is living. Into all his acts the inner oneness, the inner communion will attend him and enter into his relations with others, who will not be to him others but selves of himself in the one existence, his own universal existence. It is this poise and freedom in the Spirit that will enable him to take all life into himself while still remaining the spiritual self and to embrace even the world of the Ignorance without himself entering into the Ignorance.<sup>42</sup>

Because the supramental consciousness embraces the world with which it feels its inalienable oneness, it naturally pours its influence on all around and contributes to the spiritual elevation and transformation of others and the world as whole. Thus, concern with and an extension of a powerful helping assistance on

others and the world would be a natural consequence of the integral realization, but this action could take a variety of different forms depending on the individual. It might well take predominantly the form of a silent inner action, but would be capable of taking whatever outer forms its inner knowledge and vision saw as useful or necessary.

In order to elucidate a perspective on spiritual activism based on Sri Aurobindo's teaching, it will be useful to clarify distinctions between what I will call true and false forms of both spiritual passivity and spiritual activism. After elaborating on each of these principles, I will come back to consider what an integration of true spiritual passivity and activism might look like in light of Sri Aurobindo's teachings.

### **False spiritual passivity**

At the basis of false spiritual passivity is inertia, plain and simple. This is perhaps the most likely and common mode that spirituality takes, because inertia is the dominant principle of our material existence, and the higher evolutionary principles of vital activity and mental understanding and equilibrium develop out of it, against its natural resistance. Its influence permeates, limits, and distorts the embodied life and mind's own characteristic tendencies.

False passivity is passive to all kinds of inner and outer influences. Inwardly, all kinds of mental movements—thoughts, perceptions, memories, imaginations—may impinge on the mind unfiltered and carry it away in various directions one after another. Whereas the mind may become concentrated and directed toward specific aims, it characteristically wanders and loses focus. At the same time, all kinds of lower vital movements—desires, cravings, impulses to action, anger, fear, worry, regret, disappointment, sadness, pride, sentimentalism, ambition, striving, struggle—are allowed to continue their unquiet, upsetting, and shifting play in the emotional and dynamic centers of the being. In addition to these varied inward influences, this type of passivity receives, with little or





no discernment, all types of mental, vital, and physical influences from without—from family, friends, and acquaintances in the immediate environment, from the media and internet including its unremitting onslaught of advertising, news, and entertainment, and the more subtle influences from the physical environments in which we live and move. All these influences impinge on the passive person in a continuous manner and the individual remains more or less unconscious and oblivious of their influences upon him. Sri Aurobindo characterizes it this way:

To the ordinary man who lives upon his own waking surface, ignorant of the self's depths and vastnesses behind the veil, his psychological existence is fairly simple. A small but clamorous company of desires, some imperative intellectual and aesthetic cravings, some tastes, a few ruling or prominent ideas amid a great current of unconnected or ill-connected and mostly trivial thoughts, a number of more or less imperative vital needs, alternations of physical health and disease, a scattered and inconsequent succession of joys and griefs, frequent minor disturbances and vicissitudes and rarer strong searchings and upheavals of mind or body, and through it all Nature, partly with the aid of his thought and will, partly without or in spite of it, arranging these things in some rough practical fashion, some tolerable disorderly order,—this is the material of his existence.<sup>43</sup>

Spirituality for this type of passive person may consist mentally in interjecting into this swarm of influences some recurrent ideas of the Divine or of some spiritual ideal, whether through reading or concentration, emotionally through movements of devotion, and/or physically through engaging in religious or spiritual activities such as going to a place for devotion activities, performing rituals, or engaging in a work which is seen as helpful to the spiritual life. Thus, upon this shift-

ing basis of unconscious influences, a measure of dynamic spiritual activity is attempted or achieved, but this is done in a consciousness still passively receptive to all kinds of other influences, interjected into this shifting flux at longer or shorter intervals. There is little or no filtering or curtailment of the mental, vital, and physical influences entering from within and from without. As a result, the spiritual activity takes place on an unsteady and shifting base, has to compete for time and attention with innumerable other influences, and when it does occur, is likely to be swept away by them without a moment's notice.

### **True spiritual passivity**

In contrast to this troubled state of affairs, true spiritual passivity is to be passive only to the Divine influence, and to be able to confront whatever outside forces or contacts that may enter one's psychological and spiritual space and atmosphere with equanimity, such that they do not upset or even touch the inner peace and contact with the Divine. While it is not advisable or incumbent on the individual to indiscriminately expose himself or herself to adverse outward contacts or conditions, it may not always be practicable to exclude them, or for other reasons, it may be deemed necessary to face them. Thus, we see that there are two main aspects of true spiritual passivity: one is passivity to the Divine Power and Influence so that it may work unhindered in the inner and outer life; the second is the maintenance of an unmoved, impartial inner equality to all outside contacts, whatever their character.

In the course of the practice of Integral Yoga, the Divine pours its divine Power and Influence upon the individual in order to purify, shape, and remould the whole consciousness. The central movement of the practice of Integral Yoga is to enter into conscious relation with this Divine Presence and Power, to open and surrender to it, so that it may act upon and transform the consciousness. The first aspect of true spiritual passivity is to open to the Divine and to no other power or influence so that it may enlighten and

transform the consciousness. Sri Aurobindo explains:

In this yoga the whole principle is to open oneself to the Divine Influence. It is there above you and, if you can once become conscious of it, you have then to call it down into you. It descends into the mind and into the body as Peace, as a Light, as a Force that works, as the Presence of the Divine with or without form, as Ananda [spiritual delight]. Before one has this consciousness, one has to have faith and aspire for the opening. Aspiration, call, prayer are forms of one and the same thing and are all effective; you can take the form that comes to you or is easiest to you.<sup>44</sup>

In general, a firm distinction must be seized between the influence of the higher Divine, or of that which leads towards it, and all that hampers one's spiritual progress. A conscious contact, a clear inner perception of the Presence or influence of the Divine is a necessary prerequisite to the true passivity to the divine Influence. This inner contact and perception is something that develops with spiritual practice over time, and is not necessarily an easy achievement. It generally requires some diminution of the unquiet activity of the mind and vital nature. If the mind is constantly busy with its own ideas and preferences, and the vital nature is constantly busy with the pursuit of its own desires and the play of emotions and ambitions, this noisy activity makes it difficult to become conscious of and perceive the influence of the Divine in us. Therefore an inner calm and peace are a necessary foundation for the Integral Yoga.

