



Collaboration

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A scene at Matagiri on August 15, 1980, at the gathering in observance of Sri Aurobindo's birthday. In the center background seated on the table are Jean and Gordon Korstange giving a concert of Indian flute and devotional music.

The year 1980 was one of turmoil and upheaval throughout the world. One has only to recall the earthquakes in Italy and elsewhere, the eruption of Mount St. Helena in the U.S., and such "man-made" events as the hostage crisis in Iran and the Iran-Iraq war. It is also the year in which the first volume of *Mother's Agenda* appeared in English in America (and England). In India upheavals of all kinds are regarded as the work of Mahakali, the "terrible Mother," the Mother in her aspect of warrior and overturner. The Mother is the Divine Energy which has created the worlds and is leading all to its divine fulfilment, the Great Perfec-

tion which the Supreme sees within Himself and the seeing unleashes His divine energy, Shakti, the Divine Mother.

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have opened a new way for man's evolution, indeed for the evolution of the world, the seat or focal point of evolution. The mighty yoga they undertook in themselves has its effects everywhere. The Mother's journey into a new area of sadhana, of yoga, of the divine work, within the very cells of her body, was recorded in her conversations with Satprem and called *Mother's Agenda*. In it Mother lays waste all man's preconceived ideas, the whole mental structure he has erected for

everything-from death and illness to the spiritual life-as she moves steadily forward to bring "something else" into manifestation. Her **Agenda** is indeed a "force in action," and to read it is to be part of her overwhelming stride through the world. It is a radioactive, or perhaps better, "Shaktiactive," work. That it has now begun to appear in America is not insignificant given the role both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother said America has to play in the evolution.

Many of the pieces we have chosen for this issue of **Collaboration** touch upon the great "yoga of self-perfection" which Sri Aurobindo outlined in his **Synthesis of Yoga** and Mother undertook to live out in her life. We have also included an extract from the first volume of her **Agenda** which gives some hint of the extraordinary "inner life" she had as well as something of her nature in this embodiment. Also included are an interview with Satprem which also reveals something of the Mother and her working, and Nolini's "Great Holocaust," which has appeared in these pages previously but which seems to be apropos now too.

We are beginning also to publish extracts from a diary kept by a disciple which throw some light on a particular phase in the history of the Ashram as well as on how one sadhak at least was caught "between two worlds."

Readers are invited to submit material for **Collaboration**. We are interested in poetry and nonfiction, particularly articles or "reflections" on Sri Aurobindo's Yoga, etc.

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THE YOGA OF SELF-PERFECTION Sri Aurobindo

The principle in view is a self-surrender, giving up of the human being into the being, consciousness, power, delight of the Divine, a union or communion at all the points of meeting in the soul of man, the mental being, by which the Divine himself, directly and without veil master and possessor of the instrument, shall by the light of his presence and guidance perfect the human being in all the forces of the Nature for a divine living. Here we arrive at a farther enlargement of the objects of the Yoga. The common initial purpose of 111 Yoga is the liberation of the soul of man from its present natural ignorance and limitation, its release into spiritual being, its union with the highest self and Divinity. But ordinarily this is made not only the initial but the whole and final object: enjoyment of spiritual being there is, but either in a dissolution of the human and individual into the silence of self-being or on a higher plane in another existence. The l'atric system makes liberation the final, but not the only aim; it takes on its way a full perfection and enjoyment of the spiritual power, light and joy in the human existence, and even it has a glimpse of a supreme experience in which liberation and cosmic action and enjoyment are unified in a final overcoming of all oppositions and dissonances. It is this wider view of our spiritual potentialities from which we begin, but we add another stress which brings in a completer significance. We regard the spirit in man not as solely an individual being traveling to a transcendent unity with the Divine, but as a universal being capable of oneness with the Divine in all souls and all Nature and we give this extended view its entire practical consequence. The human soul's individual liberation and enjoyment of union with the Divine in spiritual being, consciousness and delight must always be the first object of the Yoga; its free enjoyment of the cosmic unity of the Divine becomes a second object; but out of that a third appears, the effectuation of the meaning of the divine unity with all beings by a sympathy and participation in the spiritual purpose of the Divine in humanity. The individual Yoga then turns from its separateness and becomes a part of the collective Yoga of the divine Nature in the human race. The liberated individual being, united with the Divine in self and spirit, becomes in his natural being a self-perfecting instrument for the perfect outflowing of the Divine in humanity.

This outflowing has its two terms; first, comes the growth out of the separative human ego into the unity of the spirit, then the possession of the divine nature in its proper and its higher forms and no longer in the inferior forms of the mental being which are a mutilated translation and not the authentic text of the original script of divine Nature in the cosmic individual. In other words, a perfection has to be aimed at which amounts to the elevation of the mental into the full spiritual and supramental nature. Therefore this integral Yoga of knowledge, love and works has to be extended into a Yoga of spiritual and gnostic self-perfection. As gnostic knowledge, will and Ananda are a direct instrumentation of spirit and can only be won by growing into the spirit, into divine being, this growth has to be the first aim of our Yoga. The mental being has to enlarge itself into the oneness of the Divine before the Divine will perfect in the soul of the individual its gnostic outflowing. That is the reason why the triple way of knowledge, works and love becomes the keynote of the whole Yoga, for that is the direct means for the soul in mind to rise to its highest intensities where it passes upward into the divine oneness. That too is the reason why the Yoga must be integral. For if immergence in the Infinite or some close union with the Divine were all our aim, an integral Yoga would be superfluous, except for such

