

Collaboration

Fall/Winter 1989-90

Vol. XVI Nos. 1&2



*It is ages of ardent aspiration
that have brought us here
to do the Divine's work.*

—Mother

Table of Contents

Something Else to Think About 3
By Gordon Korstange

Mickey Finn: On the Lam from the Divine.....4 - 9
In tervie ws By Clifford Gibson & John Schlorholtz

A Letter to Mother.....9
By Muriel Spanier

Sri Aurobindo and Spiritual Psychology.....10 - 15
By Scott Mandeiker

Extracts from Sri Aurobindo on Psychology.....16 - 19

Extracts from Mother On Psychology...19 - 21

A Visit to Baca Grande22 - 26
By Gordon Korstange

It was the Hour Before the Gods Awake.....26 - 28
By Joceyn Shupak

Book Announcement.....29

People.....30 - 33

Center News.....33 - 35

A.U.M. '90.....35
By Ron Jorgensen

Anonymous

M.M. Arora
 Silver Spring, MD

Bloomquist & Associates
 Berkeley, CA

Sandra Caldeira
 Oakland, CA

Peter **Callaway**
 Santa Fe, NM

Cultural Integration Fellowship
 San Francisco, CA

Robert Dane
 Palos Verdes Estates, CA

Ninnalendu & Sukla **Datta-Gupta**
 Orangeburg, SC

Katherine Dopler
 Riverside, CA

Abhinav S. Dwivedi
 Orlando, FL

Kevin Eggers
 Iowa City, IA

Joe Ferrara & Linda Sobel
 West Shokan, NY

A. & G. Gardener
 San Francisco, CA

Prabhansu & Sibani Ghoshal
 Fresh Meadows, NY

Marti Gilbert
 Springfield, MO

Jim Hurley
 Sunnyvale, CA

Bill & Raina Imig
 Portland, OR

Larry Jacobs
 Body Slant Marketing
 Newport Beach, CA

Helen Lee
 Cheshire, CT

Merriam Hill Center
 Cambridge, MA

Mark W. Meyer
 Audubon, NJ

Katherine & Paul **Molinari**
Richmond, CA

Jack Morris
 Howard Beach, NY

Zackaria Moursi
 Kansas City, MO

Tom O'Brien
 Ramsey, NJ

Arunkant R. Patel
 Lock Haven, PA

Sanjiv Patel
 Bedford, PA

Victor Patel
 San Jose, CA

Carl Peters
 Psychosynthesis Affiliates
 Los Gatos, CA

Bill & Joan Price
 Avatar School of Yoga
 Union, NJ

Dr. Joan Price
 Fountain **Hill, AZ**

Hasmukh P. **Rama**
 Greenville, SC

Dr. B.V. Reddy
Barstow, CA

Jay Schaefer
 Raphine, VA

Seyril Schochen
 Sri Aurobindo **Learning Center**
Crestone, CO

Richard & Jan Stein
 San Francisco, CA

Isabel Taylor
 Washington, D.C.

Marcel & Edith **Thevoz**
 Springfield, VA

Andrea Van de Loos
 Acupmssure & Hydrotherapy
 Soquel, CA

Mitra Vatuna
 La Canada, CA

Bobbie Voit
Crestone, CO

Frederick & Cheryl Veith
 Essential Needs
Newtown, PA

Alice Webb
Burkittsville, MD

Cover Photo by Brian Dyer

Collaboration (ISSN 0164-1522) is published by Sri Aurobindo Association, Inc., P.O. Box 372, High Falls, NY 12440, a non-profit, tax-exempt organization. Copyright 1990 by Sri Aurobindo Association, Inc. All passages from the works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother are copyrighted by the Sri Aurobindo Ashram unless otherwise noted and are used here with the kind permission of the Ashram. Photographs of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother appearing on these pages are also copyrighted by the Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

A one-year subscription is \$12; airmail outside the USA and North America is \$25. All foreign subscriptions must be paid with a US dollar draft or an International Money Order.

Larger contributions, all tax-deductible, are welcome for the work of the Association. In addition, contributions for Auroville and the Sri Aurobindo Ashram may be made through Sri Aurobindo Association, Inc.

Subscriptions should be sent to Sri Aurobindo Association, Inc., P.O. Box 372, High Falls, NY 12440.

Any editorial material should be sent to Jean Korstange, P.O. Box 297, Saxtons River, VT 05154.

Printed in the United States of America.

Something Else to Think About

By Gordon Hongtange

AND it is this intense dissatisfaction, often painful, this feeling of being still so far from the truth, the thing that is pushing us toward Something Else.” Aurovilians have made “something else” into a mantra, their *raison d’etre*. The most fervent among them call continuously for a township untainted by the dross of evolution--the instincts which ensure survival but not surprise: “.. if we want with all our hearts to go towards the new world, we have to try to undo the old world in and around us” (quotations from the *Auroville News*).

Much of the time this aspiration remains inchoate and insubstantial, for elsewhere things that make their appearance in earthly forms have a way of reminding us, if we know a little history, of something else we’ve seen or read before. Yet, at the dead end of a decadent American decade, I am glad there are Aurovilians who can still invoke transformation as a way of life, can still launch off into yet another community or project with not much more than a Sanskrit name and a desire to do what’s never been done.

Distribution of Wealth

But there is now going on in Auroville an interesting movement that has taken up probably the most stubborn problem of humanity: the distribution of wealth. Up until now, economic anarchy has severely limited how much money was available in Auroville for collective maintenance and administration--the kind of things, like road repair and schools, that most people in the world grudgingly pay taxes for. Yet a growing community needs health care, water service, and administration. How can these be achieved without some kind of imposition?

At a time when centralized economies, from Britain to Bucharest, are dissolving, Aurovilians still aspire to a state where each will be given according to their needs, where money and work should be de-linked and a basic minimum maintenance (calculated at 1,000 rupees, or about \$70 a month) and free services provided. How will Auroville avoid the stagnation and hidden inequalities of state socialism that have sparked the uprisings in Eastern Europe?

The Plan

The answer came during a meeting I attended in Auroville last February, on Auroville’s birthday. The plan that emerged was the result of many meetings by a small, committed group of economic planners. It was

a simple plan based on the fundamental principles of Auroville where unity can only be the result of the development of each Aurovilian’s consciousness: No imposition, honesty, and transparency.

The cornerstone of this program, which began last July, is that each Aurovilian is asked to contribute 200 rupees a month to one of the collective budgets, like road repair or the Auroville Electrical Service. The Aurovilian can designate where the money is to go or give it to “unspecified” and let the economic working group decide which collective service needs it the most for that month. Thus, the first principal: no imposition. Each one makes the choice to contribute.

Imagine that the United States government gave us a similar choice. Think of the money you paid Uncle Sam last year that disappeared into the black hole of the military or went to pay Reagan’s debt. What would happen if you could choose whether to give it and, furthermore, where it would go? Chaos, most likely--or perhaps a radical reordering of priorities and suddenly involved citizenry demanding accountability and some open books.

Honesty and Transparency

Which brings us to honesty and transparency. Each of the units, both “private” and collective, in Auroville is asked to show on paper how their money is spent in order to dissipate the climate of mistrust that universally surrounds finances and, presumably, to enable Aurovilians to make choices based on facts and figures as well as a perception of the community’s needs.

Thus, in October, 137,605 rupees were given to the Central Fund, of which 103,570 was specified: 20,000 to children and children’s nutrition; 10,070 to shelter; 3,100 to the **Matrimandir**; and 2,650 to the pony farm (these were the largest amounts) and 34,035 rupees unspecified. There were many budgets, however, that did not receive the amount recommended for them by the economy group. After half a year the program is still alive but obviously not flourishing:

Yet it is something else, an idea/action that is transparently simple but with profound consequences. I think that those here in the USA, charged by the Mother with financial responsibilities toward Auroville, should be both interested in and aware of this movement. 200 rupees a month equals approximately \$12 at today’s inflated exchange rate. For more information contact Auroville International USA, P.O. Box 162489, Sacramento, CA 95816.

On the Lam From the Divine

(Editors' note: This is the last in a series of interviews by Clifford Gibson. When we first read it, we wanted more background information on Mickey's quite extraordinary life. John Schlorholtz agreed to interview Mickey at his Boston, Massachusetts apartment. What follows is the story that John sent us combined with Clifford's interview.)

"I've never had a vision," Mickey told John, "I never saw any writing or heard any sounds. .. It's just that, little by little, you start to realize that there can't be any other way. The environment and activity, the total environment around each and every person that that person is conscious of is all organized and structured so perfectly for only one reason: to bring out the hidden truths in life."

The Soldier

Mickey Finn ran away from home when he was 14 years old. He had a good home but found school to be unbearable. He couldn't keep his mind on simple mathematics, couldn't read because he was thinking about things outside on the street. After two years of wandering aimlessly around the country, working "for 25 cents an hour" and being arrested in Florida for vagrancy ("They had 32 city ordinances that covered anybody who was broke"), he came back to Boston to volunteer for the Spanish civil war and fight on the loyalist side against the Hitler-backed Franco regime.

He was too young, but later joined the American army in World

War II and was sent to the Pacific. After one year he found himself on Guadalcanal fighting the Japanese: "They didn't have the firepower we had, but they had "knee mortars" that they strapped to their knees when they ran. At night, if they heard a sound anywhere or saw a movement, a whole battery would go off. Eight. There was always eight. You would hear them go off, and the whole eight would be in the air at one time. And you would count them when they landed, and if you counted up to eight you knew you were alive."

Wounded

At one point he'd been in the rain for 5 days, saw a grass shack and went to get out of the rain. The Japanese were there. Mickey heard the explosion, felt himself lifted off the ground, and then down, with his arm wounded by shrapnel. From out of nowhere a Marine picked him up and carried him to safety. He languished in a ill-equipped hospital tent with a severed artery for many days, too weak to be moved, according to the doctors. In terrible pain, but without any

painkillers, he convinced an orderly to give him a shot of morphine: "That was the first peace I had felt for 3 days and

nights. And that's how I got started on drugs."

The same orderly, a fellow Bostonian named Red, helped smuggle him on a plane bound to another island with a decent hospital. There, a doctor took one look at

his arm and said, "Prepare this guy for surgery." They performed a brand-new operation, only recently learned from America's Allies, the Russians, that could join nerve endings that had been severed more than an inch. "I woke up later in the ward," Mickey said, "and smack! (sound of his fist hitting his palm) . I reached over. My arm was there! I coulda done a handstand! I was *one of the first soldiers to get this operation."

The Criminal

After the war he "kinda drifted into a life of crime," stealing rationed items, like cigarettes, with a gang. He was caught but went on to armed robbery ("After all, the army had taught me how to use a gun!"), safe robberies, and then confidence games at the race tracks. He was into heavy drugs during this time until he tried to sell an ounce of heroin to an F.B.I. agent.

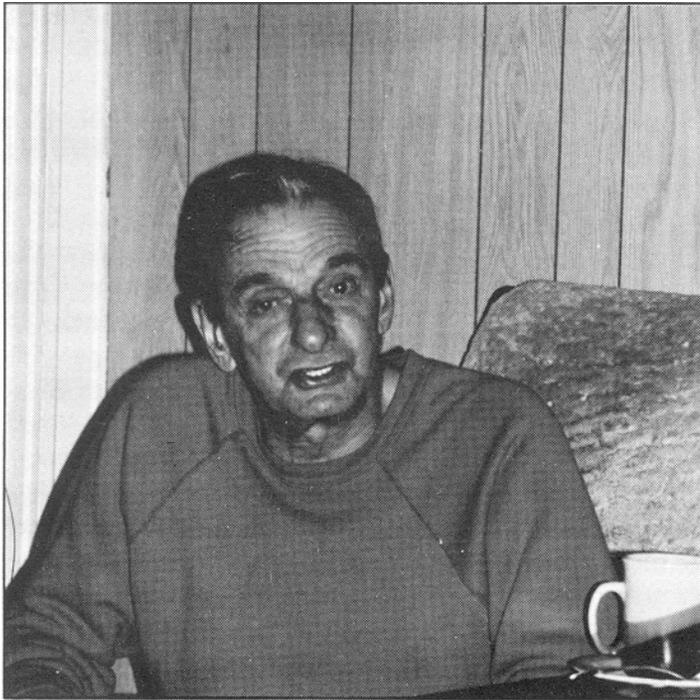
"Until I went to jail I don't think I had ever really read a book. But there I started reading Mickey Spillane and then John Dos Passos. It made me start to think a little bit."

Once out of prison, though, he returned to crime and drug use, becoming a gifted con man. He was so run down physically that his friends were taking bets that he wouldn't make it to the age of 40.

Yoga

One night his wife brought home a book about **hatha** yoga by Indra Devi. Six months later he picked it up and tried to get into the full lotus position. He succeeded immediately, and his wife later told him that a change had come over him, like he was "transfixed." So he began to practice **hatha** yoga faithfully, built himself up, and began looking for more about yoga: "I

"I went to the New York Public Library and stole a book on yoga! .. I thought that if I developed my mind better I could rob the educated rich!"



Mickey Finn

Photo by John Schlorholtz

The F.B.I. and Devi

"Then one day I called my mother's house in Boston and my mother said, 'I hope you're not calling from your house.' I said, 'Why?' She said, 'Because the F.B.I. just left here, and they probably have our phone tapped.' I got sick. I was only out of jail eighteen months at

that time. I really didn't have any question in my mind as to what it was about. I had just clipped some guy in western Pennsylvania for quite a bit of money. And all I could see was, augh, the walls again. And this time I was really gonna get it because I was already diagnosed as being a psychopathic criminal by the federal government, which means any judge is going to give you the maximum sentence; you'll never get a parole. Nobody can fix it for you.

"Anyway, I called up my lawyer. I said, 'Listen, Jerry. I just called Boston. My mother told me that the F.B.I. is looking for me, and they're waiting outside her door right now. Would you call up the F.B.I. and find out what they have against me?'

"So he did. I called him back; I didn't even give him my phone number. He said, 'Listen, they want you to come in. They got you wrapped up in a package. You don't have a chance.' So I said, 'Listen. Call the F.B.I. back and tell them that I need a week to straighten out my affairs, and then I'll come in.' He called them up, and they said they'd give me a week, and

they wouldn't look for me or bother me.

"So, that day I was supposed to go over to see Devi. That afternoon I walked into the room that she used to talk to me in, and she got in front of the door. She put her arms like this (crosses his arms in front of his chest)—I'll never forget it—she was a very imposing woman. She said, 'You're in trouble with the police. Do you want to sit down and tell me about it?'

"I wanted to run out the door. If there was a way to get around her without knocking her over, I would have. Here's this woman who I'd only met three times, and I had her on such a pedestal that when I had an appointment with her, all day I waited to get there. And how did she know I'm wanted by the police? If they knew about her, they wouldn't have been at my mother's house that same day, they would have been sitting outside her place.

"Anyway, she said, 'You want to sit down?' And I said to myself, 'Boy, there's no sense lying to this lady. How would she know all this?' So, I told her... all the arrests and the prison and drug addictions and alcohol and, you know, because that's where I was at.

"After I got through with this whole story, she never batted an eyelash. She looked at me and she said, 'Don't worry about it, nothing's going to happen to you!' When I went out the door I said to myself, 'Boy, is she carried away. Nothing's going to happen to me!'

Well, the following week I had another appointment with her in the afternoon. I called up the lawyer, said, 'Listen, Jerry, call up the F.B.I. and tell them I need another week.' I wanted to talk to her some more about yoga and Sri Aurobindo—she was always talking about Sri Aurobindo. He called them up and then said to me, 'They'll only give you this one more week, and they know they won't have too much of a problem finding you.'

went to the New York Public Library and stole a book on yoga! I sensed there was more here, more depth. I thought that if I developed my mind better I could rob the educated rich!"

But some other part of his being had been touched. One day in Central Park he picked up a newspaper and saw a photo of a woman in a sari, a Frenchwoman who called herself Devi. He went over to her "Indian cultural center" immediately. When Devi came into the room he felt electrified. He also wanted to run away, but she offered to see him and talk to him about yoga.

Later Mickey learned that Devi had been told by Ramana Maharshi to go to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, from where she came to the USA. John Kelly also told him that he had met Devi during World War II when she was a leader in the French resistance. The first time Mickey saw her he remembers her talking mostly about consciousness. "At that time I thought that if you were conscious you were awake and if you were unconscious you were asleep—or knocked out. But I kept going back to see her."