According to Integral Yoga, deep within each of us there is what is called a psychic being centered around our divine essence or soul. It is the psychic being in us that is most directly in contact with the Presence and Power of the Divine, is open and responsive to it, and is able to clearly discern its influences from those coming from others or from our own mind and vital nature. It is through a growing contact of



the outer consciousness with this psychic being and its coming forward into the outer nature that a conscious contact with the Divine and the true response to it comes about. Most people are not conscious of their psychic being precisely because they are identified with their surface mental and vital nature. Nevertheless, the psychic being does exert an influence on the outer life in spite of this unconscious condition, urging it towards all that is good, true and beautiful. However, in this case it acts indirectly through the intermediaries of the mental, vital, and physical nature, and because it works indirectly, its influences tend to be relatively weak and may even be distorted.

Therefore, as this development of the inner contact and conscious perception of the Divine proceeds, it is generally important to utilize our own mental discrimination between those influences which further our spiritual development and those which retard it. Indeed this mental discrimination should remain in place and work hand in hand with the development of the psychic contact and discrimination until the latter is well-established and secure. Thus, together with the development of the psychic being's more intuitive subtle discernment of what is true and to be accepted as coming from the Divine, there should be developed and enforced a quiet, dispassionate, yet vigilant mental discernment of what is helpful or harmful to one's spiritual growth to see that one is not led astray by wrong "intuitions" or "inner feelings."

In the earlier stages of spiritual development, one's sense of the Divine's influence on one's consciousness, and of what kinds of outer events, persons, or activities are supportive of one's spiritual growth, may be limited and subject to error. One's inner discernment of vibrations, which might originate from the higher spiritual consciousness, from movements of the deeper soul within, or from more ordinary mental, vital, or physical sources either from within oneself or from outside, may yet be deficient and inadvertently allow mixtures or wrong influences to enter. Nevertheless, such errors of discernment

which open oneself to wrong influences is different from a nondiscriminating passivity to any and all influences. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother stress the need for a constant vigilance to detect wrong influences and reject them before they take hold of the consciousness.

The second side of the true passivity is more properly referred to in Integral Yoga by the term equality. Equality is a key inner state and condition that is to be developed in the course of the practice of Integral Yoga. Sri Aurobindo explains that "Equality is to remain unmoved in all circumstances," and adds, "whatever the unpleasantness of circumstances, however disagreeable the conduct of others, you must learn to receive them with a perfect calm and without any disturbing reaction."<sup>45</sup> This unmoved inner poise has its basis in the spirit which underlies and supports all the movement and multiplicity of the universe. Firmly seated in the spiritual consciousness, no adverse event or circumstance, even intense physical pain, can break or unsettle the realized yogi's inner peace and composure. Thus, an equal, quiet, undisturbed, unrelated response to outside contacts and conditions, both those which appear good and those which appear bad, may appear to be a kind of passivity, but ideally the inner being is not touched or affected by them at all, and at least should not be allowed to be swept away by them as in the false passivity.

In the course of establishing this inner equality and poise of the spirit, progress may be marked by a gradual development of endurance, philosophical detachment, or spiritual submission to and acceptance of outside influences. While each of these three different types of psychological attitudes or poises are not yet the true spiritual equality, each can be a stepping-stone towards it.<sup>46</sup> During the development of one or more of these attitudes, it may outwardly appear that the individual is passive to events or circumstances, but this passivity is quite different than the false passivity, because the individual's aim is to remain concentrated within on the Divine and remain unaffected by these influences, rather than to allow

them to influence one's condition or action.

In addition, when the development of the true spiritual equality is incomplete and the contact with the divine presence within is still tenuous and subject to breaks, the individual may elect to focus more time and effort on inner concentration, and as an aid, temporarily retreat to a more protected environment free from distractions and disturbing influences. The person may find that a partial withdrawal from external activities and contacts may be useful or necessary in order to permanently establish and maintain the inner contact with the divine Presence. To the outside world, this may appear as passivity, because he or she is less engaged with the world and with personal and social contacts. However, in actuality the individual is simply focusing full attention on the immediate aim, and is being especially vigilant to protect the developing inner contact with the Divine. It is not a relapse into inertia, but rather an intensified one-pointed concentration on the Divine. Sri Aurobindo has cautioned practitioners of his yoga not to enter into a complete withdrawal from all outer contacts, as this may lead to certain dangers, but he permitted partial temporary withdrawals from outer activities and contacts during certain phases in the development of the inner consciousness. Furthermore, a withdrawal from contacts and activities which are both unnecessary and detrimental to the aims of the sadhana would not only be permitted, but encouraged.

### **False spiritual activism**

False spiritual activism is activism that does not have a real or sufficiently stable basis of spirit behind to support and guide it, nor a real or a sufficiently pure dynamic spiritual power flowing in and through it. Instead, it is supported by mental ideas or ideals mixed with emotional reactions to perceived injustices or wrongs, and is infused primarily with the mental will for change and vital life energy for dynamic power. Because both the mind and vital are subject to error, distortions, and even



perversions, false spiritual activism can be or become misguided, degraded, and even dangerously destructive. It would even seem that when it is informed or supported by a limited, narrow religious ideology, carrying a certain absoluteness of conviction and need of converting others, there is the greatest danger for wrong application and perversion, as evident in the history of violent religious persecution and more recent religious fundamentalism-inspired terrorism.

A clear distinction must be made between mental ideals and the true spiritual consciousness, the latter of which is something vast, calm and eternal, while at the same time extremely powerful. The mind, on the other hand, is a thing of ideas and convictions, which sometimes may be based on sound reasoning, sound data, careful reflection, but nearly always is partial and subject to errors and omissions. It often is seriously deficient and perverted by wrong influences.

Let us take the general case of science as an example. Science is supposed to be based on careful reasoning, sound evidence, experimentation and testing, and is supposed to provide us with sound and reliable data about and explanations of our existence. But even here philosophers of science have argued that it is generally based on assumptions which may be faulty, is typically oriented towards particular “fashionable” issues and tilted in favor of certain preferred outcomes, and is subject to biases of the investigator and of the institutions in which they work, biases which may be either conscious or unconscious. It should be borne in mind that scientific conclusions are never certain, and that many of even the most important and basic scientific conclusions have been overturned and undergone revision.

In some cases, scientific investigations and conclusions may inform and support activism, for example, certain types of environmental activism. While careful scientific study can provide a strong basis or a measure of support for activism, the point is that it is not infallible and one is likely to find dissenting scientific opinions. Often, however, activists

may have little basis of sound scientific evidence to support their cause, and it may be based more on beliefs and political preferences. For example, environmental activists who support the protection of a certain beautiful area of the country from industrial development may be expressing a preference for maintaining the particular environmental ecosystem in question over economic development. While they may demonstrate that the proposed development will damage that particular ecosystem, there may be other unforeseen adverse consequences of not developing it. For example, it may adversely affect the livelihoods of people in the region leading to economic hardships and adverse social conditions, or it may lead to the industrial development of an alternate site, perhaps with less stringent environmental protections, leading to even greater environmental damage. Or in the political arena, activists may prefer a particular social agenda which they fight to advance, against other activists with a diametrically opposed social agenda. The point is that in many spheres of social and political controversy, activism is based on particular partial mental opinions and preferences, rather than either a scientific or a spiritual basis.