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greater satisfaction of the being of man as we may get by a self-lifting of the whole of it towards its Source. But it would not be needed for the essential aim, since by any single power of the soul-nature we can meet with the Divine; each at its height rises up into the infinite and absolute, each therefore offers a sufficient way of arrival, for all the hundred separate paths meet in the Eternal. But the gnostic being is a complete enjoyment and possession of the whole divine and spiritual nature; and it is a complete lifting of the whole nature of man into its power of a divine and spiritual existence. Integrality becomes then an essential condition of this yoga

* * * * *

A divine perfection of the human being is our aim. We must know then, first, what are the essential elements that constitute man's total perfection; secondly, what we mean by a divine as distinguished from a human perfection of our being. That man as a being is capable of self-development and of some approach at least to an ideal standard of perfection which his mind is able to conceive, fix before it and pursue, is common ground to all thinking humanity, though it may be only the minority who concern themselves with this possibility as providing the one most important aim of life. But by some the ideal is conceived as a mundane change, by others as a religious conversion.

The mundane perfection is sometimes conceived of as something outward, social, a thing of action, a more rational dealing with our fellow-men and our environment, a better and more efficient citizenship and discharge of duties, a better, richer, kinder and happier way of living, with a more just and more harmonious associated enjoyment of the opportunities of existence. By others again a more inner and subjective ideal is cherished, a clarifying and raising of the intelligence, will and reason, a heightening and ordering of power and capacity in the nature, a nobler ethical, a richer aesthetic, a finer emotional, a much healthier and better-governed vital and physical being. Sometimes one element is stressed, almost to the exclusion of the rest; sometimes, in wider and more well-balanced minds, the whole harmony is envisaged as a total perfection. A change of education and social institutions is the outward means adopted or an inner self-training and development is preferred as the true instrumentation. Or the two aims may be clearly united, the perfection of the inner individual, the perfection of the outer living.

But the mundane aim takes for its field the present life and its opportunities; the

SELF-PERFECTION *The Mother*

Disciple: "To know oneself is to control oneself": What does it mean?

Mother: This means to be conscious of one's inner truth, conscious of the different parts of one's being and of their respective working. One must know why one does this, why one does that; one must know one's thoughts, know one's feelings, know all one's activities, all one's movements, what one is capable of, etc. And to know oneself is not sufficient; this knowledge must lead to conscious control. To know oneself perfectly means to control oneself perfectly.

But one must have an aspiration every moment of one's life.

religious aim, on the contrary, fixes before it the self-preparation for another existence after death, its commonest ideal is some kind of pure sainthood, its means a conversion of the imperfect or sinful human being by divine grace or through obedience to a law laid down by a scripture or else given by a religious founder. The aim of religion may include a social change, but it is then a change brought about by the acceptance of a common religious ideal and way of consecrated living, a brotherhood of the saints, a theocracy or kingdom of God reflecting on earth the kingdom of heaven.

The object of our synthetic Yoga must, in this respect too as in its other parts, be more integral and comprehensive, embrace all these elements or these tendencies of a larger impules of self-perfection and harmonise them or rather unify, and in order to do that successfully it must seize on a truth which is wider than the ordinary religious and higher than the mundane principle. All life is a secret Yoga, an obscure growth of Nature towards the discovery and fulfilment of the divine principle hidden in her which becomes progressively less obscure, more self-conscious and luminous: more self-possessed in the human being by the opening of all his instruments of knowledge, will, action, life to the Spirit within him and in the world. Mind, life, body, all the forms of our nature are the means of this growth, but they find their last perfection only by opening out to something beyond them, first, because they are not the whole of what man is secondly, because that other something which he is, is the key of his completeness and brings a light which discovers to him the whole high and large reality of his being. [From *The Synthesis of Yoga* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1971) pp. 586-91.]

It is never too soon to begin, never too late to continue. That is to say, even when you are quite young, you can begin to study yourself and to know yourself and little by little to control yourself. And even when you are what people call "old," when old many many years, it is not too late to make the effort to know yourself better and better and to control yourself better and better. That is the science of living.

To perfect yourself, you must first of all become conscious of yourself. I am sure, for example, that the following incident must have happened to you many times in your life. All of a sudden someone asks you, "Why have you done that?" Well, the spontaneous answer is "I do not know." If someone asks you, "What were you thinking about?" you answer, "I do not know." "Why are you tired?"—"I do not know." "Why are you glad?"—"I do not know," and so on. I may take indeed fifty persons and ask them all of a sudden without preparation, "Why have you done that?," and if they are not "awake" within, all will reply, "I do not know" (naturally, I do not speak of those who have undergone a discipline for knowing themselves and for following their movements to the extreme limit; they of course can collect themselves and concentrate and give the right answer, but only after a time). You will see that it is like that, if you look at your whole day. You say something and you do not know why you say so—it is only when the words have gone out of your mouth that you perceive that it was not quite what you wanted to say. For example, you go to see someone, you prepare in advance the words you are going to say, but once before the person in question, you say nothing or it is other words that come out of your mouth. Are you able to say to what extent the atmosphere of the other person has influenced you and prevented you from saying what you had prepared? How many people are able to say that? They do not perceive even that the person was in such or such a state and that was why they could not tell him what they had prepared. Naturally there are obvious cases when you find people in such bad humour that you can ask them nothing. I do not speak of that. I speak of a clear perception of mutual influences, what acts and reacts upon your nature—it is this that one doesn't have. For example, you are suddenly uneasy or happy, but how many people can say, "It is like that"? And it is difficult to know, it is not at all easy. One must be "awake" very much;

one must be constantly in a state to observe with great attention.