The following week I called him up and said, 'Listen, Jerry, they got me wrapped up in a package. What do they want me to come in there for? To tie the ribbon around myself? I'll come in when they pick me up. Why should I go in and cooperate with them? I'm going to get the limit anyway.'

'He said, 'Okay, if that's how you feel, I'll call them up.' I said, 'Don't call them up, just let it go. Tell them you haven't heard from me.'

Case Closed

"Three months later I called that lawyer up for some other reason completely. He said, 'I'm going to tell you something strange. The two F.B.I. men that had your case three months ago were in my office this morning. I thought they came looking for you. They never even mentioned you. They came looking for somebody else.' I said, 'Well, I hope you didn't mention me.' 'No I didn't,' he said.

"I went over to Devi that afternoon, and she asked me, 'Have you heard anything from your case?' 'No,' I said. She said, 'Don't worry about it, I don't think you ever will.' And I never heard anything from that case.

"You know, when I first started stealing at the race track, it was a pleasure. You know, I thought I was so smart, just talking people out of their money. But, after I got into the Yoga—subconsciously everybody's in it—but after I got into it consciously it became harder and harder for me to do that, till after about a year and a half it became such a torture to go to the race track that I couldn't do it anymore. I had cops ask me after that, 'What was the disposition of this case here in western Pennsylvania?' I said, 'Charges were dropped—no evidence,' but I don't know what happened. I tortured for years trying to figure out what did Devi do?

"She didn't do anything—but I couldn't understand that. I never told that story to anyone for quite a long time, for years. I figured if I told it to anybody, they'd think I was insane.

F i n a l l y there was a young girl that Wally sent over. She'd been coming to see me for

maybe five or six times. One day she came over to me, and she said, 'Oh, Mr. Finn, I think there's something I'd better tell you, but I'm so embarrassed.' I said, 'Listen, I've been in more holes and sewers than you ever know exist. Whatever it is, if you want to get something off your chest, don't feel bad telling it to me.' So she said, 'Well, I'm out on bail from Florida. I've gotta go back in another two weeks to stand trial, and I'm worried about it.'

"She was the first one I ever told that story to. And I told her, 'Listen, I'm not Devi, so I can't say nothing will happen to you, but I'll tell you this: if you stay open to the Light, the Force, the Love of the Mother it will turn out all right, I know it will.' And she said, 'Gee thanks, I feel better about it already.' Do you know she called me up four days later: 'Mr. Finn, Mr. Finn, guess what happened? All the charges against me are dropped. I'm going to get my bail money back, and that will be the end of it.' You know, it just worked. It always works."

Heroin

After that he became an even better thief than before, but it became distasteful, and he kept getting into trouble. He returned to Boston during the early 60's and decided to get a regular job. No one would hire him. He had many doubts about yoga and Sri Aurobindo—kept looking for faults in his books—and couldn't give up heroin.

"You get signs every moment of your life, but you can't see them because they're too subtle."

Finally he got a job in a foundry, continuing to do hatha yoga and pranayama to get him through the day. He used to think, 'That Devi, what did she do this to me for?' He

was getting offers "from all over the country" to go back to stealing. He said to himself, "Am I crazy work-

ing in here? I can make more money in one day stealing than I can make here working in three months. I must be out of my mind. I might work in this foundry for a hundred years and never find out if this is all really true. Maybe Sri Aurobindo's just such a brilliant writer, and maybe he could write all of these things without any flaws and make a perfect plan of what existence might be like. But it might not really be like that. It's his way of seeing it, and maybe it's not all true." And then I'd say to myself, 'But if I go back stealing, if what he says is really true I'll never find out. But supposing I work here for fifty years and never find out? Why don't I get a sign or something to show me it's all real?'

"You get signs every moment of your life, but you can't see them because they're too subtle. I worked in that place for eight months. Finally I found out that you inhale the metals and everything through your pores, through your breathing—it gets on your food when you eat. The inspector came around to find out if my urine was alright, so I asked him, 'What is all this about?'

"When it reaches the danger point,' he said, 'we tell them to lay you off.'

I was looking for an excuse to get out of there anyway—it was a torture chamber. So I quit. I went to a cooking school. The state was paying the freight and paying your living expenses. And I checked

into a motel out on Route One and, oh . . . I got up the first morning—wall to wall rug. I didn't even have a radio or a television where I lived before because I was making such small money, I was working for minimum wage. I jumped in the shower, and I'm toweling myself and, you know, it felt so wonderful with the music going, and I was floating around the room. Then I looked in the mirror—the first time I saw myself in the mirror in eight months—I couldn't believe the change that had come over my body. Pheew! I was not in good shape when I went to work in that foundry. I'd just come off of drugs. And here I was solid again. Then I opened up the book, *The Mother*, where it says that in each man She handles and answers the needs according to the force that is in him and the consciousness that's it's done in—and I said, 'My god, I needed to get built up, and She threw me in the foundry and gave me a body again.'

'I was still using drugs, but not so heavy. But every time I would take a fix, after I took it, I would say—ah... 'Sri Aurobindo is brilliant, Devi was brilliant; what do they know about junkies? From what I read in these books, you have to always be concentrated on the Yoga, on the Mother. I can't even go for ten minutes without thinking about a fix.'

"This went on for a long time. Finally one day I said it before I took the fix. I said, 'Well... I'm not going.' It was raining out. I was supposed to meet the connection on the street corner. I said, 'I'm not going. I'm crazy, because I'll be looking for that guy tomorrow morning, and he's going to be mad as a son-of-a-gun that I left him standing in the rain and, ah, I'll be sick all night.' And I didn't go.

"You know, I didn't think of

drugs for two weeks, and then it came to my mind that I hadn't been bothered for two weeks by this... thing that I was hooked into for all these years. You know, it's awful hard to pass that by and say... you know, the foundry was easy, but drug addicts, when they stop using drugs, they get sick as... oh, they get so sick. I didn't have a bad minute. So, I opened *The Mother* again (laughs). Mahakali: In one moment she breaks things without consistence, the obstacles that immobilize and the enemies that assail the seeker. Drugs went like that—She snapped it like it was a straw.

"I couldn't believe it, except then I started to think back about Devi

'My god, I needed to get built up, and She threw me in the foundry and gave me a body again.'

with the police looking for me and I said, 'My god! This is the most beautiful thing that could ever happen to anybody.' You know what I mean? And the next thing, all of a sudden I was trying to introduce other people to it, because if it was the key to me, it was the key to anybody."

Pondicherry

Loquacious fellow that he is, he started talking to people about the Yoga, and though he felt like he really knew nothing he would say things he didn't know he knew. It just came out. Eventually all this led to a now well-known incident in Pondicherry. It was two days after darshan and he was in the Indian Coffee House when he got into a conversation with a burly, Anglo-Indian ex-prizefighter named Malcolm. When Malcolm expressed doubts about the Mother

and said openly that she was a fraud, Mickey decided to stay with him to find out why he thought that way.

Finally, late that night, Malcolm blurted out that the woman he had seen on the balcony two days ago was a beautiful young woman—he'd be happy to go out with her—why were there photos of an old woman all over town? Mickey told him that he had probably seen her in her subtle body. Malcolm was thunderstruck.

No More Doubts

The next day Mickey took Malcolm to M.P. Pandit who arranged a darshan with the Mother. But Malcolm had had a dream in which Sri Aurobindo told him not to see her because it might be too much for him at this time, the same thing M.P. Pandit told him when he went to the Ashram. "Since you have seen her subtle body, you can see her anytime."

"When I came back from the Ashram I had no more doubts," says Mickey. "They know everything—Everything!"

* * *

On Yoga

Clifford: Do you remember in the beginning, you used to make an analogy between evolution and us trying to make some kind of progress, and you used to say to be patient. You said, "Just think how long . . . it took billions of years for the first life form to evolve."

Mickey: I don't even remember what I used to tell people. (laughs)

C: Well, you used to say that it took billions and billions of years for the first cells to appear on earth, and then it took so long for life to evolve--so don't worry about your own progress because it already took you so long to get here.

M: It's true.

C: I was curious when you said be patient. What scale did you think

of? Did you mean be patient within one lifetime, or. . .

M: I don't really know, but I tell you, I just picked up a book edited by Dr. Reddy because he was here (in the USA). In it Sri Aurobindo answered somebody's letter. He said, "The difference between knowledge and faith is that I know the Supermind is going to manifest

But every time somebody puts down cigarettes, it makes it easier for everybody else to put it down. That's a stronger reason than to quit for yourself. And that goes for a lot of other imperfections and impurities in us.

in the Earth consciousness. I know that we are going to effectuate a breakthrough. It's inevitable. I can't fix the timetable, but I have faith that the period is now." So, you know, I don't know these things as an actual fact, but I have faith in what He says. (laughs) I have faith in his faith.

C: What are you hoping for now?

M: Well, to see The Supermind, the Supramental Consciousness, manifest in the whole earth. That's all.

C: What do you hope for yourself?

M: Just that I can be, some time or other become, a very effective and efficient instrument through which She can work. I don't have any more personal ambition, because I know an awful lot about my own defects, falseness.. .who knows it better than the person themselves? I'm a long way from-and I'm sixty seven years old, I might not have a lot of time left. I might, I don't know...

I tell you, at least in my case,

boy, there's so much resistance just against simple things. You know, it must have taken me twenty years to quit smoking cigarettes and grass. You know, maybe twenty years for just that. Pheew! And I didn't want either one of them. I just used to do it; it seemed to be something mechanical. You know how many years I tried to get through one day without a cigarette? And I would break down all the time. But one day I said, "That's it." And do you want to know something? I never had a problem with it. I never had a problem from the minute I said "no more" this time. It never happened again. I don't get any yens for cigarettes and grass, I couldn't. But it took years just for those two little simple things that most people-thatmostpeoplecouldput down like that.

C: Cigarettes.. .most people can't put them down at all.

M: Well, cigarettes are rough on a lot of people. But every time somebody puts down cigarettes, it makes it easier for everybody else to put it down. And that's a stronger reason than to quit for yourself. And, ah, that goes for a lot of other imperfections and impurities in us. But that's such a grace to put those things down, because you know, at

sixty-seven-and I was a heavy smoker-how many years could I go?

C: When you're feeling bad, depressed or doubtful, do you have something particular that helps you to get through?

M: The Mother.. .Yeah, the Mother. I think of the Mother. That doesn't really happen to me anymore, or if it does, it's so slight . . . you know Sri Aurobindo talks about doubts, I think in *The Synthesis* . Sometimes you get doubts, and the whole

edifice that you've constructed, the whole construction that you have—of what existence is about-it all collapses with those doubts. But Sri Aurobindo explains that one of the reasons is that if you never had doubts you'd stay right with that construction, that narrow view. And so the doubts destroy it and only make room for a larger knowledge to penetrate. And I've seen this happen in myself so many times that I just know that that's how it is and so even when ... but I never have any doubts about it. Not anymore.

I mean you can see it in everything. It's like Sri Aurobindo says, you can't fix a time on it. He also said that even if it was going to be far off in the distant future, there's nothing else really to do. And even if I had doubts about myself I know that it's an inevitability. There couldn't be any other way.

C: Okay, maybe you don't care, but are you making progress?

M: I would say, yes. Yeah. In a subtle way. I seem to have an understanding of a lot of things in a way that I never did before. And this is only in the last couple of

years—two or three years. And... I can't see the Divine in every-

thing, or the Divine hand in all actions, but I know that it's there. And when I see things happen that generally people feel bad about, I don't. I don't feel bad when I see so-called Truth getting a defeat, and I don't feel elated when I see something very.. .conducive to growth, to the world happen. I know that it's inevitable. There's no way that it can miss.

When I told you that I used to look for a flaw--I'd say, if I find one flaw in here, then the whole-

I know that a Divine Life on this earth is just as sure as that this bench is here. And I've known that for a long, long time

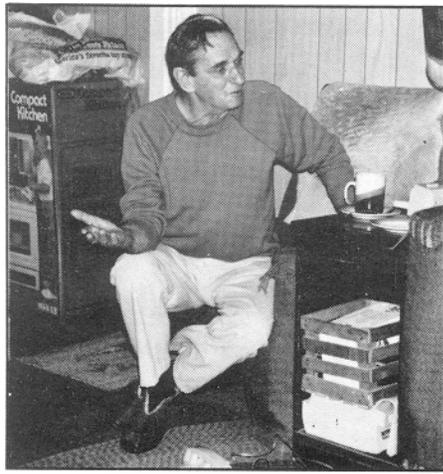


Photo by John Schlorholtz

thing isn't right—it's all out of kilter, and then the world really is doomed if these two people are not right because...if they didn't see it right, who's going to see it right? They are it. And I never found a flaw; I found a lot of things I don't understand.

But in my own consciousness there hasn't been a doubt about what's going to be in this yoga for many years, that it's going to happen. How it will happen, what form—I don't know. But I know that a Divine Life on this earth is just as sure as that this bench is here. And I've known that for a long, long time. Sometimes I wish that I could be a pure, a more perfect and more transformed instrument with which to do this work. I see some people are so effective in it, you know. But there's a tremendous amount of resistance in everybody, and it just has to be overcome.

As to the question about whether there was anything irrevocable that happened in the Sadhana: The feeling or knowledge that the Supramental will manifest on earth, and the knowledge that there is nothing else to do with one's will and action but to consciously try to unify them with the Divine Will—that feeling and knowledge is, I feel, irrevocable.

A Letter to Mother

From Muriel Spanier

April 7, 1970
Good Guest Home

Dear Mother,

I will be returning to New York next week and feel that since I saw you many questions have been answered for me and the path I must follow has been made clear. At the moment it is a path of work, work performed quietly, simply, devotionally, so that the force I feel will grow strong enough to illuminate and transform the darker aspects of my nature. May I have your blessings to become a part of your work at Matagiri? This small center already has a nucleus of young and older people who visit regularly, drawn by the spiritual force of your teachings and those of Sri Aurobindo.

There is one important question with which I need help at this time. That is how to solve the dualities that creep in to confuse? How to know which of the voices that speak is truth, which is ego, which is psychological weakness? For important decisions it is possible to go inside until the truth is known. It is the daily momentary decision and reaction which presents the problems.

Muriel Spanier
April 10, 1970
Sri Aurobindo Ashram

Dear Muriel,

The Mother has received your letter of the 7th April and has said that it is always quite difficult to discriminate between the true urge and the others. The Mother tells you that the voice of truth is less noisy, it says what it has to say quietly and smoothly. All the voices that are heard in the head and are very insistent are mostly mental voices and are not to be trusted.

Yours truly,

Andre Morisset

Sri Aurobindo and Spiritual Psychology

By Scott Mandelker

IN EVENING TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO (conversations between Sri Aurobindo and his disciples between 1923 and 1943, written down by A.B. Purani) there are two chapters, "On Medicine" and "On Psychology," in the first and second series respectively, where a great many issues of relevance to psychotherapy practice and theory are discussed. It's difficult to find systematic presentations of the various issues and ideas on these topics, the format of his talks being didactic and casual, but Sri Aurobindo's responses are consistently precise and self-contained. This paper will present a number of these statements and address the following major issues:

1. The constitution of man, including the dynamics between the psychic being and the triple lower bodies.
2. The nature of Higher Truth and Supermind.
3. Intuition, intellect and imagination.
4. Madness, dreams and emotion.
5. Comments upon Western psychoanalysis.

As I intend to limit the length of this essay, many of these areas will be given a cursory treatment. I shall present the basics with little elaboration and then enlarge upon specialized points of interest. The objective presentation of Aurobindo's ideas will be coupled with a personal commentary, mainly restricted to the second half of the paper. At every turn I'll address the relevance of these somewhat esoteric and non-analytically derived views for the practice of psychotherapy and the overall "view of the client." This integration will be seen to be intellectually fruitful for further speculation, and as embodying the quality of synthesis to characterize the germinal yet inevitable discipline of spiritual psychology towards which we are fast approaching.

The Constitution of Man

Human nature is constituted by the triple lower bodies of physical, vital and mental, considered as "instruments of expression of the psychic being (soul) ... for manifestation in earth-evolution." The soul is behind all outer manifestations, supports the three functions, and is representative of the still higher Spiritual Being (Satchitananda). We are generally unaware of these inner sources by our being "so much given to

the vital life and other external impulses," and as the soul has got its "own activity and own field ... (it) is not interested in ninety percent of his (man's) activity and keeps aloof." This point deserves further consideration: That due to our earthly myopia the psychic being itself has little inclination to make contact, hence we must become "attractive and magnetic" to invite the higher agency.