Whereas we may admit that many of the social, political, and ecological projects of activists may express partial viewpoints and preferences, there are certain injustices which would seem incontrovertible and absolute. Take, for example, human trafficking and forced prostitution, child abuse, the toxic pollution of the air or water of a community by a company. Surely standing up to issues such as these is not simply based on mental preferences or partial viewpoints; can we not take up such causes as spiritual necessities, as spiritually-inspired activist causes? Whereas there certainly are causes that are just and social changes that imperatively must be made in the forward evolution of human society and civilization, it is not the justifiability of the cause taken up that makes activism spiritual, but rather it is the underlying consciousness of the activist and the quality of the force which

expresses itself in his or her acts. If these are not spiritual in their essence, even if the cause is undoubtedly just, it is simply activism and not spiritual activism. Ecological, social, and political activism have their rightful place and can serve just causes, but they should not be confused with spiritual activism or be falsely imbued with the sanctity of the spiritual label simply to further their cause.

When it comes to specifically religious or so-called spiritual matters, the same criteria apply. The world is now awash in religious fanaticism. Religious zealots are busy blowing up crowded airport and bus terminals, bombing places of religious worship, assassinating government leaders, and trying to replace democratically-elected governments, all in the name of God. The individuals involved in these acts are convinced of their justness, of the sanction and perhaps the command of God for their acts. While the evil of their acts may seem obvious to others who do not share their fanaticism, it may be impossible to convince these extremists. A firm distinction must be made between the spiritual consciousness, and a religious and mental and vital consciousness. The distinguishing factor that makes such fanaticism evil is the underlying consciousness that drives them—the hatred, the desire to kill, the perception of others as separate and expendable.

### **True spiritual activism**

In assessing this inner condition of the activist, we must refer back to our earlier formulation of true spiritual passivity, and assert that true spiritual activism must be based on a true spiritual passivity. It is precisely on the basis of the vast, calm, eternal spiritual consciousness that spiritual activism must be founded. If it does not have this stable grounding of spirit, this passivity and receptivity to the inspiration and power of the inner Divine, this stable basis of unmoved, dispassionate equality to outer circumstances and influences, it will not be the true spiritual activism. If activism is motivated by mental preferences, emotional recoils or attach-





ments, vital desires for particular outcomes, then it is not the true spiritual activism in the deeper sense of the term. It may be a noble activism, but it is not true spiritual activism.

While spiritual activism must be founded on a calm, equal, wide spiritual passivity, it requires something more: it also requires the dynamic inspiration, guidance, and driving force of the spiritual consciousness. According to Sri Aurobindo's philosophy and yoga, as well as to ancient Indian spiritual thought, there are both passive and active aspects of the Divine and the spiritual consciousness, represented in the Indian tradition by Shiva and Kali. The dynamic aspect is the One Force that acts in all forces, that expresses itself in all forms in the universe, but can also act sovereignly and intervene in the play of world forces. Supporting this vast dynamic movement in the universe is the passive silence of conscious Being, the Witness and Enjoyer of the creation. The ideal spiritual activist is conscious of both the underlying Oneness of Being and this One Divine Force energizing all things and flowing into him and driving all his or her activities. The spiritual activist is no longer merely a separate individual trying to effect change in a resistant world, but a conscious and responsive instrument of the Force of the Divine breaking up established forms and forces and creating new ones. It is not done out of pity or anger or revulsion, but as a conscious and natural flow of the Divine Force through the activist's words and actions. As Sri Aurobindo says,

How he shall do this, in what particular way, can be decided by no general rule. It must develop or define itself from within; the decision lies between God and our self, the Supreme Self and the individual self that is the instrument of the work; even before liberation, it is from the inner self, as soon as we become conscious of it, that there rises the sanction, the spiritually determined choice. It is altogether from within that must come the knowledge of the work that has to be

done. There is no particular work, no law or form or outwardly fixed or invariable way of works which can be said to be that of the liberated being.... The action of the liberated doer of works must be even such an outflowing from the soul; it must come to him or out of him as a natural result of his spiritual union with the Divine and not be formed by an edifying construction of the mental thought and will, the practical reason or the social sense.<sup>47</sup>

Just as it is not easy to realize the passive spiritual consciousness underlying all things, it is not easy to realize this dynamic spiritual Force working in and through ourselves in a free and unhindered manner. Whereas ultimately all our actions have this One Force behind them, it normally works *through* the limitations of our mental, vital, and physical nature, and therefore, not in a direct and spiritual manner. The aim here is to allow it to substitute its own higher and more powerful working for our stumbling, misguided, and faltering efforts. This cannot be done at once, it occurs gradually over time through a disciplined practice of *karmayoga*. All the parts of the dynamic nature must progressively open and surrender themselves to the guidance and action of the Divine Force, rather than move in their own accustomed manner at the behest of a mixture of inner and outer influences, mental, vital, and physical.

The *Bhagavad Gita* is the great scriptural authority on this matter, and in discussing it, Sri Aurobindo brings out the underlying principles and processes that would lead to a true spiritual activism. The central processes that lead to this taking up of the dynamic parts of the nature by the divine Force can be briefly summarized as follows: "Equality, renunciation of all desire for the fruit of our works, action done as a sacrifice to the supreme Lord of our nature and of all,—these are the three first Godward approaches in the *Gita*'s way of *Karmayoga*."<sup>48</sup> Sri Aurobindo elaborates,

This, in short, is the demand made on us, that we should turn our whole life into a conscious sacrifice. Every moment and every movement of our being is to be resolved into a continuous and a devoted self-giving to the Eternal. All our actions, not less the smallest and most ordinary and trifling than the greatest and most uncommon and noble, must be performed as consecrated acts. Our individualised nature must live in the single consciousness of an inner and outer movement dedicated to Something that is beyond us and greater than our ego.<sup>49</sup>

It is through this continual reference of all our actions to the Divine Force that is their true source and power that we overcome the sense of our own ego as the initiator of our acts. As long as we engage in activism based on our own preferences, for the satisfaction of our own preferred outcomes, we are not yet engaged in the true spiritual activism. It is through a progressive and continually expanding self-offering of all our dynamic activities to the Divine Force that we remove the barriers to its unhindered and undistorted action in and through us. The spiritual activist is not merely a person fighting for higher principles, but is a conscious and surrendered instrument of the Divine.