There are people who sleep twelve hours daily and say the rest of the time, "I am awake"! There are people who sleep twenty hours per day and the rest of the time half awake!

To be in this state in which you observe attentively you must have so to say antennae everywhere that are in constant contact with your centre of true consciousness. You record everything, you organise everything and, in this way, you cannot be taken unawares, you cannot be deceived, mistaken, and you cannot say any other thing than what you wanted to say. But how many people live in this state normally? That is what I mean to say exactly when I speak of "becoming conscious." If you want to derive the greatest profit out of the conditions and circumstances in which you find yourself, you must be fully awake; you must not be taken by surprise. You must not do things without knowing why, you must not say things without knowing why. One must be constantly awake.

You must understand also that you are not separate individualities, and that life is a ceaseless exchange of forces, of consciousnesses, of vibrations and of movements of all kinds. It is as in a crowd; where everyone pushes, everyone goes forward, and when all go backward, everyone goes backward. It is the same thing in the inner world, in your consciousness. Constantly there are forces and influences that act and react upon you, it is like a gas in the atmosphere, and unless you are quite awake, these things enter into you and it is only when they have entered well into you and come out as if they were from you that you are aware of them. How often do men meet people who are nervous, full of anger and bad mood, like that, without knowing why. How is it that when you play against some persons you play very well, and when you play against others you are unable to play? And people who are quiet, not wicked, who suddenly become furious when they are in the midst of a furious crowd? And one does not know who started the thing; it is a thing that passed by and swept the consciousness. There are people who are capable of releasing vibrations like that and others respond without knowing why. Everything is like that, from the smallest to the biggest.

To be individualised in a collectivity, one must be absolutely conscious of oneself. And of what self? The Self above all mixture, that is to say, what I call the Truth of your being. And so long as you are not conscious of the Truth of your being, you are moved by all sorts of things

The *Mother*

My nights contain so many things that I don't always do the necessary work to remember-that takes up a lot of time. Sometimes I get up during the night and sit there recalling precisely everything that has already happened, but that sometimes takes half an hour!-and as urgent work still calls, I don't take the time to remember and it gets erased. But then you know, with all that's coming you could write volumes!

From a documentary standpoint, my nights are getting quite interesting. In the "Yoga of Self-Perfection" [in *The Synthesis of Yoga*], Sri Aurobindo describes precisely this state you reach in which all things assume meaning and a quality of inner significance, clarification of various points, and help. From this point of view, my nights have become extraordinary. I see infinitely more things that I saw before. Before, it was very limited to a personal contact with people. Now ... In my nights, each thing and each person has the appearance, the gesture, the word or the action that describes *exactly* his condition. It's becoming quite interesting.

Of course, I much prefer being in my great currents of force-from a personal standpoint, such immensity of action is much more interesting. But these documentary things are also valuable. It is so tremendously different from the dreams and even the visions you have when you enter certain representative realms of the mind (which is what I used to do). It is so different, it has another content, another life altogether: it carries its light, its understanding, its explanation within itself-you look, and everything is explained.

without being aware of it at all. Collective thought, collective suggestions is a formidable influence, acting constantly on individual thought. And what is extraordinary is that one is not aware of it. You think that you are thinking *like that*, but in reality it is the collectivity that thinks like that. The mass is always inferior to the individual. Take individuals of like category, well, when they are alone, they are at least two degrees higher than people of the same category that are in a crowd. There is a mixture of things obscure and unconscious and you slip inevitably into the unconscious. To escape from that, there is only one means; to become conscious of oneself, more and more conscious and more and more attentive.

Try to do this little exercise: at the beginning of the day, say, "I will not speak without thinking of what I say." You be-

It always gives me the feeling that I am shrinking a little, but it's interesting. And it's useful, for I am constantly moving about and doing things with people; it indicates to me what I have to say and do with each one. It's useful. But all the same, I miss the fullness and joy of the more im-personal Movement of forces.

Before going to bed, sometimes I say to myself, "I will do what is necessary to spend my night in these great currents of force (because there is a way to do it). And then I think, "Oh, what an egotist you are, my girl!" So sometimes it happens, sometimes it doesn't-when there's something important to do, it doesn't happen. But all I have to do is concentrate in a certain way before going to sleep to spend my whole night in these ... very far from here, very far .. I can't say very far from the earth, for surely it's in an intermediate zone between the forces from above and the earth's atmosphere. That's what it mainly is, in any case. It's a great universal current as well, but mainly it's what descends and comes into the earth, and it is permeating the earth's atmosphere all the time, all the time, and it comes with this wide, overall vision-it makes for wonderful nights. ... I no longer bother about people at all—at least not as such, but in a more im-personal way. [silence]

I have been pestered my whole life by ... something similar to the sense of duty without its stupidity. Sri Aurobindo had told me that it was a "censor," that I had with me a "considerable" one! It was constantly, constantly telling me, "No, it's not like that, it's like this ... Oh, no! It's wrong to do that; be careful, don't be ego-

[Continued on following page]

lieve, do you not, that you think all that you say! It is not at all the case, you *will* see that so many times the word you do not want to say is ready to come out, but you are obliged to make a conscious effort to stop it from coming out.