The Nature of Higher Truth or Supermind

The psychic being "opens to the Higher Truth" or Supermind which is "above," and atop the Supramental is Satchitananda which is ineffable and incomprehensible to the lower mind. The goal of yoga is to purify the lower nature, invoke through meditation and prayer the energy of the psychic being, and manifest the Truth of Supermind upon the physical plane, which implies actualized Higher Consciousness and liberation from the world forces of bondage and attachment.

"The object is to see the world forces (triple-body and environmental energies), to meet them on their own plane and defeat them there. Practically it means a fight with the world forces."

The practice of yoga enables us to conquer these powers, attain self-mastery and impressibility to the downflowing higher impulses.

Intuition, Intellect and Imagination

Movement towards Higher Truth accesses intuition as an image of the Supermind. When imagination becomes free of personal desires and rational-exclusivity (i.e., free from bondage to vital or mental plane complexes), it becomes the inspiration of poets and true artists.

Conversely, when the lower intellect is active "higher knowledge cannot come," so rational processes that are "merely selective" lead to dualistic, conceptions and only partial understanding. Sri Aurobindo speaks of his eventual disillusionment with the "prestige of the intellect," and sees the futility of reliance upon it for either wisdom or security. Although these discourses are eminently rational, analytical and intellectually sophisticated, they derive from direct experience and inspiration, and flow from a mind united with the Supramental which "reconciles all contraries."

When the lower mind is "passive and open to the Higher Knowledge" and one knows how to "wait till the higher consciousness begins to act" (waiting for the

inner voice and impulse to state forth before we open our mouths to speak), then by and by "... the substance of the mind itself is transformed into the intuitive mind. ... then it is found impossible to resume the old mental activity . . . then you go on developing more and more and manifest higher and higher degrees of supramental working in which the action becomes increasingly more independent of the [lower] mind."

The initial difficulty is to "isolate the true intuition from the mixture - mental as well as vital," which is simply the problem of keeping the mind thoroughly passive to higher impression, necessitating a high degree of detachment. Hence the injunctions to a disciple; "... stop the egoistic activity in his mind . . . separate himself as the mental Purusha (Man) and watch the thoughts as happening in him, but not as his. He has to

...due to our earthly myopia the psychic being itself has little inclination to make contact... we must become attractive and magnetic to invite the higher agency.

watch them and reject those that are to be rejected . . . separate yourself from your nature and all its movements . . . externalize them all."

In the West this advice might be seen as the philosophy of psychosis or extreme denial, but there are important implications to be drawn from this view when contrasted with our psychological theories. One may confidently relinquish all elements of a self when one recognizes the existence of a higher, more comprehensive Self behind it. The views of ego-psychology and all but the most radical transpersonal approaches cannot offer such powerful advice, fearing that the collapse of the house signifies the destruction of the universe. This is a crucial difference in East-West theory and practice and is a difference of kind and not merely degree.

This detachment does not mean total self-denial, as "... a well-trained intellect and strong vital being are helpful, because they render the being wide and allow the higher activity easily."

Nevertheless, the intellect can be an obstacle "because it tends to be an independent plane of consciousness" (i.e., the blindness of some theoreticians, or simple emotional self-denial), and an impure vital body "which refuses to give itself up to the Higher Power, obstinate and turned downwards" (into the physical world of desire), will also cause many problems. All our faculties ought to be developed, but their purity

to transparency), dedication, and obedience are essential to success.

Madness, Dreams, and Emotions

Balance is also essential, especially for the ardent seeker. "If there is anything which obstructs the working of the Higher Power then it may harm him. . . . If the brain is dull the mind cannot transmit its action correctly, it does it imperfectly." Madness may then result from defects in the brain or body systems collapsing under the higher impress, as Sri Aurobindo noted of one, "When the Higher Power descended upon it [the nervous system], it broke down." Another cause of insanity, perhaps more applicable to what we see in the West, is the phenomenon of the "tom veil." Regarding a disciple who suffered mental derangement, "He had broken the veil between the mental and the vital planes, opened himself to the worlds behind them and he was unable to bear all that followed."

The flooding of consciousness with grossly ego-alien contents, especially hallucinatory and delusional, may simply be the result of a tom protective matrix between subtle bodies. Pharmaceutical drugs probably don't heal this rent, but rather deaden the capacity for the brain to record the images.

Possession by a vital plane being is also possible when the mental body is rigid and narrow (as found with dogmatic people), and the vital body is intense and ambitious (e.g., some political and religious leaders.) With this configuration one may go mad or fall into delusional grandiosity, which could be unrecognized. The aims of possessing beings are considered five-fold: "To have influence on the physical . . . to play a joke, just to see what happens . . . to play God and be worshipped ... to bring about a manifestation of vital power [i.e.,

One may confidently relinquish all elements of a self when one recognizes the existence of a higher more conscious self.

magical displays, miraculous healing cures] . . . to satisfy some desire or impulse like murder or lust."

This occupation may be terminated if no part of the person "calls back the force." But quite often the person feels empty without it, and has developed a need for the alien tenant. Also communication is possible with the dead "if they feel interested in life, or in men, or are sufficiently near", or through simple contact with persistent thought forms of the deceased. All of this has relevance for understanding the content of psychotic episodes, as well as the power of certain charismatic leaders.

Essentially, mental illness and life problems in general result from neglect of the soul, which is "thrust behind." From yoga and spiritual awareness practices

it comes forward, but it can be repeatedly pushed back by “forces taking advantage of some weakness, some vital or physical defect - unless the Central Being comes down and takes hold of the Instruments.” This statement is not amplified, but I imagine this continual

Essentially, mental illness and life problems in general result from neglect of the soul, which is “thrust behind.”

struggle has great relevance to our shifting moods and chosen behaviors which we later are proud of or come to regret. Aspects of the natural process in which “by degrees the soul comes to the surface till the whole being is controlled by it” account for both spiritual awakening and the various levels of individual human excellence.

Here are two valuable passages upon dreams:

“It is perfectly true that dreams are due to something from the subconscious rising up during sleep in an irregular and fitful manner. But that does not account for all dreams. The realm of dreams is very wide. There are other kinds of dreams, not due to the subconscious . . . “

“A dream is merely a confused transcript in sleep of something that happens behind. The thing gets confused because the controlling mind is not there. All sorts of things rush up from the passive memory . . . If the mind remains conscious in dreams, you can know the working that takes place behind. Some dreams correctly represent what is taking place behind - such dreams are clear and cogent... It is very difficult to say what happens exactly [in dreams, while back] on the physical plane.”

These comments disturb Western dream theories, not by repudiating their potential symbolic interpretations or relevance to some psychological conflicts, but by insinuating that some “dreams” are quite different than supposed. Again we have a difference of kind and not of degree, which seems inevitable given the shift into spiritual awareness.

A short mention about emotions would also be in order. Sri Aurobindo notes that the psychic being is generally considered to be “behind the heart” and “behind the emotional activity which is its surface manifestation.” What we call emotional expression is usually a dynamic of the vital body in interaction with mental beliefs and complexes. It is not a direct soul expression. Being “behind” signifies both a physical location of the divine spark, and that common emotions derive some of their affective intensity from soul impulse energies. It is said that for the soul the only

emotion is love. Thus all human feelings are complex derivatives of this unitary cosmic love filtered and blended with various vital and mental forces. These can be differentiated from true psychic emotion which is both profound and expansive, a pure spiritual emotion generated when “The psychic being opens directly to the Higher Truth [Supermind realm] and it is that which can receive it here.”

Therefore all emotions are not of the same quality and may issue from various spiritual levels. Again the critique of modern psychology is its lack of perceptive discernment, rooted in a rational materialist world view (a “world-view” rather than a cosmic view.) As noted above, the intellect which has now established itself as an operating independent plane arrives at a partial understanding, neglecting spiritual dimensions of psychological functioning through its nonalignment with Higher Truth. Emotions, like dreams, are not all alike, and only a calm and passive mind utilizing intuitive inspiration may discern the subtle distinctions.

Emotions, like dreams, are not all alike, and only a calm and passive mind utilizing intuitive inspiration may discern the subtle distinctions.

Comments on Western Psychoanalysis

Sri Aurobindo is critical of Western psychology (i.e., psychoanalysis) on the grounds of its rational materialist **scientism**, broad generalizations, and intrinsic misunderstanding of theoretical validity. He states; “The Europeans have got a fixed idea about these sciences. They observe some abnormal phenomena, study them, find out a general law and they try to apply it everywhere... they want to work in psychology in the same way that they work in physics. But psychology is not so simple. You can’t generalize it as you can with matter. It is very subtle, and one has to take into account many factors... As it tries to work on the lines of the physical sciences it is absurd.”

This is the expected futility of the “prestige of intellect” bound to a strictly physical world view, arriving at conclusions and methods of research testing through “acts of reasoning [which] can lead you to a quite opposite conclusion... [choosing] one to the exclusion of all the **other** possibilities.” This ratiocinative prostitution accounts for the plethora of conflicting schools of psychological theory, the blind men groping at the elephant, the myriad suitors all ready to pay. The lower mind with its doors shut tight cannot see far.

Likewise, psychological theory building rests upon

tenuous ground. Stated simply; "Theory can never cure anybody... A theory may be true or false and yet you may obtain results from it. A theory simply puts you in a condition where something behind you can work through you. Theory merely convinces you and thereby produces the necessary inner condition. That is all. It may be true or it may be false."

The shamans and healers, the magicians and scattered adepts around the world have poor theories...but their personal power is transmitted effectively despite, or perhaps because of their lack of theory.

Interestingly, the worth of our intellectual theories cannot be measured by our effectiveness while using them. It may be that pioneers in the field who built upon, then deviated from the theories of their predecessors were not able to get into the proper condition for effective work or transmission, and only when they found their own theories could they be properly aligned. If Freud is successful it is because "he has some power that people get cured by him." The shamans and faith healers, the magicians and scattered adepts around the world have poor theories indeed, often not even internally consistent or logically ordered, but their personal power is transmitted effectively despite, or perhaps because of their lack of theory. The corpus of theory becomes the corpse of intellectual dead weight. This final criticism is definitive:

"You may try to apply the results of psychoanalysis and remove obstacles and complexes from human nature and you will see that they do not succeed... It starts its work on a wrong foundation."

All of these comments were made in 1925 and cannot be said to necessarily apply to any other major school of psychology, let alone perhaps the behaviorists whose scientism and emphasis on the observable is even more extreme. They certainly do not apply to the humanists, cognitive therapists, or transpersonalists, as these approaches may not be as drunk in the brandy of theory. Nevertheless all schools probably would be cited as partial formulations addressing isolated areas of human psychospiritual functioning. While not valueless, they are not based on an energetic evolutionary perspective which recognizes inner dynamics (the Western notion of the unconscious being not quite inner enough.) Yet I cannot speak for Sri Aurobindo, and his comments must be considered in the context of the early psychological world of post WW I Europe.

Re-spiritualizing Psychology

This paper and the work of those in the West aimed at re-spiritualizing the practice of psychology and reformulating the foundations upon which it rests are part of the same early shift in consciousness, from an exclusively rational materialist position to a broadly psychospiritual cosmic view, which recognizes nonphysical influences beyond the conceptual constraint of time/space absolutism. As we elevate our consciousness and utilize intuition as a research tool, we will open to a larger understanding of man's purpose on earth and the Plan in which he lives and acts. This will then spiritualize our human functioning. Then the field of psychology will take its rightful place as a true esoteric science of evolution, with profound consideration of the soul (psychic being), personality (lower bodies) interaction, the methods of opening to intuitive insight and inspirational creativity, the nature of mental health, madness and dysfunction, and the methods of contacting and utilizing the resources of the Supramental realm for individual and social development.

...indeed the person knows best, the True Person (Mahapurusha) that is the source of the individual's energies and life pattern.

Present-day Clinical Implications

Present-day clinical implications of this material are many. Firstly, the idea of the overshadowing soul with whom the evolving personality is in potential contact and the fact of the usual "backward thrust" of this energy in our daily lives will give deeper meaning to the process of turning within for guidance. It means that indeed the person knows best, the True Person (Mahapurusha) that is the source of the individual's energies and life pattern. We can then counsel self-trust, self-confidence, and the power of the inner core. Of course as these ideas are recognized and actualized there can be no more existential meaninglessness, alienation, rejection of life as purposeless, random or haphazard. Eventually one can come to see that there is both an organizing center to individual human life and specific goals for the earth incarnation. We will then seek to bring the soul to the fore, counseling will be directed accordingly, and individuals will learn the techniques of becoming "attractive and magnetic" to their psychic being.

There may grow in commitment the desire to receive the blessings of this higher agency. One may counsel the need to clear emotional blockages and false mental beliefs for the specific purpose of achieving the dy-

namic-passivity required to receive higher impress. In counseling there can be greater use of loosely structured visualization to access the messages we need to hear. There will be less emphasis upon the strictly analytical-historical method of returning to childhood experiences. In general there will be less need for the strictly rational intellectual process in psychological work, and intuition may guide practitioners more readily. This may translate as increased focus upon **wholistic** energy work concomitant with the resolution of mental-emotional complexes, so that the human is seen as an open

nothing proposition. Right now, counselors may only present these ideas as transformative sparks, potential seeds of revolution that may germinate later into independent activity. For now we must content ourselves with the power of the idea, well timed and well placed, and not underestimate the quiet seeds that in time may move mountains.

Other clinical applications include the wise usage of the practice of detachment - not as avoidance, but as the means of neutralizing obstructive vital-mental complexes. This is similar to Vipassana meditation techniques and can be transferred to the clinical setting by helping the client stay in the present while not identifying with what arises. The present psychoanalytical fears of detachment seem coupled to its rational-naturalist world view, and the misleading detachment of psychoses in which psychic overload prevents any real detachment at all.

As stated earlier, if you cannot conceive a Self you will be terrified to abandon the little self and the symptoms of this are treated in ego-centered therapy which ends with the stage of identity and ownership. I am not advocating psychotic de-realization, and though we have little idea of what is really real, we know that a certain self-abandonment is necessary to Self-reunion (soul-merger). This may be a major psychotherapeutic approach when the context becomes appropriate (i.e., when a genuinely spiritual philosophy of man takes root in the culture at large or in the individual client.)

...though we have little idea of what is really real, we know that a certain self-abandonment is necessary to Self-reunion (soul-merger).

The Role of Inspiration and Intuition

Sri Aurobindo's ideas about the elevation of imagination into true inspiration and the difference between intuition and intellect also have therapeutic relevance, especially regarding the quality of mental functioning practitioners hope to develop in clients. The therapist may place an emphasis upon the subtle differences in the quality of the client's cognitive experience of creative urges that arise from mental-vital planes, always somewhat tinged with selfish desire, and those impressions received through passive contact with higher sources of inspiration. Therapists might ask clients the following questions about their cognitive experiences: "Do you recognize differences in quality? Can you cultivate a higher type of registration and reception? Can you develop an adequate sphere of activity in your daily life which may call forth the energies of the

There are major differences between the desire for spiritual healing and self-perception, and the general need to make one's life work in an effective way.

energy system.

Unfortunately, it seems that the ideas of Sri **Aurobindo** are beyond the level of the tools and techniques needed to work upon so tenuous a level. Aside from the arduous task of disciplined meditation and other spiritual practices over a period of several decades, there are few other ways of being able to directly experience these ideas, unless one has confidence in the resonance of **particular** insights, which may well be enough. Not to say that the power of idea isn't adequate, only that there seems a great gulf between the rarefied treasures brought back by spiritual pioneers and the common practices utilized by even the most enlightened **transpersonal** therapists today. Yet, all the same, the problems brought by clients are generally more social-interpersonal than spiritual. Their varieties of real life problems and adjustment issues may be unsuitable for treatment by a healer-magician or a sage like Sri Aurobindo. There are major differences between the desire for spiritual healing and self-perfection, and the general need to make one's life work in an effective way.

Infusion of Spiritual Ideas

There seems to be a feedback system between the nature of our seeking and that which is offered, between the social level of consciousness/spiritual striving **and** the blessings or insights that descend into our awareness. At present, we are slowly becoming infused with spiritual ideas which act as catalysts to open new modes of thought, new realms of possibility and undreamed areas of exploration with potential relevance and value. When this reaches a critical mass, new tools will then be available for further development, but this is not until the need calls it forth. The intensity of the need parallels the degree of downflow. Of course, this is not an **all-or-**

creative source?"