As this process of inner surrender progresses, the spiritual activist continues to act according to the highest and most clear vision of what is to be done as he or she is capable, and carrying out the action with as much skill and precision as possible, all the while offering the action to the Divine. The activist must continually seek and call for the guidance as well as the originating and sustaining power of the Divine in the action undertaken. We must leave the results of the action in the hands of the Divine, and remain entirely equal whether they are successful or not. It is not the end result that must be the motivation for the action, but the act of offering, the growing consciousness of the Divine Presence in ourselves and in our activity. These are the inner signs of the deeper and true spiritual activism.



## Summary and Conclusion

The recent explosion of interest in spiritual activism is a healthy development in the field of spirituality, carrying it beyond a self-centered focus on individual health and development towards a fuller embrace of the world and its challenges. However, in its movement outward towards engagement with world challenges, spirituality must maintain its inner center and poise in the spirit. Sri Aurobindo's ideal of the divine life, which entails a radical transformation of both the individual and collective existence, does just that. In order to bring to bear the necessary spiritual power that can truly transform and divinize the outer life, it strives to reach the highest heights of inner spiritual experience and realization. It is relatively easier to attain a settled inner state of spiritual peace and harmony when one withdraws from the world and its problems, it is when one aims to change the outer life and the world that the fullness of the inner spiritual realization is more severely tested and challenged. Thus, the spiritual activist has a double task, to attain the inner poise of the spiritual consciousness, and to maintain it in the midst of engagement with the problems of the world.

What we have called the true spiritual passivity reflects this inner poise of the spirit which must attend and serve as the necessary foundation for a true spiritual activism. As briefly described here, it consists of two main elements. One is an exclusive passivity to the inner Divine Presence and Power, as distinct from other inner or outer mental, vital, or physical influences. It is not that no other ordinary human forces are allowed to enter the psychological space of the individual, but rather that they are not *passively* allowed to enter. First one must become conscious of their presence and influence, and one must admit only those which are helpful or at least not harmful. The second element is the development of an entire equality or equanimity to all circumstances, conditions, and events. For this latter condition to become complete, one must have a secure poise in the inner spiritual consciousness,

because this spiritual consciousness alone is pure and untouched by all that happens in the world. This spiritual consciousness is distinct from mind, it is the fundamental ground of the universal existence we see around us.

From this poise of the spiritual consciousness, all conditions, all events are movements of nature, and nature is driven by one conscious Divine Force that dominates all existence. In Sri Aurobindo's view, the world is a progressive evolution of the divine spirit that lies concealed in the stone, emerges in the plant, and becomes progressively more conscious in animals and humanity. It is a difficult evolution of consciousness in the matrix of matter. It progresses through a working out of conflicting forces towards a progressive harmony and is leading towards a divine delight. Birth and death are merely incidents in the long evolution of the eternal spirit. As the Isha Upanishad put it, "He whose self has become all existences, for he has the knowledge, how shall he be deluded, whence shall he have grief, he who sees everywhere oneness?"<sup>50</sup> The spiritual activist should be able to look upon the world and its problems with a calm and equal regard, without repulsion. As the Mother said, "You want to correct what the Creator is doing?" We should have, or we should try to develop, a perfect equality for things as they are.

But this does not mean that things should remain the way they are, or that we should not be involved in the change of the world. The world is a progressive manifestation of the Divine, it is not complete. It is constantly changing, constantly evolving into something that more purely expresses the higher qualities of the divine nature. Love, harmony, beauty, delight, knowledge, power must emerge in ever higher and ampler forms. As conscious instruments of the Divine, we must be luminous instruments of its higher evolution and manifestation. But here it is necessary that we do not mistake our own limited ideas and notions of what must emerge and when with the Divine's. We must inwardly unite with the Divine within so that these higher divine qualities may flow

through us into the world and into all those who are around us, awakening them to these emerging forces within themselves. Our activism should be more as a catalyst awakening these divine powers in others than as a combatant, though sometimes combat too is required when the opposition is fierce and unrelenting in its obstruction to the truth that is emerging from within.

These are all very fine as high spiritual ideals, one might counter, but as long as we remain stuck in our limited human consciousness, tethered to our mental and vital existence, what are we to do about the gross injustices and the destruction of our planet? Are we to sit quietly and meditate while our fellow human beings are abused and the world is destroyed? This is the difficult dilemma in which we find ourselves, and we feel that we must act. It is here that the Bhagavad Gita advises us to act, but to do our actions as a conscious offering to the Divine. We must act more and more with the sense and feeling that it is the Divine within us that is carrying out the actions through us and that we are merely conscious instruments for his work. Indeed it is the Divine that in reality always acts through all actions, whether we are conscious of it or not. The key is to become conscious of it, and to more and more align our will and force with the Divine Will and Force, to filter out competing mental preferences and vital desires. If we act unconsciously of the divine impetus behind our actions, the Divine will work through our unconscious and limited instruments, but if we act consciously, the Divine will work through our conscious, responsive and therefore more effective and powerful instruments. This inclusion of the dynamic parts of our nature, our abilities to carry out effective and complex actions in the world in conscious unity with the Divine, is the important and necessary ingredient in a true spiritual activism. This comes only through practice, through work done while consciously referring the work to the Divine Force behind. It does not come through meditation or inaction. Act we must, it is impossible to completely cease to act, so it is best



that we act consciously, referring our actions to the Divine, seeking the Divine's guidance, and progressively aligning and attuning our actions with the Divine Will and Force.

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39. In the 1930s, Sri Aurobindo kept up an enormous correspondence with his disciples regarding their spiritual practice, at the peak working up to 10-12 hours per day on this correspondence. The Mother, meanwhile, looked after all the needs of the growing community of Ashramites, showing them with love and attention.
40. Sri Aurobindo's writings extend to 37 volumes. The Mother's collected works consists of 17 volumes, and her conversations with a disciple, Satprem, during the latter part of her life, extends to 13 more volumes. Just as importantly, many of their disciples still feel that they are inwardly guided by them.
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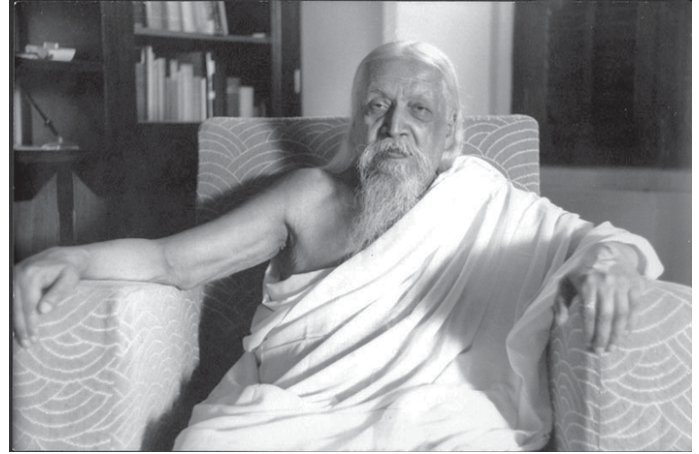