I knew people who were very scrupulous about telling a lie, but when directly they are in a group instead of saying the truth, they tell a lie spontaneously. They did not intend to do so, but it came "like that." Why? Because they were in the company of liars: there was an atmosphere of falsehood and they simply caught the malady!

It is in this way that little by little, slowly, with perseverance, first of all with great care and attention, one becomes conscious, learns to know oneself and afterwards to become master of oneself. [Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, February 1964, pp. 45-51.]

27 November 1965

[This talk begins with Mother's comments on the message distributed on the Darshan day of 24 November.]

"It is certainly a mistake to bring down the light by force—to pull it down. The Supramental cannot be taken by storm. When the time is ready it will open of itself—but first there is a great deal to be done and that must be done patiently and without haste."—Sri Aurobindo

Mother: That is good for reasonable people. They will say, "There, he does not promise miracles."

Disciple: Why? Do many people have the tendency to "pull down"?

Mother: People are in a hurry, they want to see the results immediately.

And then, they believe they are pulling down the Supramental—they pull down some small vital individuality who mocks at them and in the end makes them play the shabby fool. This is what happens most often—99 times out of a hundred.

A small individuality, a vital entity who plays the big play and makes a great show, plays of light. Then the poor fellow who has "pulled" is bedazzled; he says, "There, it is the Supramental," and he falls into a pit.

It is only when you have touched, seen in some way and had a contact with the true Light, that you can distinguish the vital, and you perceive that it is altogether like the plays of light on a stage, an artificial light. But otherwise, others are dazzled—it is dazzling, it is "wonderful," and then they are deceived. It is only when you have *seen* and when you have had the contact with the Truth, ah, then you smile!

It is quackery, but you must know the truth in order to recognise quackery.

At bottom, it is the same for everything. The vital is like a superstage that gives shows—very attractive, dazzling, deceptive: it is only when you know the True Thing that you recognise immediately, instinctively, without reasoning, and you say, "No, I do not want that."

And for everything it is so. Where it has taken a capital importance in human life is with regard to love. Vital passions, vital attractions have almost everywhere taken the place of true feeling, which is quiet, whereas the other puts you in ferment, gives you the feeling of something "living." It is very deceptive. And you do not know it, you do not feel it, you do not perceive it clearly unless you know the True Thing. If you have touched true love through the psychic and the divine union, then the other thing appears hollow, thin, empty—an appearance and a comedy, more often tragic than comic.

Whatever one may say about it, however one may explain it, is of no use at all, because he or she who is caught says immediately, "Oh, this is not what it is for others"—what happens to yourself is never like what happens to others! One must have the true experience, then the whole vital appears like a masquerade—not attractive.

And when you "pull," well, it is much more than 99 times out of one hundred . . . out of a million there is found only one case where one happens to pull the True Thing—this proves one was ready. Otherwise it is always the vital which you pull, the appearance, the theatrical show of the Thing, not the Thing itself.

To pull is always an egoistic movement. It is a deformation of aspiration. True as-

piration consists in a giving, a self-giving, whereas to pull means to want for oneself. Even if in the mind you have a vaster ambition—the earth, the universe—that means nothing, these are mental activities. [long silence]

You felt nothing special on Darshan day?

Disciple: No.

Mother: Sri Aurobindo was there from morning till evening.

For, yes, for more than an hour he made me live, as in a concrete and living vision of the condition of humanity and of the different strata of humanity in relation to the new or supramental creation. And it was wonderfully clear and concrete and living. . . . There was all the humanity which is no longer altogether animal, which has benefited by mental development and created a kind of harmony in its life—a harmony vital and artistic, literary—in which the large majority are content to live. They have caught a kind of harmony, and within it they live life as it exists in a civilised surrounding, that is to say, somewhat cultured, with refined tastes and refined habits. And all this life has a certain beauty where they are at ease, and unless something catastrophic happens to them, they live happy and contented, satisfied with life. These people can be drawn (because they have a taste, they are intellectually developed), they can be attracted by the new forces, the new things, the future life; for example, they can become disciples of Sri Aurobindo mentally, intellectually. But they do not feel at all the need to change materially; and if they were compelled to do so, it would be first of all premature, unjust, and would simply create a great disorder and disturb their life altogether uselessly.

The Mother's Nights and Her "Censor"

[Continued from preceding page]

tistical; be careful—do this, do that." He was right, but I sent it away long ago—or rather, Sri Aurobindo sent it away. But there remains the habit . . . of not doing what I like. Rather, of doing what *must* be done, and whether it's pleasant or not makes no difference.

This, too, Sri Aurobindo had explained to me. I used to tell him, "Yes, you always speak of life's 'delight,' life for the sake of its delight." But as soon as I had the notion, as soon as I was put in the presence of the Supreme, it was: "For You—exclusively what You want. You are the sole, the unique and exclusive reason for being." And that has remained, and this movement is so strong that even when . . . you see,

now I have ecstasy and ananda in abundance—everything comes, everything. But even then, even what that is there, something in me always turns towards the Supreme and says, "Does this *truly* serve You? Is it what You expect of me, what You want from me?"