In all of this we will be aiding social adaptation to the energies of the psychic being, which will result in a kind of sanctified inner and outer adaptation. This is generally what modern psychotherapists do, except that an esoteric-integral view means they can be more comprehensive, rigorous and precise. This will alleviate Sri Aurobindo's recurrent criticism of the inexactitude of psychoanalytic theory and practice, as psychology will share this cosmic perspective and become a spiritual science.

Diagnoses of hallucination and delusions may consider the subtle dynamics of having a punctured veil between the vital (astral) and the mental bodies, flooding the individual with florid and possibly accurate impressions from nonphysical worlds, when they do not have the power or belief structure to cope with such information.

Hopefully practitioners in the future will be clairvoyant and magical so they may both see and do active work upon the beings or thought forms causing the possession, as some psychotic episodes are thus caused. If their power is sufficient or we have more subtle technology, we can work directly upon rent subtle bodies to heal and strengthen them. This of course lies mainly in the future. As for today, we may perhaps have another set of ideas for understanding schizophrenic psychosis of the hallucination-delusion experience. Likewise, we may also have another set of ideas for understanding dreams.

Dream Analysis

Sri Aurobindo is vague in his analysis of dreams and critique of Western theories. Understandably, he doesn't go into an immense and esoteric account of the dreaming experience in all its manifestations. I will not go into this in depth either, although an excellent and full treatment is given in *Esoteric Psychology*, Vol. II, p.p. 493-511, by Alice Bailey. Suffice it to say that dreams may be true or distorted impressions of real or imagined activity upon the vital, mental or soul levels, including subplanes of each and mixtures of any. Some dreams are quite accurate recollections of direct conscious participation or observation. Some are symbolic representations staged by the soul for teaching purposes - hence our view of dream symbols. Some are accidental or meaningless jumbles of psycho-physical fragments. Again, the future will hold increasing diagnostic accuracy in dream assessment. The well-trained therapist will know how to access the meaning of dreams on all these different levels and act accordingly.

For today it's enough to recognize the enormous and subtle variability in what are called dreams. We can approach cautiously the current dream analysis methods and theories which hold rigid prefabricated herme-

neutics. Most importantly, the dreams that some clients present are in fact indications of their real life activity outside the physical body, or their general level of involvement or present concern. The level of dream experience and content of true dreams can be diagnostic indications themselves.

Dreams are not always "the royal road to the unconscious." That revered and generally accepted maxim neglects the whole world of conscious nonphysical experience filled with intelligent life and dynamic forces, which may influence in many ways the ostensible sleep, and in which the sleeper may even have a regular and dynamic role, albeit forgotten each morning. Obviously our notions of dreams, personality theory and altered states of consciousness are quite incomplete at present. Only time will reveal the methods and processes of the inevitable transformation of Western psychological thinking.

Clearly, Sri Aurobindo's ideas have tremendous potency and potential for inspiring creative thought, and in his intimate ashram in Pondicherry, India he reiterated the outlines of the future direction of the human science of psychology. It is a crucial task to continue the integration of these esoteric ideas with practical Western psychology, and then make them work. We need to expand our transpersonal perspective a bit more, so that a more interesting and fertile valley may be glimpsed in the distance, so that humanity will be helped to regain the true spiritual dignity it deserves. Because unfortunately, this dignity is nowhere more degraded than in certain psychological traditions. With our efforts, psychology as a field of study will be helped in its present escape from the materialistic abyss in which it struggles.

The spiritualization of psychology, like life, like all growth and spiritual expansion, can be seen as a beautiful starry field that inspires our work and exploration - so that the head, heart and spirit may finally all know each other and consummate their union in the humble body of the human being.

Sources: Purani, A.B., *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, First Series, (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1959) p.p.197-256.

Purani, A.B., *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, Second Series, (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo, 1961) p.p. 173-243.

Scott Mandelker is currently in a Master's program in Counseling Psychology at the California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS), in San Francisco. He spends his time working with clients, leading study groups in metaphysics and esoteric psychology (emphasis on the Alice Bailey material) and writing. He has a B.A. in Buddhist Studies Psychology and has over ten years experience in Buddhist and Taoist study and practice. He is interested in the synthesis of esoteric psychology, cosmology, and transpersonal alchemy, utilizing various tools and sources.

Extracts on Psychology

From Sri Aurobindo

The Work of Psychology

FOR THE LAW AND THE TRUTH that has to be discovered is not that of the material world - though this is required, nor even of the mental and physical - though this is indispensable, but the Law and Truth of the Spirit on which all the rest depends. For it is the power of the Self of things that expresses itself in their forms and processes.

The idea by which the illumination of Asia has been governed is the firm knowledge that truth of the Spirit is the sole real truth, the belief that the psychological life of man is an instrument for attaining to the truth of the Spirit and that its laws must be known and practised with that aim paramount, and the attempt to form the external life of man and the institutions of society into a suitable mould for the great endeavor.

The message the West brings to the East is a true message. Man also is God and it is through his developing manhood that he approaches the godhead; Life also is the Divine, its progressive expansion is the self-expression of the Brahman, and to deny Life is to diminish the Godhead within us. This is the truth that returns to the East from the West translated into the language of the higher truth the East already possesses; and it is an ancient knowledge. The East also is awaking to the message. The danger is that Asia may accept it in the European form, forget for a time her own laws and nature and either copy blindly the West or make a disastrous amalgam of that which she has in its most inferior forms and the crudeness which are invading her.

The problem of thought therefore is to find out the right idea and the right way of harmony; to restate the ancient and eternal spiritual truth of the Self so that it shall re-embrace, permeate, dominate, transfigure the mental and physical life; to develop the most profound and vital methods of psychological self-discipline and self-development so that the mental and psychical life of man may express the spiritual life through the utmost possible expansion of its own riches, power and complexity; and to seek for the means and motives by which his external life, his society and his institutions may remould themselves progressively in the truth of the spirit and develop towards the utmost possible harmony of individual freedom and social unity.

The effort involves a quest for the Truth that underlies existence and the fundamental Law of its self-expression in the universe, - The work of psychology, not as it is understood in Europe, but the deeper practical psychology called in India Yoga...¹

The Path of Psychology

The other line of psychological investigation is still frowned upon by orthodox science, but it thrives and yields its results in spite of the anathema of the doctors. It leads us into by-paths of psychical research, hypnotism, mesmerism, occultism and all sorts of strange psychological gropings. Certainly, there is something here of the assured clearness and firmly-grounded positivism of the physical method. Yet facts emerge and with the facts a momentous conclusion, - the conclusion that there is a "subliminal" self behind our superficial waking mind, not inconscient but conscient, greater than the waking mind, endowed with surprising faculties and capable of a much surer action and experience, conscient of the superficial mind, though of it the superficial mind is inconscient. And then a question arises. What if there were really no Inconscient at all, but a hidden Consciousness everywhere, perfect in power and wisdom, of which our mind is the first slow, hesitating and imperfect disclosure and into the image of which the human mentality is destined progressively to grow? It would at least be no less valid a generaliza-

**"If utterance is by speech and life by
the breath, vision by the eye, hearing
by the ear, thought by the mind
. . . . then what am I?"**

Aitareya Upanishad

tion and it would explain all the facts that we now know considerably better than the blind and purposeless determinism of the materialistic theory.

In Pursuing psychological investigation upon this line we shall only be resuming that which had already been done by our remote forefathers. For they too, the moment they began to observe, to experiment, to look below the surface of things, were compelled to perceive that the surface man is only a form and appearance and that the real self is something infinitely greater and more profound. They too must have passed through the first materialistic stages of science and philosophy. For we read in the Aitareya Upanishad that entering upon possession of the material world and the body, the Purusha, the Conscious Soul, asks himself, "If utterance is by speech and life by the breath, vision by the eye, hearing by the ear, thought by the mind," If, in short, all the apparent activities of the being can be accounted for by the automatic functioning of Nature,

“then what am I?” And the Upanishad says farther, “He being born distinguished only the working of the material elements, for what else was there of which he should discuss and conclude?” Yet in the end, “He beheld this conscious being which is Brahman utterly extended and he said to himself, ‘Now have I really seen.’” So too in the Taittiriya Upanishad Bhrigu Varuni meditating on the Brahman comes first to the conclusion that “Matter is Brahman” and only afterwards discovers Life that is Brahman, -so rising from the materialistic to the vitalistic theory of existence as European thought is now rising, -then Mind that is Brahman and then Knowledge that is Brahman, -so rising to the sensational and the idealistic realization of the Truth, -and a last Bliss of

**Man the mental being,
once aware that there is
this deep, great and hidden self,
the real reality of his being,
must necessarily seek to enter into it,
to become conscious in it,
to make there his centre
instead of dwelling
on the surface...**

**Ancient psychology . . . distinguished
three strata of the conscient self,
the waking , the dream and the sleep
selves of Man, --in other words,
the superficial existence, the
subconscient or subliminal and
the superconscient.**

Existence that is Brahman. There he pauses in the ultimate spiritual realization, the highest formulation of knowledge that man can attain.

The Conscient therefore and not the Inconscient was the Truth at which the ancient psychology arrived; and it distinguished three strata of the conscient self, the waking , the dream and the sleep selves of Man, -in other words, the superficial existence, the subconscient or subliminal and the superconscient which to us seems the inconscient because its state of consciousness is the reverse of ours: for ours is limited and based on division and multiplicity, but this is “that which becomes a unity”; ours is dispersed in knowledge, but this other self-conscious knowledge is self-collected and concentrated; ours is balanced between dual experiences, but this is all delight, it is that which in the very heart of our being fronts everything with a pure all possessing consciousness and enjoys the delight of existence. Therefore, although its seat is that stratum of consciousness which to us is a deep sleep, -for the mind there cannot maintain its accustomed functioning and becomes inconscient, -yet its name is He who knows, the Wise One, prajna. “This,” says the Nandukya Upanishad, “is omniscient, omnipotent, the inner control, the womb of all and that from which creatures are born and into which they depart.” It answers, therefore closely enough to the modern idea of the Inconscient corrected by the other modern idea of the subliminal self; for it is inconscient only to the waking mind, precisely because it is superconscient to it and the mind is therefore only able to seize it in its results and not in itself. And what

better proof can there be of the depth and truth of the ancient psychology than the fact that when modern thought in all its pride of exact and careful knowledge begins to cast its fathom into these depths, it is obliged to repeat in other language what had already been written nearly three thousand years ago?

We find the same idea of this inner control repeated in the Gita; for it is the Lord who “sits in the hearts of all creatures and turns all creatures mounted on an engine by his Maya.” At times the Upanishad seems to describe this self as the “mental being, leader of the life and the body”, which is really the subliminal mind of the psychical investigators; but this is only a relative description. The Vedantic psychology was aware of other depths that take us beyond this formula and in relation to which the mental being becomes, in its turn, as superficial as is our waking to our subliminal mind. And now once more in the revolutions of human thought these depths have to be sounded; modern psychology will be led perforce, by the compulsion of the truth that it is seeking, on to the path that was followed by the ancients. The new dawn, tracing the eternal path of the Truth, follows it to the goal of the dawns that have gone before, -how many, who shall say?

And the goal of that journey cannot be other than the “highest good” which the ancient psychologists proposed to the life and growth of the soul. Man, the mental being, once aware that there is this deep, great and hidden self, the real reality of his being, must necessarily seek to enter into it, to become conscious in it, to make there his centre instead of dwelling on the surface, to win and apply its diviner law and supreme nature and capacity, to make himself one with it so that he shall become the Real instead of the Apparent Man. And the sole debate that remains is whether this great conquest can be achieved and enjoyed in this human life and terrestrial body or is only possible beyond -whether in fact the human consciousness is the chosen instrument for the progressive self-revelation of this “inconscient”, this real self within us, or only a baulked effort with no fruition here or a haphazard and incomplete sketch that can never be perfected into the divine image.²

Psychology Admits a Cosmic Consciousness

The possibility of a cosmic consciousness in humanity is coming slowly to be admitted in modern Psychology, like the possibility of more elastic instruments of knowledge, although still classified, even when its value and power are admitted, as a hallucination. In the psychology of the East it has always been recognized as a reality and the aim of our subjective progress. The essence of the passage over to this goal is the exceeding of the limits imposed on us by the ego-sense and at least a partaking, at most an **indentification** with the self-knowledge which broods secret in all life and in all that seems **inanimate**.³

Ordinary Psychology

...How to disengage from this knot of thinking mortal matter the Immortal it contains, ...is the real problem of a human being and living. Life develops many **first** hints of the divinity without completely disengaging them; Yoga is the unravelling of the knot of life's difficulty.

First of all we have to know the central secret of the psychological complexity which creates the problem and all its difficulties. But an ordinary psychology which only takes mind and its phenomena at their surface values, will be of no help to us; it will not give us the least guidance in this line of self-exploration and self-conversion. Still less can we find the clue in a scientific psychology with a materialistic basis which assumes that the body and the biological and physiological factors of our nature are not only the **starting-point** but the whole real foundation and regards human mind as only a subtle development from the life and the body.⁴

Mind and Spirit

...**Knowledge** only begins when we get away from the surface phenomena and look behind them for their true operations and causes. To the superficial view of the outer mind and senses the sun is a little fiery ball circling in mid air round the earth and the stars twinkling little things stuck in the sky for our benefit at night. Scientific enquiry comes and knocks this infantile first-view to pieces. The sun is a huge affair (millions of miles away from our air) around which the small earth circles, and the stars are huge members of huge systems indescribably distant which have nothing apparently to do with the tiny earth and her creatures. All Science is like that, a contradiction of the **sense-view** or superficial appearances of things and an assertion of truths which are unguessed by the common and

the uninstructed reason. The same process has to be followed in psychology if we are really to know what our consciousness is, how it is built and made and what is the secret of its functionings or the way out of its disorder.

There are several capital and common errors here: -

1. That mind and spirit are the same thing.
2. That all consciousness can be spoken of as "mind".
3. That all consciousness therefore is of a spiritual substance.
4. That the body is merely Matter, not conscious, therefore something quite different from the spiritual part of the nature.

First, the spirit and the mind are two different things and should not be confused together. **The** mind is an instrumental entity or instrumental consciousness whose function is to think or perceive either in the mental or the sensory way, because whatever knowledge it has is direct or essential knowledge, *svayamprakas*.

Next, follows that all consciousness is not necessarily of a spiritual make and it need not be true and is not true that the thing commanding and the thing commanded are the same, are not at all different, are of the same substance and therefore are bound or at least ought to agree together.

Third, it is not even true that it is the mind which is commanding the mind and finds itself disobeyed by itself. First, there are many parts of the mind, each a force in itself with its formations, functionings, interests, and they may not agree. One part of the mind may be spiritually influenced and like to think of the Divine and obey the spiritual impulse, another part may be rational or scientific or literary and prefer to follow the formations, beliefs or doubts, mental preferences and interests which are in conformity with its education and its nature. ... mind and vital, whatever anybody may say, are not the same. The thinking mind or buddhi lives, however imperfectly in man, by intelligence and reason. Vital, on the other hand, is a thing of desires, impulses, force-pushes, emotions, sensations, **seekings** after life-fulfillment, possession and enjoyment; these are its functions and its nature; -it is that part of us which seeks after life and its movements for their own sake and it does not want to leave hold of them if they bring it suffering as well as or more than pleasure; it is even capable of luxuriating in tears and suffering as part of the drama of life. What then is there in common between the thinking intelligence and the vital and why should the latter obey the mind and not follow its own nature: ... -because the thinking mind is a nobler and more enlightened entity and consciousness than the vital and ought, therefore, to rule and, if the mental will is strong, can rule. But the rule is precarious, incomplete and held only by much self-discipline. For if the mind is more enlightened, the vital is nearer to earth,

more intense, vehement, more directly able to touch the body. There is too a vital mind which lives by imagination, thoughts of desire, will to act and enjoy itself and make it its auxiliary and its justifying counsel and supplier of pleas and excuses. There is also the sheer force of Desire in man which is the vital's principal support and strong enough to sweep off the reason, as the Gita says, "like a boat on stormy waters", *navamivambhasi*.

Finally, the body obeys the mind automatically in those things in which it has formed or trained to obey it, but the relation of the body to the mind is not in all things that of an automatic perfect instrument. The body also has a consciousness of its own and, though it is a submental instrument or servant consciousness, it can disobey or fail to obey as well. In many things, in matters of illness for instance, in all automatic functionings, the body acts on its own and is not a servant of the mind. If it is fatigued, it can offer a passive resistance to the mind's will. It can cloud the mind with *tamas*, inertia, dullness, fumes of the subconscious so that the mind cannot act. The arm lifts, no doubt, when it gets the suggestion, but at first the legs do not obey when they are asked to walk, they have to learn how to leave the crawling attitude and movement and take up the erect and ambulatory habit. When you first ask the hand to draw a straight line or to play music, it can't do it and won't do it. It has to be schooled, trained, taught, and afterwards it does automatically what is required of it. All this proves that here is a body-consciousness which can do things at the mind's order, but has to be awakened, trained, made a good and conscious instrument. It can even be so trained that a mental will or suggestion can cure the illness of the body. But all these things, these relations of mind and body, stand on the same footing in essence as the relation of mind to vital . . .