## Source material

### The spiritualization of society

by Sri Aurobindo

The solution lies not in the reason, but in the soul of man, in its spiritual tendencies. It is a spiritual, an inner freedom that can alone create a perfect human order. It is a spiritual, a greater than the rational enlightenment that can alone illumine the vital nature of man and impose harmony on its self-seekings, antagonisms and discords. A deeper brotherhood, a yet unfound law of love is the only sure foundation possible for a perfect social evolution, no other can replace it. But this brotherhood and love will not proceed by the vital instincts or the reason where they can be met, baffled or deflected by opposite reasonings and other discordant instincts. Nor will it found itself in the natural heart of man where there are plenty of other passions to combat it. It is in the soul that it must find its roots; the love which is founded upon a deeper truth of our being, the brotherhood or, let us say,—for this is another feeling than any vital or mental sense of brotherhood, a calmer more durable motive-force,—the spiritual comradeship which is the expression of an inner realisation of oneness. For so only can egoism disappear and the true individualism of the unique godhead in each man found itself on the true communism of the equal godhead in the race; for the Spirit, the inmost self, the universal Godhead in every being is that whose very nature of diverse oneness it is to realise the perfection of its individual life and nature in the existence of all, in the universal life and nature. This is a solution to which it may be objected that it puts off the consummation of a better human society to a far-off date in the future evolution of the race. For it means that no machinery invented by the reason can perfect either the individual or the collective man; an inner change is needed in human nature, a change too difficult to be ever effected except by the few. This is not certain; but in any case, if this is not the solution, then there is no solution, if this is not the way, then there is no way for the human kind. Then the terrestrial evolution must pass beyond man as it has passed beyond the animal and a greater race must come that will be capable of the spiritual change, a form of life must be born that is nearer to the divine. After all there is no logical necessity for the conclusion that the change cannot begin at all because its perfection is not immediately possible. A decisive turn of mankind to the spiritual ideal, the beginning of a constant ascent and guidance towards the heights may not be altogether impossible, even if the summits are attainable at first only by the pioneer few and far-off to the tread of the race. And that beginning may mean the descent of an influence that will alter at once the whole life of mankind in its orientation and enlarge for ever, as did the development of his reason and more than any development of the reason, its potentialities and all its structure... (*The Human Cycle*, pp. 220-21)



Sri Aurobindo. (Photo courtesy Sri Aurobindo Ashram)

Therefore the individuals who will most help the future of humanity in the new age will be those who will recognise a spiritual evolution as the destiny and therefore the great need of the human being. Even as the animal man has been largely converted into a mentalised and at the top a highly mentalised humanity, so too now or in the future an evolution or conversion—it does not greatly matter which figure we use or what theory we adopt to support it—of the present type of humanity into a spiritualized humanity is the need of the race and surely the intention of Nature; that evolution or conversion will be their ideal and endeavour. They will be comparatively indifferent to particular belief and form and leave men to resort to the beliefs and forms to which they are naturally drawn. They will only hold as essential the faith in this spiritual conversion, the attempt to live it out and whatever knowledge—the form of opinion into which it is thrown does not so much matter—can be converted into this living. They will especially not make the mistake of thinking that this change can be effected by machinery and outward institutions; they will know and never forget that it has to be lived out by each man inwardly or it can never be made a reality for the kind. They will adopt in its heart of meaning the inward view of the East which bids man seek the secret of his destiny and salvation within; but also they will accept, though with a different turn given to it, the importance which the West rightly attaches to life and to the making the best we know and can attain the general rule of all life. They will not make society a shadowy background to a few luminous spiritual figures or a rigidly fenced and earth-bound root for the growth of a comparatively rare and sterile flower of ascetic spirituality. They will not accept the theory that the many must necessarily remain for ever on the lower ranges of life and only a few climb into the free air and the light, but will start from the standpoint of the great spirits who have striven to regenerate the life of the earth and held that faith in spite of all previous failure. Failures must be originally numerous in everything great and difficult, but the time comes when the experience of past failures can be profitably used and the gate that so long resisted opens. In this as in all great



human aspirations and endeavours, an a priori declaration of impossibility is a sign of ignorance and weakness, and the motto of the aspirant's endeavour must be the solvitur ambulando of the discoverer. For by the doing the difficulty will be solved. A true beginning has to be made; the rest is a work for Time in its sudden achievements or its long patient labour.

The thing to be done is as large as human life, and therefore the individuals who lead the way will take all human life for their province. These pioneers will consider nothing as alien to them, nothing as outside their scope. For every part of human life has to be taken up by the spiritual,—not only the intellectual, the aesthetic, the ethical, but the dynamic, the vital, the physical; therefore for none of these things or the activities that spring from them will they have contempt or aversion, however they may insist on a change of the spirit and a transmutation of the form. In each power of our nature they will seek for its own proper means of conversion; knowing

that the Divine is concealed in all, they will hold that all can be made the spirit's means of self-finding and all can be converted

into its instruments of divine living. And they will see that the great necessity is the conversion of the normal into the spiritual mind and the opening of that mind again into its own higher reaches and more and more integral movement. For before the decisive change can be made, the stumbling intellectual reason has to be converted into the precise and luminous intuitive, until that again can rise into higher ranges to overmind and supermind or gnosis. The uncertain and stumbling mental will has to rise towards the sure intuitive and into a higher divine and gnostic will, the psychic sweetness, fire and light of the soul behind the heart, *hrdaye guhayam*, has to alchemise our crude emotions and the hard egoisms and clamant desires of our vital nature. All our other members have to pass through a similar conversion under the compelling force and light from above. The leaders of the spiritual march will start from and use the knowledge and the means that past effort has developed in this direction, but they will not take them as they are without any deep necessary change or limit themselves by what is now known or cleave only to fixed and stereotyped systems or given groupings of results, but will follow the method of the Spirit in Nature. A constant rediscovery and new formulation and larger synthesis in the mind, a mighty remoulding in its deeper parts because of a greater enlarging Truth not discovered or not well fixed before, is that Spirit's way with our past achievement when he moves to the greatneses of the future.