This has protected me from all seeking for pleasure in life. It was a wonderful protection, because pleasure always seemed so futile to me—yes, futile; for the sake of your personal satisfaction. Later, I even understood how foolish it is, for you can never be satisfied—though when you're small you don't yet know that. I never liked it: "But is it really useful, does it serve some purpose?"

And I still have this attitude in regard to my nights. I have this widening of the consciousness, this impersonalization, this wonderful joy of being above . . . all that. But at the same time I also have "I'm here in this body, on earth, to do something—I mustn't forget it. And this is what I have to do." But probably I'm wrong!

I'm waiting for the Lord to tell me clearly,

But when I saw that, I always see Him smiling—a smile . . . it's all very good to smile, but . . . it encourages you more than it cures you! [Mother's Agenda, vol. 1 (Paris: Institut de Recherches Evolutives, 1979), 2 October 1960, pp. 426-28.]

This was very clear.

Then there were some—rare individuals—who were ready to make the necessary effort to prepare for the transformation and to draw the new forces, to try to adapt Matter, to seek means of expression, etc. These are ready for the yoga of Sri Aurobindo. They are very few in number. There are even those who have the sense of sacrifice and are ready for a hard, painful life, if that would lead or help towards this future transformation. But they should not, they should not in any way try to influence the others and make them share in their own effort; it would be altogether unfair—not only unfair, but extremely maladroit, for it would change the universal rhythm and movement, or at least the terrestrial movement, and instead of helping, it would create conflicts and end in a chaos.

But it was so living, so real that my whole attitude (how to say it—a passive attitude which is not the result of an active will), the whole position taken in the work has changed. And that has brought a peace—a peace and a calmness and a confidence altogether decisive. A decisive change. And even what seemed in the earlier position to be obstinacy, clumsiness, inconstancy, all kinds of deplorable things, all that has disappeared. It was like the vision of a great universal Rhythm in which each thing takes its place and . . . everything is all right. And the effort for transformation, reduced to a small number, becomes a thing *much* more precious and much more powerful for the realisation. It is as though a choice has been made for those who will be the pioneers of the new creation. And all these ideas of “spreading,” of “preparing,” or of “churning Matter” . . . are a childishness. It is human restlessness.

The vision was of a beauty so majestic, so calm, so smiling, oh! . . . it was full, truly full of the divine Love. And not a divine Love that “pardons”—it is not that at all, not at all! Each thing in its place, realising its inner rhythm as perfectly as it can.

It was a very beautiful gift.

Well, all these things people know in some part, intellectually, like that, in idea; they know all that, but it is quite useless. In everyday practice you live in another way, with a truer understanding. And there, it is as though you touched the things—you saw them, you touched them—in their higher disposition.

It came after a vision of plants and the spontaneous beauty of plants (it is something so wonderful), then of the animal with so harmonious a life (so long as men do not intervene), and all that was in its right place; then of the true humanity as

humanity, that is to say, the maximum of what a mental poise could create of beauty, harmony, charm, elegance of life, taste of living—a taste of living in beauty, and naturally suppressing all that is ugly and low and vulgar. It was a fine humanity—humanity as its maximum, but nice. And perfectly satisfied with its being humanity, because it lives harmoniously. And it is perhaps also like a promise of what almost the whole of humanity will become under the influence of the new creation. It appeared to me that it was what the supramental consciousness could make of humanity. There was even a comparison with what humanity has made of the animal species. It is extremely mixed, naturally, but things have been perfected, bettered, utilised more completely. Animality, under the mind's influence, has become another thing, which is naturally something mixed, because the mind was incomplete. In the same way there are examples of a harmonious humanity among well-balanced people, and this seemed to be what humanity could become under the supramental influence.

Only, it is very far ahead. You must not expect that it will be immediately—it is very far ahead.

It is clearly, even now, a period of transition which may last quite a long time and which is rather painful. Only, the effort, sometimes painful (often painful) is compensated by a clear vision of the goal to attain, of the goal that *will* be attained: an assurance, yes, a certainty. But it would be something that would have the power to eliminate all error, all deformation, all the ugliness of the mental life—and then a humanity very happy, very satisfied with being human, not at all feeling the need of being anything other than human, but with a human beauty, a human harmony.

It was very charming, it was as though I lived in it. The contradictions had disappeared. It was as though I lived in this perfection. And it was almost like the ideal conceived by the supramental consciousness, of a humanity become as perfect as it can be. And it was very good.

And this brings a great repose. The tension, the friction, all that disappeared, and the impatience. All that had completely disappeared.

Disciple: That is to say, you concentrate the work instead of diffusing it a little everywhere?

Mother: No, it may be diffused materially, because the individuals are not necessarily collected together. But they are few in number.

That idea of a pressing need to “prepare” humanity for the new creation, that impatience has disappeared.

Disciple: It must first of all be realised in some.

Mother: Quite so.

I was seeing, I saw that in such a concrete way. Apart from those who are fit to prepare the transformation and the supramental realisation, and whose number is necessarily very restricted, there must develop more and more, in the midst of the ordinary human mass, a superior humanity which has towards the supramental being of the future or in the making the same attitude as animality, for example, has towards man. There must be, besides those who work for the transformation and who are ready for it, a superior humanity, intermediary, which has found in itself or in life that harmony with Life—that *human* harmony—and which has the same feeling of adoration, devotion, faithful consecration to “something” which seems to it so high that it does not even try to realise it, but worships it and feels the need of its influence, its protection, and the need to live under that influence, to have the delight of being under that protection. It was so clear. But not that anguish, those torments of wanting something that escapes you because—because it is not your destiny to have it, and because the amount of transformation needed is premature for your life and it is that then which creates a disorder and suffering.