This puts the problem on another footing with the causes more clear and, if we are prepared to go far enough, it suggests the easy out, the way of **Yoga**.⁵

¹ Sri Aurobindo, *The Supramental Manifestation*, Vol. 16 SABCL (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1975) p.p. 308-315.

² Sri Aurobindo, *The Supramental Manifestation*, Vol. 16 SABCL (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1975), p.p. 257 - 264.

³ Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, Vol. 18 SABCL (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1975), p.21.

⁴ Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Vol. 21 SABCL (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1975), p. 597.

⁵ Sri Aurobindo, *Letters on Yoga*, Vol.22 SABCL (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1975), p.p.321-324.

The Mother on Psychology

D O NOT DIVIDE WHAT WAS ONE. Both science and spirituality have the same goal - the Supreme Divinity. The only difference between them is that the latter knows it and the other not.

December 1 1960¹

A True Psychology

6 April 1955

What is this psychoanalysis of Freud, Sweet Mother?

Ah, my child, it is something that was in vogue, very much in vogue at the beginning of the century . . .no. in the middle of the century!

At the beginning of the century, that's it.

This is what Sri Aurobindo says: dangerous, useless, ignorant, superficial; and it was in fashion because people like these things, it corresponds precisely with all that is unhealthy in their nature. You know how children love to waddle in the mud! Well, big people are no better than that. There!

Sweet Mother, what should true psychology be like?

True psychology, what do you mean by true psychology?

Because we said...

Sri Aurobindo says that this is not true psychology, he says that modern psychology has no knowledge. True psychology would be a psychology which has knowledge.

Psychology means...What is the precise meaning of logos? It is knowing, science; and psyche means soul. So it means the science of the soul or the science of the psychic, you see. This is the original sense. Now one has made of that the knowledge of all the inner movements, of all feelings, all the inner movements which are not purely physical movements, you see, all that concerns the feelings, thoughts, even the sensations in their subtlety. But true psychology is the knowledge of the soul, that is, the knowledge of the psychic being. And if one has the knowledge of the psychic being, one has at the same time the knowledge of all the true movements of the being, the inner laws of the being. This is true psychology but it is the etymological meaning of the word, not as it is used nowadays.²



Photo courtesy of Sri Aurobindo Ashram Delhi Branch

something that has no strength. It is a joke. But what did you want to ask?

Here, "spiritual experience by the flicker of their torchlights" ..

Yes, that's it, it means that they want to judge spiritual experiences with a very tiny light which is worthless, which has no strength, a torch-light, a torch-lamp, it is nothing at all. These people want to explain everything by the most material and most ordinary phenomena of human life; and they want to explain everything, including the creation and all the higher phenomena by the help of all the small physical habits of the most ordinary consciousness. It is absolutely ridiculous.⁴

The Inner Work of Psychology

28 July 1954

Mother, last time you said that often there is in us a dark element which... which suggest to us... which makes us commit stupidities. So you said that when one is conscious of this element, it must be pulled out. But does pulling it out mean... For example, when one is conscious that this element comes to make us do stupid things, then, if by an effort of will one abstains from doing it, can one say that one has pulled it out?

That one doesn't commit stupidities?

By an effort of will. For example, one doesn't do that action which one shouldn't do.

Yes, yes.

Then, can one say that one has pulled out the elemental which was the cause?

One has sat upon it.

Then, how to pull it out?

For that, first of all, you must become conscious of it, you see, put it right in front of you, and cut the links which attach it to your consciousness. It is a work of inner psychology, you know.

One can see, when one studies oneself very attentively... For example, if you observe yourself, you see that one day you are very generous. Let us take this, it is easy to understand. Very generous: generous in your feelings, generous in your sensations, generous in your thoughts and even in material things; that is, even you understand the faults of others, their intentions,

IT SEEMS TO ME THAT PSYCHOLOGY without yoga is lifeless. The study of psychology must necessarily lead to yoga, at least to practical yoga if not theoretical.

23 December 1960³

The Small Light of Psychology

13 April 1955

Sweet Mother, here it is written: "I find it difficult to take these psycho-analysts at all seriously..."

It means that he is laughing at them, simply that.

"...when they try to scrutinize spiritual experience by the flicker of.."

"of their torch-lights". It is a joke; it's to say that it is a very tiny light of nothing at all and that they think they can judge spiritual experiences with this light which is no better than a small torch-light; it means

weaknesses, even nasty movements. You see all this and you are full of good feelings, of generosity. You tell yourself, "Well...everyone does the best he can!" -like that.

Another day - or perhaps the very next minute - you will notice in yourself a kind of dryness, fixity, something that is bitter, that judges severely, that goes as far as bearing a grudge, has **rancour**, would like the evildoer punished, that almost has feelings of vengeance; just the very opposite of the former! One day someone harms you and you say, "Doesn't matter! He did not know" . . . or "He couldn't do otherwise"... or "That's his nature" . . . or "He couldn't understand!" The next day - or perhaps an hour later - you say, "He must be punished! He must pay for it! He must be made to feel that he has done wrong!" - with a kind of rage; and you want to take things, you want to keep them for yourself, you have all the feelings of jealousy, envy, narrowness, you see, just the very opposite of the other feeling.

This is the dark side. And so, the moment one sees it, if one looks at it and doesn't say, "It is I", if one says, "No, it is my shadow, it is the being I must throw out of myself", one puts on it the light of the other part, one tries to bring them face to face; and with the knowledge and light of the other, one doesn't try so much to convince - because that is very difficult - but one compels it to remain quiet...first to stand farther away, then one flings it very far away so that it can no longer return - putting a great light on it. There are instances in which it is possible to change, but this is very rare. There are instances in which one can put upon this being - or this shadow - put upon it such an intense light that it transforms it, and it changes into what is the truth of your being.

But this is a rare thing.. It can be done, but it is rare. Usually, the best thing is to say, "No, this is not I! I don't want it! I have nothing to do with this movement, it doesn't exist for me, it is something contrary to my nature!" And so, by dint of insisting and driving it away, finally one separates oneself from it.

But one must first be clear and sincere enough to see the conflict within oneself. Usually one doesn't pay any attention to these things. One goes from one extreme to the other. You see, you can say, to put it in very simple words: one day I am good, the next day I am bad. And this seems quite natural... Or even, sometimes for one

hour you are good and the next hour you are wicked; or else, sometimes the whole day through one is good and suddenly one becomes wicked, for a minute very wicked, all the more wicked as one was good! Only, one doesn't observe it, thoughts cross one's mind, violent, bad, hateful things, like that... Usually one pays no attention to it. But this is what must be caught! As soon as it manifests, you must catch it like this (Mother makes a movement) with a very firm grip, and then hold it, hold it up to the light and say, "No! I don't want you! I - don't

- want - you! I have nothing to do with this ! You are going to get out of here, and you won't return!"

(After a silence) And this is something - an experience that one can have daily, or almost... when one has those moments of great enthusiasm, great aspiration, when one suddenly becomes conscious of the divine goal, the urge towards the Divine, the desire to take part in the divine work, when one comes out of oneself in a great joy and great force..

and then, a few hours later, one is miserable for a tiny little thing; one indulges in so petty, so narrow, so commonplace a self-interestedness, has such a dull desire... and all the rest has evaporated as if it did not exist. One is quite accustomed to contradiction; one doesn't pay attention to this and that is why all these things live comfortably together as neighbors. One must first discover them and prevent them from intermingling in one's consciousness: decide between them, separate the shadow from the light. Later one can get rid of the shadow.

There we are, and now it is time. Anything urgent to ask? **No?**⁵

...if one says, "No it is my shadow, it is the being I must throw out of myself," one puts on it the light of the other part, one tries to bring them face to face... one doesn't try to convince... but one compels it to remain quiet..

¹The Mother, *On Education*, Vol. 12 (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1979), p.248.

²The Mother, *Questions and Answers 1955*, Vol. 7 (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1979), p.p.108 &112.

³ The Mother, *On Education*, p. 248.

⁴The Mother, *Questions and Answers 1955*, Vol. 7, p.118.

⁵The Mother, *Questions and Answers 1954* Vol. 6 (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1979), p.p. 262 - 264.

A Visit to Baca Grande

By Gordon Korstange

THE ROAD INTO BACA Grande led from the tiny, empty-looking town of Moffat, Colorado straight toward the imposing center of Kit Carson mountain. I pushed the cruise control buttons of our rented car, took my foot off the accelerator and felt the peaks pull us into them like a magnet -- past the Luis Maria Baca Grande Ranch house; past the Good Samaritan Hotel where a group of Christians treat substance abusers; past the mirage of a golf course; then past the turn-off into another tiny town, Crestone (pop. 75) and into the residential area of the Baca.

Getting There

The drive from Denver had been long, about four and a half hours, at first a series of mountain passes, climbing steadily from 5000 to 9000 feet, but as soon as we came down out of the last pass and shot out under the presence of huge white mountains onto the ribbon of road that bisects the San Luis Valley (at 8000 ft. the highest alpine valley in the world), they began to pull on us. It may be the perceptual effect that great distances of flat land leading to 14,000 ft. high mountains create - you see them from very far away, and it takes so long to reach them - almost like driving in slow motion at 70 mph. Someone described the sensation as feeling like a mountain is actually coming toward you, then at a certain point retreating, coaxing you on and on.

As we drove south, the valley widened and the landmarks of the

American West appeared: barbed-wire fences, grazing cattle, abandoned stores and houses. Conspicuous, large trees, with twisted trunks of rugged bark and gaunt limbs, reared up and proclaimed themselves survivors among the scrub-brush that dotted the dry pastures. Small towns, with names like Fairplay and Conifer, appeared beaten down by the wind and sun and consisted of little more than general stores and gas stations. After the grassed-in condos and hi-tech offices of Boulder we seemed suddenly thrust into another time and space.

Baca was empty too. We parked at the restaurant and de-facto community center called the Bistro and got out into windy silence. The group of 12 townhouses surrounding the Bistro seemed deserted. It felt like an afternoon in Auroville, the constant pressure of the wind sweeping across flat land, the sun boring into you out of a cloudless sky - only here were mountains, not ocean, milder temperatures and the gurgle of a nearby stream.

That first night we walked slowly, savoring the air, with Seyril

Schochen up to Savitri House while the sun went down behind the San Juan mountains across the valley. A deer bounded across the paved road. We watched the play of amber light on Kit Carson and Crestone peaks, hoping the sunset would turn them the blood-red color which caused the Spanish conquistador, Coronado, to exclaim, "Sangre de Cristo!" (blood of Christ), giving



Gas Station, Crestone, Colorado

them their modern name, when he saw them for the first time. From the deck of Savitri House, standing near the 400-year-old juniper tree that seems to guard it, we looked out on the scattered lights of the alpine valley and, farther to the south, Alamosa, 50 miles away, with 30,000 people. The town serves as provision center for Baca residents, as Pondicherry does for Aurovilians.

The Bloodless Valley

The spiritual source of Baca, however, loomed behind us: the mountains, sacred to native Americans for thousands of years. Their medicine men and elders went up into them to acquire power, and their young men came on vision quests. They called this area the "bloodless valley," in ironic juxtaposition to Coronado's epithet. Tribes met here in peace, with no weapons, to trade and talk beneath the dignity of the mountains.

The sun's light had faded, and the night sky was peppered with stars. We were in the dark presence of land, and that land had palpable power.

The next day, inexorably, we were pulled up into those peaks, lured by tales of a 12,000-foot mountain lake. The trail ascended along Willow Creek, a stream bordered by trees through which we could catch the green gleam of isolated tents, shelters for Outward Bound students of the University of Colorado which has a center at

After the grassed-in condos and hi-tech offices of Boulder we seemed suddenly thrust into another time and space.

the Baca. They were in the final day of their wilderness experience, a silent time alone.

After about two hours of steady uphill walking we came to a meadow called Willow Park that formed a lip at the base of the peaks. Beyond and below, the San Luis valley lay flat and brown. The mountains were near enough now to show their wrinkled fissures. Although the thin air made us pause often, we pushed on up through a series of switchbacks, surprising a deer at one point.

At the waterfall that spilled out Willow Creek, we had to traverse an open rocky face where the strong, gusty winds seemed almost ready to fly us, like kites, off the mountain on a long drifting arc to the plains over 3000 feet below. We picked our way along a path through a rock slide, stopping to examine multi-hued stones whose dominant color was pink. Each uphill effort affected us more as we neared 11,000 feet. Even baby-step climbing produced a 130 pulse rate, aerobic results.

Willow Lake

As we walked exhausted through a small valley semicircled by the peaks, we began to wonder if we could reach the lake. Then a tall, blonde-bearded young man, the first hiker we'd seen all day, came striding down the path toward us with the encouraging news that the lake was only ten minutes away. He was Brother Ross, a Carmelite monk who had come to the Baca in 1982 to help build a monastery. Later that week we were to visit and admire the beautiful workmanship of its chapel. Now we were grateful for the news of how near the lake was and how long (up to 6 months) it takes to get used to the altitude.

In the basin formed by a circle of mountain peaks, the icy, deep blue waters of Willow Lake lapped stone and drank in light. An animal's skull on a rock near the water stared at us while we ate lunch. An orange tent stood on the far side of the lake, but no one stirred. The peaks were reachable along a rocky ridge, but we had gone far enough. Here would be a place to wait, to fast, a place that seemed a funnel for pure sky, for the wind, for the invisible.

Hanne Strong

She came from Phoenix, Arizona



Carmelite Chapel at Baca Grande

to the Baca seeking a place where she could live in the Southwest. Her husband, Maurice Strong, Canadian businessman and environmentalist, had gotten involved with the ranch when his company took over the property from another company which had first developed the land beneath the mountains. They had intended it to be a vacation retreat and had installed electricity and water lines in anticipation of an influx of residents who never came. As she stood in front of the ranch house and gazed up at the mountains, she knew this was a special place. She moved from Phoenix soon after.

Two months later, an 82-year-old "Anglo" named Glen knocked on her door. "So at last you have come," he said by way of abrupt introduction and plunged on, pouring forth a stunning, visionary

description of the Baca as a place that would draw seekers and leaders from many different religions, spiritual paths and political philosophies. Later, weeping, he stood with her on a patch of barren ground, disconsolate that the restaurant later to be called the Bistro had not been built yet. During the course of three visits before he passed away, Glen prophesied and placed many of the Baca's present structures.

Red Ute

Hanne Strong was to learn much more, especially from native Americans like Red Ute, about the power of the Baca to attract people and heal them. For thousands of years, he told her, different tribes had gathered there peacefully under the protection of "the white mountain," fastened to earth with a thunder bolt and home of the thunder beings. Hannah speaks of Red Ute with reverence and awe and of the sun dance, a 4-day ritual of movement and fasting that is the high point of a southwest native American's spiritual life. To perform one confers grace and power. Red Ute has completed 36.

He told her much about the people who had lived there for thousands of years before Anglos came. He told her, too, that the Baca was now going to attract tribes and chiefs from all over the planet to assemble and create peace.

And slowly, without being called, they began to come. Individuals like Christian Barnhardt, a member of the Swedish Royal Academy, designator of Nobel Prize winners, came, dying of a heart condition, to say goodbye to Hanne and Maurice. One week later he pronounced himself cured by the Baca and is still alive today.

Then, according to Hanne, there was Bill Moyers, the most thoughtful television commentator and producer in the United States (and a former Baptist minister) who told Maurice, as they sat below the thunderbolt mountain, that he could

feel the power emanating from the earth. Minutes later, she says, a nearby bush burst into flame.

Refuge for World Religions

Some of the chiefs brought tribes. William Irwin Thompson, founder of Lindisfarne, had a large, stone house built and sponsored a school for sacred architecture. He later handed over the property to American Zen roshi, Richard Baker. Today it looks out from a niche in the foothills as the Crestone Mountain Zen Center. Other groups who have settled in the Baca as part of its Refuge for World Religions include the Haidakhandi Universal Ashram and Temple, the Spiritual Life Institute (The Carmelite Monastery that Brother Ross helped build), the San Luis Valley Tibetan Project, and the Sri Aurobindo Learning Center.