This endeavour will be a supreme and difficult labour even for the individual, but much more for the race. It may well be that, once

started, it may not advance rapidly even to its first decisive stage; it may be that it will take long centuries of effort to come into some kind of permanent birth. But that is not altogether inevitable, for the principle of such changes in Nature seems to be a long obscure preparation followed by a swift gathering up and precipitation of the elements into the new birth, a rapid conversion, a transformation that in its luminous moment figures like a miracle. Even when the first decisive change is reached, it is certain that all humanity will not be able to rise to that level. There cannot fail to be a division into those who are able to live on the spiritual level and those who are only able to live in the light that descends from it into the mental level. And below these too there might still be a great mass influenced from above but not yet ready for the light. But even that would be a transformation and a beginning far beyond anything yet attained. This hierarchy would not mean as in our present vital living an egoistic domina-

tion of the undeveloped by the more developed, but a guidance of the younger by the elder brothers of the race and a constant

*They will adopt in its heart of meaning the inward view of the East which bids man seek the secret of his destiny and salvation within; but also they will accept, though with a different turn given to it, the importance which the West rightly attaches to life and to the making the best we know and can attain the general rule of all life.*

working to lift them up to a greater spiritual level and wider horizons. And for the leaders too this ascent to the first spiritual levels would not be the end of the divine march, a culmination that left nothing more to be achieved on earth. For there would be still yet higher levels within the supramental realm, as the old Vedic poets knew when they spoke of the spiritual life as a constant ascent... But once the foundation has been secured, the rest develops by a progressive self-unfolding and the soul is sure of its way.

This at least is the highest hope, the possible destiny that opens out before the human view, and it is a possibility which the progress of the human mind seems on the way to redevelop. If the light that is being born increases, if the number of individuals who seek to realise the possibility in themselves and in the world grows large and they get nearer the right way, then the Spirit who is here in man, now a concealed divinity, a developing light and power, will descend more fully as the Avatar of a yet unseen and unguessed Godhead from above into the soul of mankind and into the great individualities in whom the light and power are the strongest. There will then be fulfilled the change that will prepare the transition of human life from its present limits into those larger and purer horizons; the earthly evolution will have taken its grand impetus upward and accomplished the revealing step in a divine progression of which the birth of thinking and aspiring man from the animal nature was only an obscure preparation and a far-off promise. (*The Human Cycle*, pp. 265-269)



## On the world condition

by the Mother

**S**ri Aurobindo has written: “The descent of the Supermind will bring to one who receives it and is fulfilled in the truth consciousness all the possibilities of the divine life. It will take up not only the whole characteristic experience which we recognise already as constituting the spiritual life but also all which we now exclude from that category...” (*The Supramental Manifestation, SABCL, Vol. 16, p. 47*)

So, what are you asking? What is excluded?

What do we exclude!... It depends on the person.

But what are you asking, really?

I don't see what we are excluding.

Ah! that's sensible. Here we profess we are excluding nothing. That's precisely the reason. We have taken up all human activities, whatever they may be, including those that are considered the least spiritual. But I must say it is very difficult to change their nature! But still, we are trying, we put all possible goodwill into it.

*It is also said that the descent will make the change easier.<sup>1</sup>*

There are two points which resist strongly—all that has to do with politics and all that has to do with money. These are the two points on which it is most difficult to change the human attitude.

In principle we have said that we have nothing to do with politics, and it is true that we have nothing to do with politics as it is practised at present. But it is quite obvious that if politics is taken in its true spirit, that is, as the organisation of human masses and all the details of government and regulation of the collective life, and relations with other collectivities—that is, with other nations, other countries—it must necessarily enter into the supramental transformation, for so long as national life and the relations between nations remain what they are, it is quite impossible to live a supramental life on earth. So it will just have to change; we shall have to deal with that too.

As for financial matters, that is, finding a means of exchange and production which is simple—“simple,” well, which should be simple, simpler than the primitive system of exchange in which people had to give one thing to get another—something which could in principle be world-wide, universal; this is also altogether indispensable for the simplification of life. Now, with human nature, just the very opposite is happening! The situation is such that it has become almost—intolerable. It has become almost impossible to have the least relation with other countries, and that much-vaunted means of exchange which should have been a simplification has become such a complication that we shall soon



*The Mother in 1969. (Photo courtesy Sri Aurobindo Ashram)*

reach a deadlock—we are very, very close to being unable to do anything, to being tied up in everything. If one wants the smallest thing from another country, one has to follow such complicated and laborious procedures that in the end one will stay in one's own little corner and be satisfied with the potatoes one can grow in one's garden, without hoping to know anything at all about what is going on and happening elsewhere.

Well, these two points are the most resistant. In the human consciousness this is most subject to the forces of ignorance, inconscience and, I must say, quite generally, ill-will. This is what most refuses all progress and all advance towards the truth; and unfortunately, in every human individual this is also the point of resistance, the point that remains narrowly stupid and refuses to understand anything it is not used to. There it is truly a heroic act to want to take up these things and transform them. Well, we are trying this also, and unless it is done, it will be impossible to change the conditions of the earth.

It is relatively—very relatively—easier to change economic and social conditions than political and financial ones. There are certain general, global ideas from the economic and social point of view which are accessible to human thought: certain liberations, a certain widening, a certain collective organisation, which do not seem absolutely senseless and unrealisable; but as soon as you touch on the other two questions, which are however of capital importance, especially the political question, it is quite otherwise.... For, one might imagine a life which would get rid of all financial complications—although, without playing on words, it would be a veritable impoverishment. In what financial possibilities and processes bring, there is a very considerable wealth of possibilities, for if they were used in the right way and in the true spirit, that would simplify all human relations and undertakings to a very great extent and make possible a complexity of life which would be very difficult under other conditions. But I don't know why—except that the worst usually precedes the best—instead of taking the way of simplification, men have followed the way of complication to such a point that, in spite of the aeroplanes which





carry you from one end of the world to the other in two days, in spite of all the modern inventions which try to make life so “small”, so “close” that we could go round the world not in eighty days now but in a very few days, in spite of all that, the complications of exchange, for instance, are so great that many people can’t get away from home—I mean from the country they live in—because they have no means of going to another one and if they ask for the money they need to live in another country they are told, “Is it very important for you to go? You could perhaps wait a little, because it is very difficult for us at the moment....” I am not joking, it is quite serious, this does happen. That means we are becoming more and more the prisoners of the place where we are born, while all the scientific trends are towards such a great proximity between countries that we could very easily belong to the universe or, at any rate, to the whole world.

There. This is the situation. It has grown considerably worse since the last war; it grows worse year by year, and one finds oneself in such a ridiculous situation that, unfortunately, as one is at the end of one’s resources, to simplify what has been made so complicated, there is an idea in the earth-atmosphere—an idea which might be called preposterous, but unhappily it is much worse than preposterous, it is catastrophic—the idea that if there were a great upheaval, perhaps it would be better afterwards.... One is so jammed between prohibitions, impossibilities, interdictions, rules, the complications of every second, that one feels stifled and really gets the admirable idea that if everything were demolished perhaps it would be better afterwards!... It is in the air.