For example, one of the very concrete things that brings out the problem well: humanity has the sexual impulse in a way altogether natural, spontaneous, and, I would say, legitimate. This impulse will naturally and spontaneously disappear with animality. Many other things will disappear, as for example the need to eat and perhaps also the need to sleep in the way we sleep now. But the most conscious impulse in a superior humanity, which has continued as a source of—bliss is a big word, but joy, delight—is certainly the sexual activity, and that will have absolutely no reason for existence in the function of Nature when the need to create in that way will no longer exist. Therefore, the capacity of entering into relation with the joy of life will rise by one step or will be oriented differently. But what the ancient spiritual aspirants had sought on principle—sexual negation—is an absurd thing, because that must be only for those who have gone beyond this stage and no longer have animality in them. And it must drop off naturally, without effort and without struggle. To make of it a centre of conflict and struggle is ridiculous. It is only when the consciousness ceases to be human that it drops off quite naturally. Here also there is a transition which may be somewhat difficult, because the beings of transition are always in an unstable equilibrium; but within oneself there is a kind of flame and a need which makes it not pain-

ful—it is not painful effort, it is something that one can do with a smile. But to seek to impose it upon those who are not ready for this transition is absurd.

It is common sense. They are human, but they must not pretend that they are not.

It is only when spontaneously the impulse becomes impossible for you, when you feel that it is something painful and contrary to your deeper need that it becomes easy; then, well, externally you cut those bonds and it is finished.

It is one of the most convincing examples.

It is the same with regard to food. It will be the same thing. When animality will drop off, the absolute necessity of food also will drop off. And there will probably be a transition where one will have less and less purely material food. For example, when you smell flowers it is nourishing. I have seen it, you nourish yourself in a more subtle way.

Only, the body is not ready. The body is not ready and it deteriorates, that is to say, it eats itself. That proves that the time has not come, that it is only an experience—an experience that teaches you something, teaches you that it will not be a brutal refusal to come into contact with the corresponding Matter and an isolation (one cannot isolate oneself, it is impossible), but a communion on a higher or deeper plane. [silence]

Those who have reached the higher regions of intelligence, but have not dominated the mental faculties in them, have an innocent need that everybody should think like them and be able to understand as they understand. And when they see that others do not, cannot understand, their first reflex is to be horribly shocked; they exclaim, "What an idiot!" But they are not at all idiots—they are different, they are in another domain. You do not go and say to an animal, "You are an idiot," you say, "It is an animal." Well, you say, "It is a man." It is a man; only, there are those who are no longer men and are not yet gods, and they are in a situation . . . rather awkward.

But it was so soothing, so sweet, so wonderful, that vision—each thing expressing its kind quite naturally.

And it is quite evident that with the amplitude and totality of the vision, there comes something which is a compassion that understands—not that pity of the superior for the inferior; the true divine Compassion, which is the total comprehension that each one is what he must be. [Mother's Collected Works, vol. 11 *Notes on the Way* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1980), pp. 22-29.]

INTERVIEW WITH SATPREM

[Following is a translation of an interview with Satprem published in the French magazine *Lui* in January 1980. The translation was provided by the Institute of Evolutionary Research in New York, the publisher of *Mother's Agenda*.]

Neither a guru nor a philosopher, but a man who reflects and who is trying to discover a "passage towards a new, superior state of man." A sage who wants to pierce through the secret of Matter . . . For Jacques Chancel [the interviewer on the famous *Radioscopie* program on French radio], Satprem is an "adventurer of the inner" . . . Surprising itinerary for this Breton from Paris who followed all the paths of the world before finally settling down in India, at the age of thirty. For at the time of his first visit he had been "fascinated" by Sri Aurobindo, great guide and thinker about whom he wrote several books, among them *Sri Aurobindo or The Adventure of Consciousness*. And by Mother, beside whom he lived for 19 years, recording her *Agenda* . . . This was the first time that Satprem had come to Paris in 20 years. Frederick de Towarnicki was able to meet him for *Lui*.

Lui: You left Europe when you were 21. You are French. You have been living in India for the last 19 years and today you are still pursuing your quest there for knowledge and wisdom. You were very close to the extraordinary spiritual guide, Sri Aurobindo, a great master of yoga, and Mother, who was at the head of the Pondicherry Ashram. How and where did your novel-like life begin?

Satprem: The beginning was a question. A question that I first asked myself in the Nazi concentration camps, when I was in a state of total nothingness: "What is man? What is life, Matter, death? What remains in a man when all has been wiped out? When nothing more exists?" My entire life has been an attempt to answer this.

As a child, I was already suffocating. Who was I? Who was this being that was me? I never could feel it, I never could get to what was really "me." It was always others that spoke, that "knew," that decided things for me. There was always a school, a father, a mother, knowledge, religion, professors. . . . There was always someone or something holding me back, a screen between reality and myself.

Lui: So then you have tried to answer your question?

Satprem: The first time, around 1950, I sought life at its source, by leaping backwards several million years: I returned to the Earth's past by living in the virgin forests of Guyana. There were moments when I felt this forest as it must have existed at the time of the great primates.