Aside from the Carmelites, many of these organizations consist of only one or two people living in a house that is dedicated to a spiritual tradition. Most of Baca's 75 people have bought or built their own house and live privately, making a living as best they can in an area that doesn't offer much in the way of employment.

Diane and Ken

Diane and Ken Rowland-Skye were on their way from California to Auroville when Diane heard Hanne speak about the Baca at the 1988 All USA Meeting in Boulder, Colorado. "I had the same reaction as when I first heard about Auroville," says Diane, "I had to go and see it."

They drove from California to spend a week at the Baca while Ken interviewed for a teaching job in the local school system. It took them two days to acclimatize, but when they left Diane cried because she thought

she'd never see the place again.

Then, ten days before school started in September, Ken got the job. They cancelled the trip to Auroville, moved out with 4 kids and 5 animals, and rented a house. Over the course of the year, they purchased the house and built two more rooms. Both Diane and Ken got involved with the planning of Seyril's

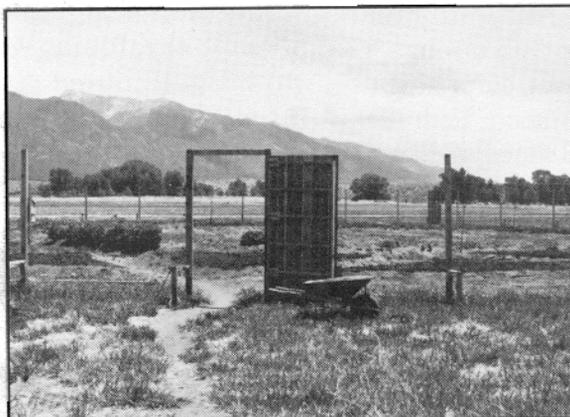
proposed Savitri Village and talked about moving there one day.

Then Ken began

having difficulties with the conservative administration and school board at the local school who, he says, were resisting and purposely blocking possibilities for change and parent involvement proposed by the governor of Colorado. Now he no longer has his job, and others in the Baca area talk about starting a school there.

For Diane, though times have gotten tougher, her connection with the land and participation in the weekly meditations, when Catholic, Buddhist and Hindu gather, keep her going in the Baca. We attended one on Thursday night at what appeared to be a normal Baca house, one story, made from dark reddish wood with a wrap-around deck. Inside, the main room contained the trappings of a Tibetan Buddhist monastery. We sat for 45 minutes with about 10 other people, including Brother Ross of

"I had the same reaction as when I first heard about Auroville," says Diane, "I had to go and see it."



Entrance to the World Garden

the Carmelites, and we met a young man named Paul Motsinger who admitted later that he wasn't used to sitting on the floor for such a long time.

The World Garden

Paul had come to the Baca via Nepal where he worked as a Peace Corps agricultural volunteer in a village near the Tibetan border, a two-day walk from Katmandu. There, for two years, he helped the villagers to experiment with new plant varieties, and watched trekkers go by his house. Annapurna and

Dalmagiri hovered nearby.

Upon his return to the United States, he recoiled at the idea of a job with a big seed company or the government. Then his friend, Maria, a Buddhist from Venezuela, told him about the Baca Center for High Altitude Sustainable Agriculture. A handshake with Hanne Strong gave him the job.

The next day we found him working at the World Garden behind the ranch house. Encircled by an electric fence to protect it from being completely stripped by deer, the garden's mandala pattern contains plants, flowers, and herbs sectioned off according to their native continent. The full range of the Baca mountains, not always so visible in the residential area nestled beneath them, greets you when you look up from work.

In nearby fields, protected from deer by rows of edible plants, Paul is trying out new crops that may help out local farmers who seem stuck with growing only potatoes. Like an Aurovilian, he invites us in for tea to talk about Nepal and how he feels at home here, with the

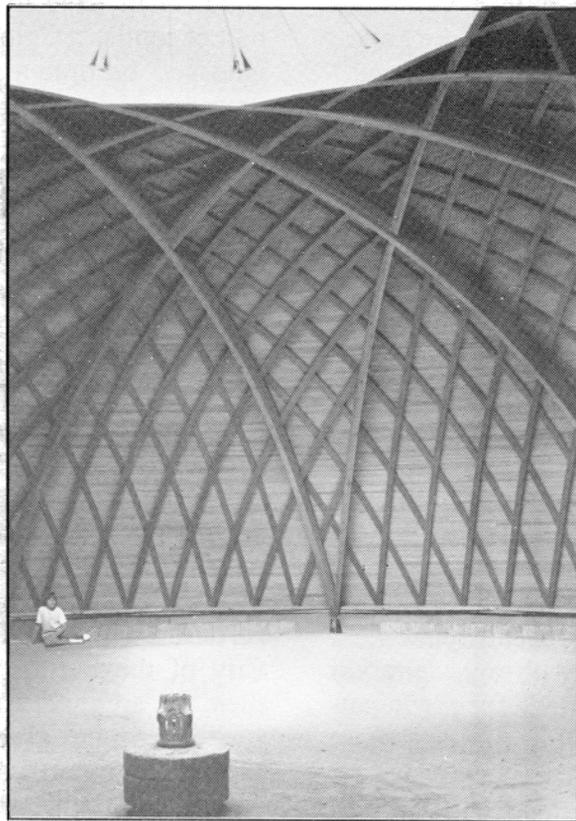
mountains and with the freedom to experiment that has come with the job.

The Dome

Michael Baron was drawn to the Baca while buying geometry books in a San Francisco book store in 1981. He met a woman associated with English architect Keith Critchlow who was holding a summer architecture seminar, sponsored by Lindisfarne, at the Baca and decided that he had to get into that seminar. Although there was a long waiting list, an opening finally appeared, and he joined former Auroville pioneer Bob Lawlor in constructing a domed building behind what is now the Crestone Zen Center.

"I'd never seen anything like this valley," he says as we sit at tea in back of the town houses, looking at the nearby mountains, "and I'd never gotten involved with an architectural project like the dome."

He soon found that the distinction between sacred architecture workshop and construction work began to blur, as did that between learner and builder. He also found himself the foreman, fundraiser and workshop facilitator as the project took longer than expected, William Irwin Thompson lost interest and the dome itself began to play an active role in its own



Inside the Dome

construction.

Red Ute came by to look at this giant sweat lodge. He told them it was like a *kiva*, the Southwest Native American, underground sacred space, and performed a pipe ceremony in the partially constructed building for the core group of builders who had settled into the Baca. They were drawn by their fascination with the geometry and technique of bending and fitting together without nails the long, thin planks in ever-tighter arcs that were to make the skin of the dome.

After three years interesting things began to happen. "We thought we were building a structure," Michael says, "but we found that it was building us. It had a personality, a sense of humor. When we got to the very top it appeared that the pieces were racking and twisting, and we thought we had made a mistake, but it was the subtle

laughter of the building saying, 'Let this be, you fools. You might learn something.'"

During that time, Michael Baron learned much about the land, both from Red Ute and from living through its bitterly cold, brilliant winters and scorching summers. He also learned that professor

gurus can be fickle when William Irwin Thompson suddenly decided to give the dome, the land, and the large, stone house where the build-

ers were staying to his friend, the de-frocked Zen roshi, Richard Baker. The dome is empty now, covered temporarily with shingles. A German couple have turned the house, with the view towards the thunder mountains, into a zen-do.

Michael drives up to the Baca from Santa Fe, New Mexico, where he continues his work on sacred architecture. He has wrestled with the land in a very Aurovilian way and can read its history and temperament in small details. It won't let him go.

Savitri Village

Seyril Schochen met Hanne Strong at the Matrimandir in Auroville when Hanne visited it as part of a United Nations' habitat delegation. They stayed in touch and met again at the International Women's Conference in New York City where Seyril gave a presentation of Auroville. She moved to Boulder and stayed in a house that was owned by a Rajneeshi who returned when the guru's Oregon empire collapsed. He didn't want Sri Aurobindo in his house. Seyril called up Hanne and said, "I'm moving to the Baca."

Once there she set up shop in a house named "Savitri." It's a typical, one-story Baca house, surrounded by scrubbrush and piñon pines, with a deck that almost encircles it. Inside, a large, high-ceiling room is filled with photos, posters, symbols and books about Auroville and the Yoga. From her room Seyril churns out ideas, letters, articles, plays and the activities of the Sri Aurobindo Learning Center, the organization she founded in Baca. She has tables full of her ongoing and yet-to-be-born projects that keep her constantly in motion, in process.

The day before our departure, we go with Seyril and Michael Baron to visit the site of her latest and grandest project, Savitri Village, a solar community, dedicated to conscious education and integral living, that has land (61 acres do-

nated by Maurice Strong) and a plan (drawn up by Phillip Tabb of Boulder) based on Seyril's vision.

We drive away from the center of Baca, and park along the road that leads south, towards the Zen Center, and, beyond that, the abandoned gold mine that swelled Crestone's population to 4000 people fifty years ago. We walk up the steep, winding road, made by miners for hauling wood, with Michael as our guide, pointing

out the little pink ribbons tied to trees that mark boundaries, possible roads and buildings.

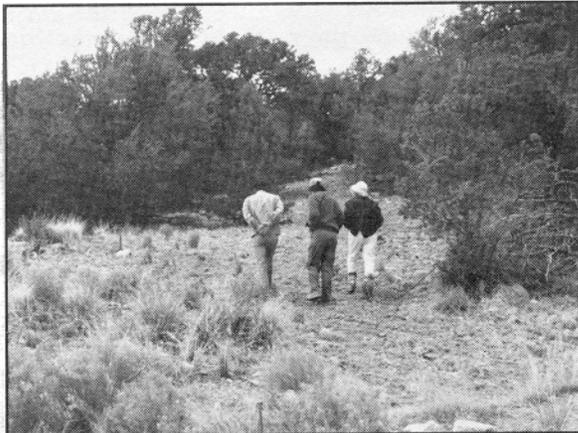
When we reach the mesa the ascent is more gradual. The land runs right into the mountains here, too close to get any grand vista, only glimpses of peaks through the stubble of pinion pines that also hide our view of much of the valley.

Michael finds a "mano," a Native American stone, smooth and flat, that was used with a "matat'e,"

the base, for grinding corn. "They're all around," he says, "If you think it's a good spot to camp they probably did too. Last month, Diane's daughter, picked up an arrowhead."

We're soon kids again, thinking we've discovered "manos" every

few feet, taking them to Michael for verification, filled with wonder at this presence of the past on land which



The Site for Savitri Village

had seemed as barren and rough as an eroded field in Auroville. Suddenly the place becomes alive. We find red and yellow wild flowers, an open space with a view that would make a good building site.

"You have to listen to the road," Michael says, "find out where it wants to go. Even though the plan is there, the land will tell you how to shape it if you listen. You can start by just taking care of it, clearing good building rock from the road, harvesting dead trees for fire-

wood, camping out . . ."

Storm clouds, big thunderheads, are rolling in from the west now, making passes at the Baca as if they would rain, then peeling off south. Just like June in Auroville. We find, near the center of the site, an unusual clump of trees, spruce and a venerable juniper with thick-muscled bark. Seyril says, "Let's meditate," and we all touch a branch or trunk.

As I feel the craggy strength that has bound this tree to the mesa for unnumbered years I sense the determination it will take to build Savitri Village here, where everything is just beginning, sustained by one woman's vision and will, a woman who revels in the seemingly impossible.

There is also the Baca. Like Auroville in the early years, before trees, the Matrimandir and enduring communities made the idea of human unity almost respectable, people will have to come to this part of southern Colorado, hike the land and be drawn to the sacred presence of the mountains in order to fasten themselves to this wind-blown, rocky shelf, invoke the spirits of those who left the smooth stones, and begin to call it home.

June, 1989

It Was The Hour Before the Gods Awake

By Jocelyn Shupak

Editors' Note: February 28th is Auroville's birthday.

IT IS ANYHOW, at least an hour before most people wake up.

It is also my favorite time of day. I think I was born in this hour and wake up without effort every morning around 4:30 to enjoy the quiet stirrings of the new day.

Today is a little bit special, the

birthday of Auroville. Somehow, even after so many years here, I wake up on the anniversary of the inauguration full of anticipation and hope, vibrant with an aspiration and joyful gratitude for participating in this story.

I remember the first time I came to Auroville, in August of 1969, and the impossible recognition of this as the place my heart had been dreaming of, as though the land was singing the song of my soul.

Today I remember vaguely the

vastness of that initial impression which I tried to ignore--there was no possibility to live in the beautiful desert with my infant child. The City of the Future was a dream then, an architect's machete projected on a vast unbrokenness of earth, stark against an impossibly clear sky.

I moved to Auroville six months after that first visit on a day like today, February 28. It was 1970. On the eve to that day, to which Mother had given the name

“Change,” about 15 people, including **Binah**, my 14 month-old daughter, and I, set out with Austin Delaney in an old fishing boat manned by local fishermen to the Auroville beach called “Quiet.” It was a beautiful, old, large, wooden boat of the kind which has been used by the fishermen off this Coromandel coast for ages.

We glided smoothly over the soft waves up the coast, disembarking on the white sand. A few large coconut palm trees swayed majestically over the new hut where villagers and Austin had prepared our evening meal and place for us to sleep.

Dawn

In the morning, at dawn, many of the residents of Auroville joined us on the beach to watch the sunrise over the Bay of Bengal, glorious red, gold, and the salmon-pink color of Auroville.

Then, altogether, fifty or so people hiked through the canyons up to Aspiration, then a new settlement of mostly French people between the beach and the center of the projected town. There we all ate breakfast and more people joined the procession as we walked to Auroson’s Home (now Certitude) through the wilderness.

It seemed like a fantasy walk through an enchanted and enchanting land. At one point we reached a lonely tree on the landscape and saw a lovely blonde woman sitting on a branch, playing a flute, and an eccentric, red-haired man, wearing a very big and very long polka-dotted tie, who recited poetry to us. Wonderland!

To the Banyan Tree

At Auroson’s Home we were given tea and more poetry and the procession continued down the hot dusty road to the banyan tree at the center of Auroville. I was carrying **Bina** and soon lagged far behind everyone else. There wasn’t a bit of shade; only the parched land, the

dusty road, and the already hot South Indian day. How wonderful that banyan tree looked in that desert! Restful and cool, the green boughs shading us from the sun. We sat there, perhaps 100 people, and listened to a tape of the 1970’s New Year’s music by Sunil.

It is seventeen years later today and a pleasure to walk in the cool early morning from my hut in a small, lo-year-old mango grove to the center of Auroville along quiet tree-lined roads. The banyan tree itself is much larger, nearly dwarfed by **the Matrimandir**, and surrounded by a soft green lawn and stone benches, the center of a beautiful oasis of grass, trees, and shrubs, with flowers everywhere, and though the landscape has so much altered over the years, it seems that that same vibrant force permeates the atmosphere--or am I dreaming?

The Amphitheater

If I am dreaming I am not sleeping. I pinch myself and seem to be awake, and my life and memories appear as a kind of dream. I remember coming here on February 28th, 1973, with 4-year-old **Binah**, much too early for the bonfire at dawn, and walking with her around the vast hand-sculptured foundation of the Matrimandir. As we approached the structure, two golden globes of light appeared to float up from the foundation towards heaven.

“What’s that Momma?” **Binah** asked.

“A miracle,” was all I could answer.

We watched the floating globes until they disappeared into the early morning sky, then sat at the edge of the amphitheater to await the dawn--just as I sit today watching the sky begin the amazing light show which heralds the new day.

Slowly, silently, people come and sit, alone, together. Young children, exuberant, run with their friends to the urn at the center and wait, anxious and expectant, until the traditional bonfire is lit and the

orange sparks fly against the midnight blue of the early morning sky like a giant sparkler and the golden pink streaks of dawn reflecting our little fii with the glimmer of that dynamic explosion which gives us light and life--the sun.

The fire dies. The sun rises and the dramatic colors of dawn give way to the clear cool blue white sky of a new day. I look around at the glowing faces of friends and neighbors. We stand up and walk around wishing one another Happy Birthday.

Perhaps the most extraordinary revelation I have had in all these years is that I am an ordinary human being with the limitations and responsibilities of every other homo sapiens animal, and how I deal with this will determine the quality of my life.

Now in middle age I seek an aura of harmony around me and have recognized some activities which will certainly disturb a constant flow of good feeling between me and the little piece of planet where I move, and even so--I do not have it under control.