And all the governments have put themselves in such impossible conditions; they have become so tied up that it seems to them they will have to break everything to be able to move forward.... (*Silence*) This is unfortunately a little more than a possibility, it is a *very* serious threat. And it is not quite certain that life will not be made still more impossible because one feels incapable of emerging from the chaos—the chaos of complications—in which humanity has put itself. It is like the shadow—but unfortunately a very active shadow—of the new hope which has sprung up in the human consciousness, a hope and a need for something more harmonious; and the need becomes so much more acute as life, as it is at present organised, becomes more and more contrary to it. The two opposites are facing each other with such intensity that one can expect something like an explosion....

(*Silence*)

This is the condition of the earth, and it is not very bright. But for us one possibility remains—I have spoken about it to you several times already—even if, outside, things are deteriorating completely and the catastrophe cannot possibly be avoided, there remains for us, I mean those for whom the supramental life is not a vain dream, those who have faith in its reality and the aspiration to realise it—I don’t necessarily mean those who have gathered here in Pondicherry, in the Ashram, but those who have as a link between them the knowledge Sri Aurobindo has given

and the will to live according to that knowledge—there remains for them the possibility of intensifying their aspiration, their will, their effort, to gather their energies together and shorten the time for the realisation. There remains for them the possibility of working this miracle—individually and to a small extent collectively—of conquering space, duration, the time needed for this realisation; of replacing time by intensity of effort and going fast enough and far enough in the realisation to liberate themselves from the consequences of the present condition of the world; of making such a concentration of force, strength, light, truth, that by this very realisation they can be above these consequences and secure against them, enjoy the protection bestowed by the Light and Truth, by Purity—the divine Purity through the inner transformation—and that the storm may pass over the world without being able to destroy this great hope of the near future; that the tempest may not sweep away this beginning of realisation.

Instead of falling asleep in an easy quietude and letting things happen according to their own rhythm, if one strains to the utmost one’s will, ardour, aspiration and springs up into the light, then one can hold one’s head higher; one can have, in a higher region of consciousness, enough room to live, to breathe, to grow and develop above the passing cyclone.

This is possible. In a very small way, this was already done during the last war, when Sri Aurobindo was here. It can be done again. But one must want it and each one must do his own work as sincerely and completely as he can. (*Collected Works of the Mother*, Vol. 9, *Questions and Answers 1957-1958*, Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram)

<sup>1</sup>“A divine life on earth need not be a thing apart and exclusive having nothing to do with the common earthly existence: it will take up human being and human life, transform what can be transformed, spiritualise whatever can be spiritualised, cast its influence on the rest and effectuate either a radical or an uplifting change, bring about a deeper communion between the universal and the individual, invade the ideal with the spiritual truth of which it is a luminous shadow and help to uplift into or towards a greater and higher existence.... It is obvious that if the Supermind is there and an order of supramental being is established as the leading principle in earth-nature, as mind is now the leading principle, but with a sureness, a complete government of the earthly existence, a capacity of transformation of all upon their level and within their natural boundaries of which the mind in its imperfection was not capable, an immense change of human life, even if it did not extend to transformation would be inevitable.” (*The Supramental Manifestation*, SABCL, Vol. 16, pp. 47 – 49)

Pessimism is the demon’s weapon and he senses his situation (*gesture of shaking*). Well, if what I see as possible is realised, it will be truly a decisive victory over the adverse forces—naturally, he defends himself as best he can.... (*CWM*, Vol. 11, *Notes on the Way*, pp. 256-257)



## The poetry room

### The secret knowledge<sup>1</sup>

Alive in a dead rotating universe  
We whirl not here upon a casual globe  
Abandoned to a task beyond our force;  
Even through the tangled anarchy called Fate  
And through the bitterness of death and fall  
An outstretched Hand is felt upon our lives.  
It is near us in unnumbered bodies and births;  
In its unslackening grasp it keeps for us safe  
The one inevitable supreme result  
No will can take away and no doom change,  
The crown of conscious Immortality,  
The godhead promised to our struggling souls  
When first man's heart dared death and suffered life.  
One who has shaped this world is ever its lord:  
Our errors are his steps upon the way;  
He works through the fierce vicissitudes of our lives,  
He works through the hard breath of battle and toil,  
He works through our sins and sorrows and our tears,  
His knowledge overrules our nescience;  
Whatever the appearance we must bear,  
Whatever our strong ills and present fate,  
When nothing we can see but drift and bale,  
A mighty Guidance leads us still through all.  
After we have served this great divided world  
God's bliss and oneness are our inborn right.  
A date is fixed in the calendar of the Unknown,  
An anniversary of the Birth sublime:  
Our soul shall justify its chequered walk,  
All will come near that now is naught or far.  
These calm and distant Might's shall act at last.  
Immovably ready for their destined task,  
The ever-wise compassionate Brilliances  
Await the sound of the Incarnate's voice  
To leap and bridge the chasms of Ignorance  
And heal the hollow yearning gulfs of Life  
And fill the abyss that is the universe.

—Sri Aurobindo

### On the ash<sup>2</sup>

On the ash  
of Hiroshima,  
new flowers.

—Michael Miovic

### Our thoughts are not ours<sup>3</sup>

Our thoughts are not ours,  
We live in the house of God:  
Sacred the air we breathe,  
Sacred the dust we've trod.

Our dreams are long arms, they reach  
To lives we cannot see:  
Sacred our moon-tossed fleeting hours,  
And sacred our company.

Our hopes are high vaults that soar  
To wing-brushed ether overhead:  
Sacred the light that shines above,  
Sacred tonight's resting bed.

Into star-shower fields we are cast,  
Like sparks from a glowing core:  
Sacred the vasts through which we sail,  
And sacred the distant shore.

All things return in the end,  
Are wed and by Oneness bound:  
Sacred is joy and sacred pain,  
Sacred this threshing ground.

Thoughts are deeds, mighty steeds  
That ring throughout the spheres:  
Sacred is silence and sacred prayer,  
Sacred our station here.

—Michael Miovic

### The divine self-assertion

I am the promised shore,  
the gateway and  
the threshold  
you stumble over,  
again and again.

Look straight  
at Me, stand up  
and see: there is  
no difference  
between this world of  
My Glory Divine and  
the one wherefrom  
you have come:  
half of you, almost  
blind, sunken in my gloom;



everywhere, in everything  
I alone am dancing,  
tremendously enjoying  
My Cosmic Dance  
midst utter chaos and  
order most superb,  
in suffering and strife  
as well as in carnal  
pleasures and  
joys sublime, deep in  
the secret caverns of  
the darkest darkness,  
high on the mountains of  
most dazzling brightness;

around and within,  
beneath and beyond all,  
the changeless  
ever-changing whole,  
I am dwelling  
forevermore in  
My sole Being,  
the Bliss supreme.