Water, wind, rain, the plants, the insects, the snakes, the trees, all mixed together in a kind of intense complicity. The nights were vibrant with a million sounds and secret movements. It was an unbelievably sumptuous madness! What was man in the midst of this extraordinary vibration? A minuscule point. He was no longer the center of everything! I also experienced moments of indescribable joy, and I discovered this inner harmony that links all things. It was already a new regard. At times my body grew light and no longer seemed to obey the laws of gravity. . . . But this return to the Earth's past—as I later understood—was not enough. One had to be still farther, deeper, towards man's future which is as yet only a rough draft.

Lui: Then you wandered all over India, didn't you?

Satprem: Yes, I was a kind of wandering monk. Doing that, I saw and understood many things. I practiced Tantrism, I became a sannyasi. But even there I received no convincing answers, and what did it matter here and there to meet some isolated yogis floating in the heights of the mind? Along the way I had seen too many men stricken by sickness and pain. . . .

Lui: So then you went on?

Satprem: Yes. I was interested in the Tantra, but I didn't want to get stuck in one experience. Not in a religion or a spiritual technique any more than in a virgin forest. Nor, as I once wrote, become a "bureaucraft of adventure." So again, I had to ask the question "Where is the man in all this? Has he flowered already? If not, what is he?" And only with Sri Aurobindo and Mother did I understand where and how I could answer this question I had asked myself in the concentration camps. . . .

Lui: You are a Breton. Is Satprem your pen name?

Satprem: Mother gave it to me. It means "he who truly loves."

Lui: Is what you discovered a sort of "third eye"?

Satprem: No, it is simpler than that, much more direct. It is what is left when we peel off this varnish that has been glued onto us, or else when we burst out of this bowl in which we are trapped, like a fish, and which distorts our vision. And really, what would you think of a fish who pretends to grasp the reality of the world looking out of his fishbowl? What is truly

adventurous in Mother and Sri Aurobindo is that they did not seek to conduct their experiment in some “up above” or in an established religion. They did not believe in the heaven of a would-be liberated yogi any more than in our hygienic heaven which is at present suffocating us. They wanted to experiment in their own earthly bodies, in the very midst of evolution. Without microscopes, without test tubes and telescopes and rockets, they were determined to explore Matter itself, and that is where they went! They thus discovered a new mental vibration. And the fact of discovering another state of consciousness deep within themselves, deep within their bodies, within their very cells, is bound to transform the world’s condition. Mother and Sri Aurobindo tried to open up for us a passage to another stage of evolution. For we are, I believe, on the eve of a great upheaval. ...

Lui: By that, do you mean a reversal of consciousness?

Satprem:

Lui:
place?

Satprem:

But in this world visibly governed by violence, desire for power or money, isn’t it an illusion to think we are living through a transitional stage that is leading man to a higher level?

precisely. We to doubt ourselves. The walls are beginning to crack. Everyone is feeling that our usual solutions are no longer effective. We are realizing just how broke we are. What we are witnessing is not the end of a civilization, but rather of a cycle in the paleontological or geological sense. There is something going on we don’t know about. Millions of men-bombarded, ripped apart by contradictory information-are asking new and painful questions: “What is the meaning of all this?”

what it should be, that what they have been taught has no relation to reality. They are reaching out, calling for

something. There is a change in perception, in their way of seeing; the hope for a new, more transparent perception of

can discover new dimensions. o n e day our children will live.

Lui: But what do you feel when you have such an experience, when you enter into real matter? Is the word “matter” really the right one?

Satprem: Matter as we know it is something quite different from what it really is. The most accurate word would be “energy.” Or even “consciousness-energy.” In India they speak of the “shakti.” ... It’s an incredible current! It is the very essence of what we call matter. When Mother began experiencing this cellular consciousness, she said that once you have traversed all the layers of evolution and come to matter as it really is, you perceive waves vibrating “at lightning speed within total immobility.” When that happens, “you” and “I” are no longer two different things but one tremendous current. ...

Lui: By living closely with the animals, did you discover the power that lies behind instinct?

Satprem: We humans talk of “instinct” when we speak of the species other than man. We say that what drives a bird from Siberia to his tropical lagoon is instinct. But it doesn’t work like that. In fact, the tropics and Siberia, and the entire map of the world, unfold ... within the bird. He does not fly above the environment and look at it from on high; rather, it is something that happens inside him. In this same way, each species goes towards its own work and its own goals, each is harmonious in its own way: the human species is not yet so. But as I said before, what Mother and Sri Aurobindo discovered was a tremendous level, this new, cellular consciousness within us, which is yet we hardly know.... I think that evolution is the discovery of what man is. Each progress of the species is a step towards the reality of what “is.”

Lui: You were the friend, the confidant of the Mother. Who was she?

Satprem: Mother came to India in 1914. She had a rather strange background. Her father was Turkish, her mother Egyptian, and they both lived at the court of the Khedive in Egypt. But one day, her mother refused to bow down before the Khedive, and she and her husband had to leave Egypt. So Mother was born in Paris in 1878, on the Boulevard Haussmann. She knew Renoir, Manet, Sisley, and Rodin quite well. ... She lived in Paris when Fauvism and cubism were born. What stories she told us! She was a wonderful storyteller! As an adolescent, she had rather bizarre experiences; she would feel herself going out of her body, spreading wide in space, but she did not understand what was going on within her. She was 20 when Einstein formulated his theories on the equivalence of matter and energy, and on relativity. Mother was like a cyclone and, basically, very Occidental: an extraordinary force in action. ...