I am still sometimes battling with myself and my desires for things that will surely create a disequilibrium in the body, like fried food--and people. I love some, dislike others and still have not figured out how to relate to other people without being a lamb or a wolf.

The Experiment

Auroville is an experiment. Mother offered an area of earth as a laboratory, a new Eden to those who felt called. And what happened? This isn’t paradise, nirvana, heaven, but a few acres of our lovely, ugly, wonderful, terrible old Mother Earth. Is it over now? Everything is incomplete! I don’t know.

Where is the power to go on? What for? Are we simply staying to make enough money to pay the workers next week, to watch the trees grow, to see the Matrimandir

completed, to see all the children with Walkmans, motorcycles, and, maybe next year, with switchblades?

Where is the great inner driving force which allowed me to imagine for many years that being alive means something? That there is a noble purpose to our little lives in this little corner of the universe? The word love means something different than want --it describes a fullness of being and harmony in creation in which there is a completeness and fulfillment in each moment and not merely filling in the space between being born and dying with as little participation as possible, knowing the grace of life, a conscious spark in the supernal mural of existence.

It is the sincere personal aspiration of everyone who is living in this community which is its strength.

good is also manifesting.

One good thing Auroville has done is to reverse the process of desertification in this area, rebuild top soil where the land had been washed away, and to plant and tend millions of trees where there were only weeds and thorns.

Because of the forests many beautiful species of birds have come here. Because the earth is richer and more fertile it is easy to grow flowers, fruits, and vegetables difficult to even imagine in 1968 when this was a piece of wasteland. The restoration of the land has somehow been paralleled by a dramatic rise in the standard of living in the area.

But these changes are somehow external and superficial, perhaps a necessary first step but surely not

the last step, because it would not be difficult to reverse these results.

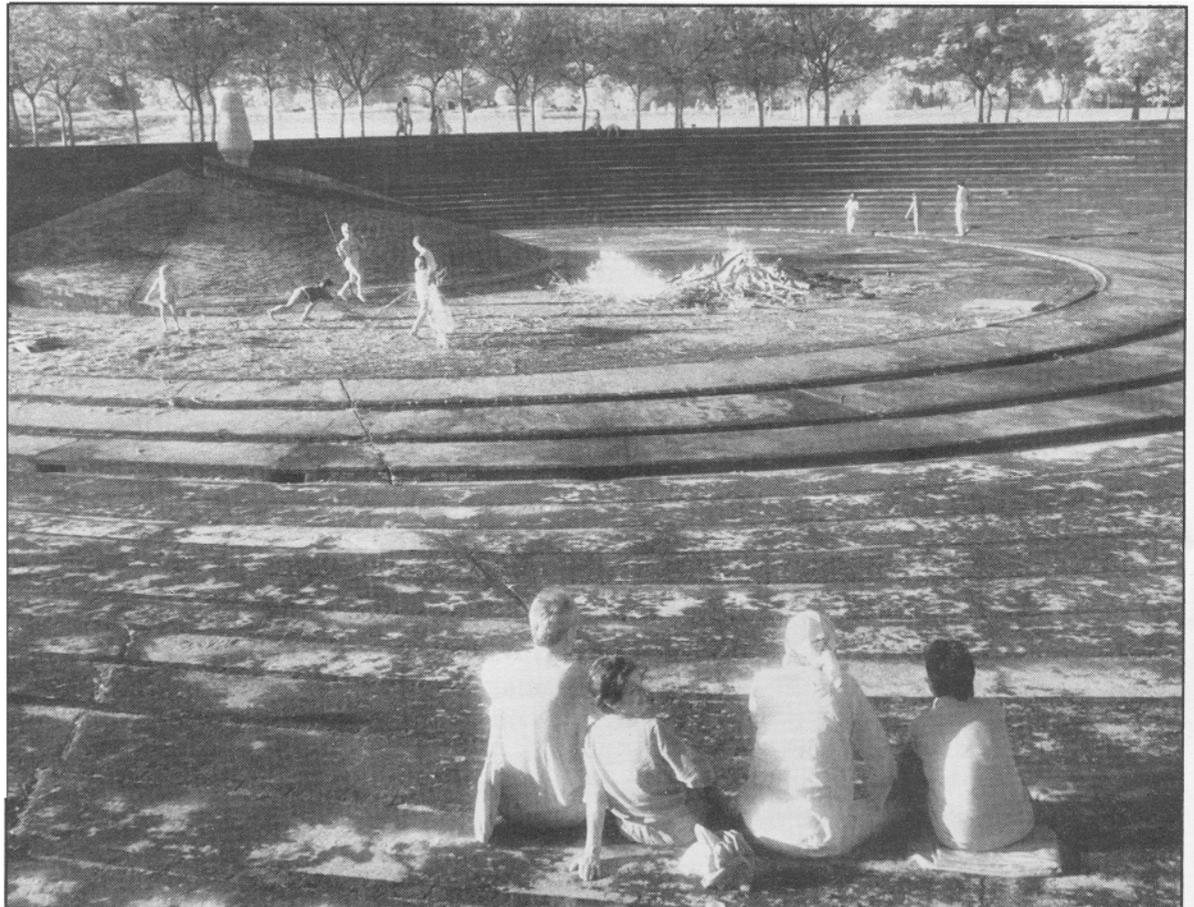
It is the sincere personal aspiration of everyone who is living in this community which is its strength. We may disagree about everything, but somehow we are united because we live here to serve the dream. Although each of us interprets the dream within the concept of our personal desires, understanding and situation, each is somehow careful to at least call for the victory of the dream, even over our own personal limitations.

The birds sing a welcome to the new day. In their song is music of the life we have chosen. The world wakes us; there is the hum of machines behind the buzz of the bee, the whistle of the bird, but it altogether resounds of a beautiful dream of living another golden day.

Jocelyn Shupack, a longtime resident of Auroville, now lives in California. Her daughter, Binah, attends Skidmore College.

The Trees

We have often been wrong and not nice at all during the past two decades, but now we know that is not the way. If Auroville is to continue to grow and manifest something for everyone, those of us who live here must adopt an attitude of goodwill toward everyone and everything everywhere. It is difficult when one is certain others are wrong not to get into the same vibration communicating that. Because, although a lot has obviously gone wrong, it is clear that a lot of



Auroville Birthday Bonfire

Photo by Verne Henshall

Sri Aurobindo

A Brief Biography

by Peter Heehs

172 pp. \$11.95

(Oxford University Press, 1989)

Excerpted from the Introduction:

Sri Aurobindo, known to some as a yogin and philosopher, to others as a political and revolutionary leader, was also a prolific poet and scholar. His many-sidedness has created difficulties for his biographers... Those interested primarily in his spiritual experiences and teachings have played down his revolutionary activities. Those interested solely in his political thought and action have dismissed his life after 1910 in a few sentences. Those interested chiefly in his philosophy or poetry have given passing notice to his political career and spiritual development but gone on to treat him almost exclusively in intellectual terms. No one has tried to deal

evenly with all the different aspects of his life: domestic, scholastic, literary, political, revolutionary, philosophical, spiritual.

I have attempted, so far as the scope of this volume has permitted, to give adequate attention to each of these aspects... A scholarly biography cannot be devotional in tone. But a biography of Sri Aurobindo that ignored his spiritual life could hardly be considered complete. For forty-five of his seventy-eight years he was engaged in the practice of yoga. The correct attitude of the scholar towards the inner experiences of this period is neither the passivity of the believer nor the aggressiveness of the debunker, but rather the critical openness of the seeker of truth. It is legitimate for a scholar to assume, as I have assumed, that spiritual experiences are (or let us say, can be) genuine experiences of actual realities. I recognize that not all my readers will wish to make this assumption. I have therefore divided the book into two parts, the first of which requires no acceptance of, nor interest in, spiritual matters. This part, which covers the

years 1872-1910, deals in chronological fashion with Sri Aurobindo's outer life, giving priority to his political career. The second part, covering the years 1908-50, is arranged topically as well as chronologically, and deals chiefly with his intellectual and spiritual development.

The present work is based on fifteen years' research in primary source materials... It is a short work and does not pretend to be comprehensive. It is meant rather as a popular introduction to the subject. I hope it will mark the beginning of the critical study of a remarkable life.

Sri Aurobindo A Brief biography

is available from:

Sri Aurobindo Association
P.O. Box 372, High Falls,
N.Y. 12440 for \$11.95 plus
\$2.50 P&H. NYS residents
please include local sales tax.

Letters to the Editors

Dear Friends:

I was unable to make it to the meeting at Woodstock (AUM 89), but a friend who attended brought me a tape recording of Professor Robert McDermott's talk. Two points mentioned struck me as not quite correct, and I would like to take this opportunity to state them more precisely for the record.

During my recent stay at the Ashram at Pondicherry, I took the advantage of discussing those two points with a couple of veterans, and both agreed with me; so I am setting them forth below, for the benefit of interested followers and historians:

(1) McDermott said that on November 24, 1926, Sri Aurobindo had perceived that "the Mother's consciousness exceeded his own."

There is no evidence that either Sri Aurobindo or the Mother said

anything to that effect. Rather, Sri Aurobindo has made it very clear that there was One Divine Consciousness working in the two of them, and any differentiation in this respect is dangerous.

(2) Professor McDermott also said, "the guru-authority was transferred" on that date from Sri Aurobindo to the Mother, as the former decided to confine himself to his room in order to concentrate on some specific spiritual work.

It is true that the Mother was formally installed as the Guide. However, Sri Aurobindo never ceased to be the Guru - only the disciples were instructed to approach him through the Mother.

After the 24th, the practice in the Ashram was as follows:

The disciples would write about their experiences, addressing those letters to the Mother - who would then give them to Sri Aurobindo, who would often spend hours reading them and com-

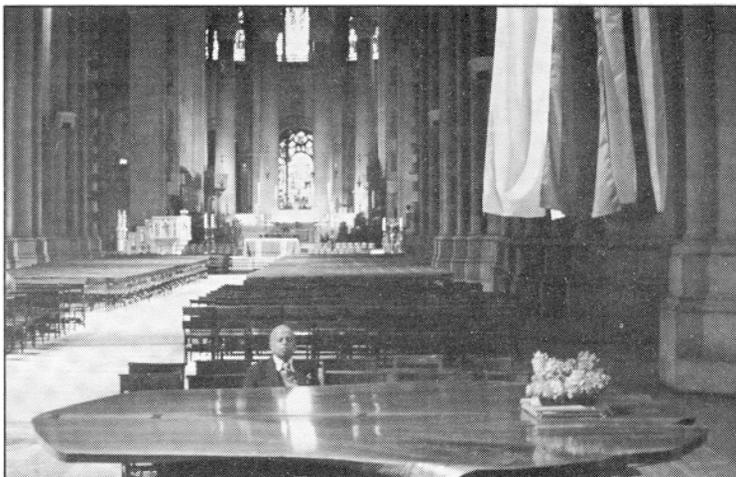
menting upon them. The contents of some of these letters might be discussed by Sri Aurobindo with the Mother; but in general she did not go over the letters at all - she did not even read them. It may safely be said that the two together performed the job of the Guru.

In one volume of the *Agenda*, the Mother says that "Sri Aurobindo told the disciples that I would take care of them and that everything would be done by me; but he did not say that to me." In another place in the *Agenda*, the Mother says that during the thirty years she lived with Sri Aurobindo she did not have to worry at all--she had no anxiety, since she knew that "he was there--he did everything."

Sincerely yours,
Chittaranjan R. Goswami

People

BALKRISHNA PODDAR, director of the Sri Aurobindo Books Distribution Agency in Pondicherry, paid a visit to the Northeast as part of his



Balkrishna at George Namashima's Altar to Peace

world tour. His first stop upon leaving India was a book fair in Moscow. While there he heard of an excellent translation of *The Mother* in Russian by someone who was not fluent in English, from a formerly "underground" study group still wary of being known. He also made official contacts for publication of some of Sri Aurobindo's books. The adventure was not without peril, since sausage and cold cuts dominate the diet. Tough territory for vegetarians.

After visiting Sam and Eric at Matagiri and Jurg and Sudha Hunziker in Hillsdale, NY, Balkrishna and Julian Lines met with Joe and Muriel Spanier, who were visiting their daughter in Greenwich, Connecticut before returning to Boulder. Robert McDermott joined the group for a few hours. The friendships which had weathered the years glowed in the warmth of that afternoon, much to everyone's delight. And there were promises of projects to come.

Balkrishna and Julian returned

to the home of Shashikant and Sushila Desai, which served as a base for their visits to bookstores and friends in New York City.

Balkrishna continued his tour via Montreal and Toronto. He then returned to the States to visit Wilmot Center in Wisconsin (home of Santosh Krinsky). He then proceeded to the homes of Wayne and

Surama Bloomquist in Berkeley, California and on south to Robert and Mary Dane in Los Angeles.

AMUDHA, Dhanalakshmi and Kamala were in the northeastern states for a six-week educational program from September 14 to October 30, 1989. Their goals were to live and work at the community of Sirius in Shutesbury, Massachusetts, pursue particular interests, visit cities like Boston and New York and stay with a family to experience family life in this country. The following extracts are from a summary of their program.

Amudha

During my stay in the U.S. I learned to drive a car, to live with my friends from Auroville, about teaching by going to schools and watching how the children learn to read and write, about caring for children, about community life and about doing something by myself

by staying with a family here.

First when I went to Sirius I saw the people, the place and it felt like Auroville because of the trees, plants and separate houses. At the same time, I didn't know the people. I'm scared because I don't know how I am going to be friends with these people. When I was in Auroville I was too shy to speak. I was shy here also. But the Sirius people came and spoke kindly with me, asked me questions. I don't know how but I answered their questions, and then I lost my fear. When people asked questions I felt I could give good answers. I learned new words by listening. When I asked questions about words I didn't know they answered kindly. They took care of us like we were part of their family.

Jai Narayan, our program coordinator, was always asking about us and sharing things with us. She answered all our questions.

I like the way Sirius people got together to eat, work and have meetings and meditation. Each day one person cooks lunch or dinner. They sign up on a timetable. And community members and friends sign up to eat community meals. So one person cooks for all of the people signed up to eat. They cook lunch in the community kitchen everyday. Dinner some days is in the community kitchen and some days in people's houses. I liked when we went to different houses for dinner.

I went to the garden and saw many vegetables that I never see; like carrots, cauliflower, and many others that I don't know the name of. I was happy to work that day because it was sunny. Linda, Victoria and all of us worked together. They didn't have the kind of tools I know how to use. So I worked with my hands by picking vegetables and weeding.

Saturday is community work day. All the people get together, tell the work to be done and everybody chooses which work **they** want to do. One Saturday I went to the construction work. Many people worked that day, guests and those in the community. We worked on building the community center.

We were all together here. It was like somebody put glue and we stuck together. Maybe **Dhanalakshmi** put the glue. The only time we weren't together was the last week when we went to different families. That was the only time we were separate. When we talked about going to the family I thought; "I don't know the people, I don't know the family, I don't know anybody. How can I stay with them?" I felt bad. I was wondering why Jean's sending me to some other house. But this way I had the chance to live in a western family's house. There I saw how they take care of children, how the husband and wife share the housework.

Village people always order children like this: "You eat this, you go take a bath, you go read." They order everything. Here people ask, "Can we eat together now? Do you want time to finish that?" They don't order. They ask. Sometimes the children say, "I want to finish this," so the parents let them do it and then they do what their parents ask.

Not everything is free. Some children want everything, "This is mine!" they say. They don't want to give anything for the sister. Parents tell the child, "This is your sister's, not yours. You give it to her. You have other things." In the village parents would say to the older child, "Your little sister wants that. You give it to her." But here they don't let children have everything. They say, "When you finish with this I will give you more."

The parents speak with their children like a friend. Parents here ask what their children want to do like

this: "Do you want to go visit your friend? Ok, I'll take you and you tell the time when you want to come back and I'll pick you up." In the village the parent will ask, "Where you went? Why you going like that?" Village people give an order, here people ask the children to do things. The children can tell that they want to finish something. Parents talk like a friend with their children.

Here I am getting freedom. I don't need to take care of my house and children. There I don't have the time to do other things, to learn other things. Here I had the time to learn.

I feel like I speak good English here. Some words I don't know the meanings. Here I hear the word many times and then I can ask the meaning and that way I learn new words. When the people speak to me here they speak kindly. They didn't think, "This is the Indian people, we don't need to take care." They think of us like we are part of their family. I liked that. That's why I feel like they were my family and I can't just leave them like that.