—Dhyaanavati Ananda

#### The Mother<sup>4</sup>

Effulgent Mother, aureate as the sun,  
Who com'st to reave our ignorance shadow-spun,—  
Thou art incarnate on the dismal earth  
To unfold secrets of an Immortal birth:  
O luminous lore from the heart of paradise,  
At thy flower-like feet the Soul, in homage, lies.

Thy advent, a deep precipitate of Light,  
Annihilates our glooms of aeoned Night.  
Thy sentinel Gleam on life's peaks knows no sleep  
And scintillates in jewels of the deep  
Revealing in a flash eternities:  
At thy flower-like feet the Soul, in homage, lies.

Lone-poised beyond the pauseless swirl of Time,  
Beyond the atoms and the Vast sublime,  
Things sentient thou hast with thy love ensouled:  
Equal and warm, unique and manifold.  
Hues' thrills are thy refracted ecstasies:  
At thy flower-like feet the Soul, in homage, lies.

A mystic Healer of our stricken life,  
Leavening with love our squalor, pain and strife,  
Thou slayest still the demon-hordes with thine  
Infinite strength and quellest undivine

And dark rebellions with thy swift sunrise:  
At thy flower-like feet the Soul, in homage, lies.

A quintessential Fire of the universe,  
Primeaval Queen, whose youth no ravage mars,  
Vicegerent of Lord Shiva! Thou rainest still  
All boons—faith, courage, power invincible  
And yet remain'st ethereal, robed by skies:  
At thy flower-like feet the Soul, in homage, lies.

A young sun-glint upon earth's ancient brow,  
Thou heralded a New Dawn's tender glow:  
Life's avenues with new blooms flare apace  
Where birds sing in a new sky-consciousness,  
Thou bring'st to deserts sylvan harmonies:  
At thy flower-like feet the Soul, in homage, lies.

Colonies of an unglimped loveliness  
Are gifts to earth of thy imperial Grace.  
By thee inspired, surrendering our all  
We win thy lustre's endless carnival.  
O Light that sees and Flame that purifies,  
At thy flower-like feet the Soul, in homage, lies.

With the King of mystic seers in union,  
Stationed in bliss, though farest free and lone:  
Thy footfalls usher magic floods in sands  
Life and extinction rock in thy twin hands.  
O thou revered of the last infinities!  
At thy flower-like feet, the Soul, in homage, lies.

—Nishikanto

#### Savior storm<sup>5</sup>

The immortal music of her mind  
Sweeps through the earth a lustrous wind—  
“Renounce, O man, thy arduous oar  
And, opening out faith's song-charmed helpless sail,  
Reach on my breath of love the ecstatic shore!  
My rush is truth self-beaconed, not thy pale  
Stranger-surmise:  
I am a cyclic gale  
That blows from paradise to paradise!”

—K.D. Sethna (Amal Kiran)

1. *Savitri*, Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1993, p. 59.
2. *Initiation*, Hyderabad: Sri Aurobindo Society, 2004. p. 286.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 287.
4. *Poems on Sri Aurobindo and on the Mother*, Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1954, pp. 119-120.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 87.





## Apropos

This yoga can only be done to the end by those who are in total earnest about it and ready to abolish their little human ego and its demands in order to find themselves in the Divine. —Sri Aurobindo

The center of the human is the psychic which is the dwelling-place of the immanent Divine. Unification means organization and harmonization of all the parts of the being (mental, vital and physical) around this center, so that all the activities of the being may be the correct expression of the will of the Divine Presence. —The Mother

What we think, or what we know, or what we believe, is, in the end, of little consequence. The only consequence is what we do. —John Ruskin

Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous, conceited, proud or boastful, it is not arrogant, selfish, irritable or rude. Love does not keep a record of wrongs. Love is not happy with evil, but is happy with the truth. Love never gives up, and its faith, hope and patience never fail. Love is eternal. —1-Corinthians 13:4

To find the universal elements enough; to find the air and the water exhilarating; to be refreshed by a morning walk or an evening saunter; to be thrilled by the stars at night; to be elated over a bird's nest or a wildflower in spring—these are some of the rewards of the simple life. —John Burroughs

There is a pleasure in the pathless woods, there is a rapture on the lonely shore, there is society, where none intrudes, by the deep sea, and music in its roar: I love not man the less, but Nature more. —Lord Byron

Those who dwell among the beauties and mysteries of the earth are never alone or weary of life. —Rachel Carson

Look deep into nature, and then you will understand everything better. —Albert Einstein

Nature is the art of God. —Thomas Browne, *Religio Medici*, 1635

The creation of a thousand forests is in one acorn. —Ralph Waldo Emerson

Faith is an oasis in the heart which can never be reached by the caravan of thinking. —Kahlil Gibran

It is better to believe than to disbelieve; in so doing, you bring everything to the realm of possibility. —Albert Einstein

Sometimes, simply by sitting, the soul collects wisdom. —Zen proverb

Doubt is a pain too lonely to know that faith is his twin brother. —Kahlil Gibran

You are never asked to do more than you are able without being given the strength and ability to do it. —Eileen Caddy

Man often becomes what he believes himself to be. If I keep on saying to myself that I cannot do a certain thing, it is possible that I may end by really becoming incapable of doing it. On the contrary, if I have the belief that I can do it, I shall surely acquire the capacity to do it, even if I may not have it at the beginning. —Mahatma Gandhi

There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as if everything is. —Albert Einstein

Great spirits have always encountered violent opposition from mediocre minds. The latter cannot understand it when a man does not thoughtlessly submit to hereditary prejudices but honestly and courageously uses his intelligence. —Albert Einstein

Go confidently in the direction of your dreams. Live the life you've imagined! —Henry David Thoreau

Keep away from people who try to belittle your ambitions. Small people always do that, but the really great make you feel that you too can become great. —Mark Twain

Say what you mean and act how you feel, because those who matter don't mind, and those who mind don't matter. —Dr. Seuss

People are always blaming their circumstances for what they are. I don't believe in circumstances. The people who get on in this world are the people who get up and look for the circumstances they want. And if they can't, make them. —George Bernard Shaw

People who say it cannot be done should not interrupt those who are doing it. —Author Unknown

Re-examine all you have been told. Dismiss what insults your soul. —Walt Whitman

You take your life in your own hands, and what happens? A terrible thing: no one to blame. —Erica Jong

There is a destiny that makes us brothers—none goes his way alone; all that which we send into the lives of others, comes back onto our own. —Edwin Markham

The purpose of life, after all, is to live it, to taste experience to the utmost, to reach out eagerly and without fear for newer and richer experience. —Eleanor Roosevelt

The time is always right to do what is right. —Martin Luther King, Jr.

We need to remember that we are all created creative and can invent new scenarios as frequently as they are needed. —Maya Angelou

When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves. —Viktor Frankl

We are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars. —Oscar Wilde