There is only one thing I want to do when I go back to Auroville. I want to become a good teacher. Here I learned a little about how to speak to the children. When children make a mistake here the teachers speak kindly. I learned how the teachers get children to write in their journals.

When I go to the Auroville school I don't want to push the children like: "You do this like this. That's how they do it in U.S." Maybe I can go to the Delhi Ashram School and learn more about teaching. I want to do it slowly, slowly, not like; "This is how to do it."

I want to learn more reading and writing English. I have class twice a week but that is not enough for me. Each day one hour of English would be good. I don't have more time than that.

Dhanalakshmi

When I arrived at Sirius right away I thought, "There's no shop, no other houses, only the community." I thought, "What is this place? How are they living?" I didn't know anybody. Everybody and everything was new. I was happy that they weremaking a party. I had no idea what I'm going to do there. Maybe **talk with** somepeople and learn English. I felt scared and missed my family very strongly. For two weeks I'm pushing the days to go quickly because I was so homesick. Then I started going outside to work in the garden and do construction work. People came to Sirius to spend the weekend. During the week the community was very quiet. When these people came on the weekend, they were talking and doing meditation. These people were learning about the community also.

All the Sirius community people always talked with me and helped to make me happy. They were very friendly. I learned English here because I talked with people. Here I'm not shy. Because people are speaking kindly and asking me questions. Then I can give an answer. In Auroville I have to go to work and do so many things and I'm thinking about all that, so I don't have time to talk with people in Auroville. I'm too busy and the other people are too busy.

When I get home I first have to learn to read and write. I don't think I'm going to find a teacher in Auroville. But withoutreading and writing I can't do anything in Auroville. Only I am going to work, cooking and eating. When I know how to read and write I can do other things also. Only I do garden and construction work because this is all I know. But when I learn to read and write then I can do other work. This is really important for me.

Kamala

When I went to Sirius I felt very nervous. I thought; "How am I going to live here? What am I going to do here? What do they do here?" At the same time I went into the dining room at the farm house. Our names were up on the wall. They had a party for us. People came and talked to me and asked many questions like: "How did you feel on the flight? Is this your first time to travel?" Then I managed to talk and ask questions. I asked them if this was a special party for us. They said it was the Sirius birthday and they were happy to have us here. They started lunch with a circle of people holding hands, a short meditation, a song and then told what food was for lunch. It was the first time I saw a community of people who got together for a meal, held hands, did meditation, introduced themselves and sang a song.

When I went to see the room where we would stay at Sirius I thought it was so small for all three of us. There was just a curtain across for a door. I thought, "How am I going to sleep here?" At the same time I was happy that we would all sleep in the same room. Still I was scared and cold. At that time it was raining and cold. I thought it wasn't a good time for me to come here. I couldn't go outside in such cold. But I also felt I was lucky because I saw the trees change. It was amazing for me.

After one week I met the people and talked with them. People work together. Women do garden work together. Men do construction work together. I liked the community kitchen because breakfast was self-serve and only a few people ate lunch together because many go to work in town. They eat 3 dinner meals in the community kitchen and three dinners in family homes near the community. I liked the way they do meditation and a weekly community meeting in one room.

When I talked to people they asked about the spiritual life. They were very interested in Sri Aurobindo and Mother. They asked, "How can people in Auroville manage so much land?" Sirius has only 25 people. They can't imagine how so many people can be in a community together. Here only a few people live the community life. Everyone liked when I talked with them about Auroville. They said they would like to come.

It's totally different between the

never did garden work and construction work with others. I did it here and like it so much.

Jai Narayan knew how to coordinate with the community. She knew how to take our needs to the community. If I got homesick she came and talked to me like her own child. She taught me how to take video. Never I touched video before. She taught me how to work the camera. I took video with her. I asked why I should learn this. She said, "Just for fun and to enjoy with



Dhanalakshmi, Kamala, and Amudha

two communities. Here there are only Western people. In Auroville it's a mixed international community and they're not forcing people to do this or that. Because a large number of people are living in Auroville, it's too hard to make people do things. The rules for sharing the Sirius community life are good. Sirius people don't eat meat or drink alcohol in the community buildings. I like it that they say this is a spiritual community and don't drink alcohol here. On the community work day the people meet and do meditation and tell what they want to do. I was happy to share what these people do. I

her." I took video of the leaves changing. She was kind and showed how to do things.

My aim is to learn more English. I talked freely with people. Asked them questions and found out about people. In Auroville I couldn't find people to talk English with because everyone is separate.

Here people are eating together and we slept in a building where other people were living too. So every time they're talking. In Auroville I'm living separate and only I can look my child and talk with my husband. Here I could talk with everyone. I talked freely with people at Sirius.

The last week I went to share the family house. I think, "How can I go to live there? How can I manage to leave my friends where I lived together happily for 5 weeks." I feel afraid. This is the first time I'm coming out of my family. I go alone. I think, "How can I manage with these people?" I was very scared. When I met these people they were so kind. They had three children. The children were so kind. I liked so much what they are doing. The woman is cooking and the man is doing the dishes. I like that way. Always I'm doing all the work in the house. Both the man and woman are going to work and writing and doing so many things. I like that way.

The parents put the children to bed at 8 p.m. because they are going to school. Then in the morning the

children get up and get ready for school easily. The parents tell the children a story before bed. One night I told the story. They liked it 'so much. They slept well. **Raman** always says song or poem to the baby when he goes to sleep. But I don't do that. When I go back I'm going to do that. Now I know what that is.

The food was difficult Always eating brown rice and salad for lunch and dinner. It was hard on my stomach. I needed to eat some white rice. I missed my own food. We cooked sometimes and the people liked our food very much. But we didn't cook much. We needed that time to talk with people. I visited many friends. Otherwise I can't visit many friends.

I want to do typing work so for that I need to learn more reading

and writing. It's very hard for me to take care of the baby and work. If I work half-day and go to school half-day, I can't take care of the baby. There's no time. If I get workers to take care of the baby, I need money for them. So I have a problem of how to manage. I don't have enough time or money.

I'm interested to work in the school also. But I need someone to train me to be a teacher. I don't know what's going on in the school. I know a little bit about drawing and Tamil so that I could help teach those things. First I want to listen and watch how they teach.

I also want to learn more typing. I want to take a computer class in Aspiration. I would like to travel in India so I can know about the culture in India.

Center News

Sri Aurobindo Association
P.O. Box 372
High Falls, New York
12440
(914) 687 - 9222

The Association sponsored two gatherings in November. An observance of Mother's Mahasamadhi was held on November 18th at the home of Dushyant Desai, where the relics of Sri Aurobindo are installed in a rectangular marble shrine. After a meditation, reading, and chanting of bhajans, a videotape of films made on the Ashram and Sri Aurobindo International Center of Education were shown.

On November 24th, a darshan commemorating Sri Aurobindo's Siddhi Day, (in 1926 he experienced the descent of the **Overmental** or Krishna consciousness into the physical), friends gathered at the home of Marcel and Edith Thevoz in a Virginia suburb of

Washington, D.C. Guests included the Indian Ambassador, Dr. Karan Singh, and his wife, Dr. S. Mathur, Minister of Education and Culture at the Embassy, Robert, Martha and Arthur **Orton**, recent arrivals from Auroville, David Wickenden, Sally Walton, Dr. and Mrs. Aurora and many other old and new friends. A reading from *Savitri* by Chitra Neogy-Tezak highlighted the program which concluded with a brief address by Dr. Singh who spoke with clarity and insight on the life and thought of Sri Aurobindo.

"Our Planet Ourselves" was the title of a two-day festival on November 11th and 12th at the High School for the Humanities in Manhattan. Participants included a number of environmental, conscious investing, spiritual and new age marketing groups. Masseurs, chiropractors, and psychics abounded.

Robert and Martha wish to host a gathering in Charlottesville, Virginia over the weekend of February

~24th in observance of Mother's birthday on the 21st and **Auroville's** on the 28th. Write to them at P.O. Box 4472, Charlottesville, VA 22905 or call (804) 296-2328 if you're interested in attending.

The Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library of thirty volumes, which is out-of-print, is available in limited quantities in the deluxe silk-bound edition. Inquiries should go directly to Ram and **Tara Patwardhan**, 12 Perry Street, New York City, New York, 10014, 212-924-1806.

Wilmot Center
33719 116th Street
Twin Lakes, Wisconsin
53181
(414) 877-9396

Wilmot Center has been quite alive with new energy over the last few months. The Center's facilities have been filled with visitors and guests ranging from Pondicherry

Ayurvedic doctors to friends from around the country.

Over the summer David Mitchell (known to many of you for his long-time association with the Yoga) moved from New York to Wisconsin in order to join us in developing the business and our community. With his advent a new level of intensity has spawned, leading to strong developments in a number of areas. The following summary reflects this renewed activity in each of the Center's departments.

Lotus Light Publications: Our publishing department released the book **Vedic Deities**, by Sri M.P. Pandit for the 15th of August, 1989. This is actually a new, U.S.A. edition of the original title **Aditi and Other Deities in the Veda**. The interest in **Vedic Deities** in the U.S.A. is growing substantially and the book appears at just the right moment to help guide and direct that interest. This is a companion to the earlier book we published, **Vedic Symbolism**, a compilation of writings by Sri Aurobindo.

In addition, arrangements have been made to publish a U.S.A. edition of **The Psychic Being**, a compilation on the titled subject from the writings of Sri Aurobindo and Mother, which first appeared in its Indian edition earlier this year. We are expecting the book shortly after the first of the year. It will be priced at \$8.95.

Lotus Light is undertaking the publication of **Search for the Soul in Everyday Living**, a book compiled from the writings of Mother by Wayne Bloomquist. It should be available in the beginning of 1990.

Our publications department has recently effected a merger with the Blue Pearl company which had over 1,700 new age and metaphysical bookstore customers. This gives us greater access to the bookstore market in the U.S.A. for our book offerings. A new Blue Lotus cata-

logue with all the books and products we are distributing has been developed to reach these stores.

The Institute for **Wholistic Education**: After waiting for over a year, we have recently heard from the IRS that our official notice of Non Profit Status should be approved. With the completion of our first "on site" Ayurvedic course last Spring, the Institute is now offering a first-year correspondence course. Due to the strong response to this program we are developing a second-year course as well.

The Institute will offer a special weekend seminar on **Vedic Deities** this winter. If you are interested in participating contact the Center for date, time and agenda.

Our second year of "home school" for two of the Center's children is in process. We are learning a lot about education and are still looking for a full-time teacher to join us in developing an **alternative** school program. Anyone interested in taking part in this project should contact the Institute, c/o Wilmot center.

Center Meetings: Due to the expressed interest in some kind of regular meeting for Sri Aurobindo people in the Chicago/Milwaukee area a study circle is being planned to meet this need. The meetings will begin after the new year. Anyone interested in taking part should contact the Wilmot Center. Our library and other facilities are available upon request.

Midwest Regional News: Members of the Wilmot Center participated in the first regional meeting of devotees in the Midwest coordinated by Paula Murphy (AVI board member) in Madison, Wisconsin. The first meeting took place on Saturday, November 4, 1989. Much to everyone's delight people came from as far away as Illinois and Iowa. Our goal is to provide a way for those of us scattered around the Midwest to feel the support and communion of fel-

low seekers on the path of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga. Anyone interested in joining these regional meetings should contact Paula Murphy at 909 Clarence Court, Madison, Wisconsin 537 15, (608) 255-0140. This **satsang** can be an aid to all of us in our attempt to practice the Yoga in our daily lives.

Santosh Krinsky

Global View Rt. 3, Willow Gold Spring Green, Wisconsin 53588

Marion Nelson exhibited textiles from Southeast Asia at the Chicago Academy of Sciences and the Textile Arts Centre from November 17 - 19, 1989. She displayed traditional fabrics from the Himalayas-Ladakh, Nepal, Bhutan, Thailand and South India. Marion presents first hand accounts of the weavers and explains how the textiles are used in ceremony, as status symbols, talismans and mystic expressions in each culture.

Sri Aurobindo Learning Center Savitri House Baca Grande, P.O. Box 60 Crestone, Colorado 81131

Very Dear Co-Builders of Savitri Solar Village:

It is unity in a New Consciousness that is the aim.

-Sri Aurobindo

It is the unity of all in the solidarity of a common manifestation that will allow the creation of the new and divine world upon the earth. Each will bring his part, but no part will be complete except as a power in the solidarity of the whole.

-The Mother

A gnostic society, a spiritualized society would live like its spiritual individuals, not in the ego, but in the spirit, not as the collective ego, but as the collective soul.

-Sri Aurobindo

The Sri Aurobindo Learning Center will host a summer program at the **Baca** for the creation of a Global Village Network. This three-day conference will bring together people who are involved in the creation of sustainable villages and intentional communities, particularly those with a spiritual basis. Village planners, builders, and residents of such communities will be encouraged to present their village projects, planning processes, physical and social structures, responses to critical environmental issues and ways of financing.

The Network eventually hopes to reach out to villages in other countries, such as, Russia, China and India in order to provide a forum for the sharing of problems, opportunities and inspiration.

The 1990 conference will network at least three village projects in The United States and one in South India. The three U.S. villages are currently being planned in Sedona, Arizona, Santa Fe, New Mexico and Savitri Solar Village, **Baca**. The international community of Auroville in South India will be represented even though its original plan was that of a township, for in fact it is a village at present. Issues that could be presented or discussed at this initial meeting are: **Village planning process** and education; Social structure and governance; Physical facilities and housing techniques; Fund raising and financing schemes; Use of alternative energy; Integration of sustainable agriculture and afforestation; Village economy and non-residential activities; Village as vehicle for health and healing; Village responses to climatic and environmental issues.

If you are interested in participating in this conference contact the Sri Aurobindo Learning Center at **Baca**.

All USA Meeting
Finding the Flame Behind the Heart
Thursday June 28--Thursday July 5, 1990
\$300 or \$50 a Day

To me, welcome means "to come in a state of well-being." Welcome to the 1990 meeting! We in the Pacific Northwest are very happy to swing open the gate for a wish growing in previous All USA Meetings, since almost the beginning in 1985: more of a focus on sadhana, on the work in oneself. So, here is the year of ***Finding the Flame Behind the Heart***, which we should explain in case you feel new or rusty! The flame is of the psychic being or the true soul deep, deep within, which is always burning whether we're aware of it or not. The inmost radiance is not part of the mind or the emotional being, but it lights the way by direct and infallible feeling, and so is behind the heart, our center of emotional feeling.

The 1990 Meeting is offered as a one-week aid in the preparation for finding the flame behind the heart, the first major stage of Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's yoga. That is why the geographical setting, found so gratefully, is deep within the vast, rich, monumental Cascade forest very near a physical figure of the Divine on earth--a great mountain. Lordly Rainier's shocking majesty, although not the highest summit of any, is partly due to it being the most massive mountain on earth.

We plan ten major sessions, each on an aspect of finding the flame behind the heart, such as work, relationships, meditation, the vital, led by those who can actually help us do it--not simply talk. And, too, the workshops we'd all like: a full afternoon already developing on Auroville; abundant possibilities for solitude in the "murmurous deep-thoughted woods;" chances for physical work together (and play): thousands of acres of forest trails, and horseback riding, swimming in a heated outdoor pool, volleyball and, finally, the evenings' campfires.

Buck Creek Camp is only 90 minutes from the Seattle-Tacoma Airport. We're developing an economical and convenient local transportation arrangement, and working on very promising air discount possibilities for those who'll have to fly.

More details soon, of course, in a brochure. But for now we ask three things: **1. any** reactions or suggestions you feel that we could together make part of the planning process. **2.** you arrange vacation time and save funds on a budget for the week together. And while you are here take the opportunity of extra days in the opulence of the Pacific Northwest: Seattle, the San Juan Islands, Vancouver, the Olympic rainforests, Portland, sand dunes and sagebrush deserts, volcanoes, hot springs, the Columbia River Gorge and the Grand Coulee Canyon, the Pacific Ocean and Puget Sound. .. We'll include needed information on such side trips if you mark your registration form **3.** send registration deposit (or total payment if possible) now--we've got a brochure to print, etc.

Suggestions and questions to: Ronald Jorgensen, 2020 Roosevelt Avenue, Enumclaw, WA 98022 (206) 8253413.

(Note: Discount airline seats are already filling up some A.U.M. dates; so to save substantial dollars, don't wait.)

**All USA Meeting
June 28 - July 5, 1990:
Buck Creek Camp, Washington**



Buck Creek Camp in Winter



Buck Creek