Mother lived an experience that had nothing to do with intellect, sects, “spirituality”. ... She lived it right to the end, until her ninety-fifth year. She never stopped. Three days before her death, and right to her last breath, she said, “Help me to walk. I want to walk ...” Mother told us that Sri Aurobindo had come to accomplish a work that concerns the entire terrestrial evolution. ... With her I understood that I had to set out towards the “future of man.”

Lui: But how does this experiment express itself practically?

Satprem: First of all, let’s keep it simple: we must try to bring more consciousness, more transparency, into each movement of our lives. At each second I am preoccupied with being as fully “open” as possible, with more fully perceiving the surface falsehood and illusion. If that second is lived fully, all the rest automatically follows from it. Then things appear with a kind of self-evidence. And even suffering loses its reality. I don’t even know what sickness means any longer. What interests me is this pulsation or this respiration beating within me when I walk, when I live, when I contemplate nature ... or when I go in an elevator: a kind of immediate density, a sensation of harmony. The touchstone is the present second: how it is lived, the way one “is” in that second, seeking a new depth. I do not hide behind “explanatory systems.” for those who have made this experiment, it is very simple. ... And they come to realize that their bodies know more about it than they do.

One day, for example, I was walking along the eroded canyons near Auroville, I was attacked by three ruffians who, as

I later learned, had been paid to kill me. But strangely enough, when they came upon me, I had absolutely no reaction, neither of fear nor even reflection. I was in a kind of blank state. Only, when I raised my eyes and looked at the leader of these men, his arm fell back down and everything stopped. And calmly, I walked away, as if nothing had happened. And suddenly I understood that for the body, our physical body, actually "nothing" had happened.

Lui: How do you see India today? As a propitious ground for inner experiences? . . .

Satprem: There is an inner India that touches you deeply, and a kind of air that you can't find anywhere else. Of course, modern India absorbs many Western ideas as a result of its technical and industrial development. And yet—how can I explain this?—you can breathe there; there is a "soul" of India, something you can feel very physically. In most cases, the people are so simple, with such a depth of calm to them. What is striking is that even when they are "materially poor," they are seldom miserable, whereas in the West, even when they are "materially rich," their lives so often remain rather miserable.

Lui: Is the teaching of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother along the lines of those ancient Hindu sacred texts, the Vedas?

Satprem: Indeed, the Vedas are the great common line, centered upon the truth of Matter. Later, this line was completely lost, and it was taught that the world is an illusion (which in a sense is true) and that one had only to get out by soaring to the "spiritual" heights. But the priests, the Vedic rishis, knew that it was not the upward path or the path of ascension that had to be trod, but the path of descent . . . one had to go to the very heart of matter-energy, the place of the supramental vibrations. This secret has been totally lost, it has become unintelligible for those who read the Vedas today. But Sri Aurobindo said, "This is what I have lived, what I have discovered." And for everyone. For, once again, what is a "superman" all alone in his room? To us right here, what good are a few "liberated" yogis in the Himalayas? . . .

Lui: Satprem, do you believe in reincarnation yourself?

Satprem: What can we possibly understand of existence if we do not realize that this "moment" we call our life is the fruit of many other efforts, which explains, for example, why today we are more developed in one area than another, or why we experience certain difficulties that seem to push us towards some fated mistake? We have many lives behind us, it's obvious. . . .

In a sense, reincarnation is an evolutionary strategy that brings the species to a certain threshold from which it can advance to a higher dimension. From this point of view, it can be said that there is no need to construct the "superman"; we must let it develop by itself. . . .

Lui: But isn't Buddhism too a certain experience in matter? Can't Nirvana be considered as a "hole" in matter?

Satprem: At the time of the Buddha—500 years before Christ—mankind was not ready for what Sri Aurobindo and Mother have discovered, that the real work must be done in matter.

In Buddhism, the mind goes up into the higher regions of the fishbowl and enters a sort of vagueness in which everything evaporates, disappears. Perceiving nothing any longer, the mind experiences a kind of luminous swooning with a feeling of infinity, and it feels liberated, very much at ease. But you could as easily say that under the effect of an anesthetic on the operating table, you are liberated—for you no longer feel the pain, the suffering. And it's true. But in another sense it is an illusion, for the body wakes up and the patient comes back to the world of suffering, misery and sickness. When consciousness is thus "liberated," what does that change in the body, in matter, in evolution? Nothing at all. Why in the world have we taken a body if it is only to find a way out of it? Evolution has no mystical sense; there is nothing more material. . . .

Lui: In the West, we sometimes criticize certain Indian ashrams, as well as the rather mercantilistic reality of that experimental city, Auroville. . . .

Satprem: Mother and Sri Aurobindo have nothing at all to do with the composition of ashrams or of Auroville. You cannot prevent people (often of good will) from coming somewhere and forming groups. Including, sometimes, people too much in a hurry, too self-interested, or too zealous. . . . The Vatican, Mecca have known pilgrims and dealers in sacred objects of every type! . . . Some self-interested groups have tried to grab hold of Auroville to make a big business out of it. But that's only an appearance. The essential thing is that meaningful experiments are going on there. . . .

Lui: In one of your books you have mentioned "the death of death." What do you mean by that?

Satprem: Death is the key, the greatest obstacle and at the same time the greatest possibility. Mother crossed through all the layers of negation, the pettiness, the refusal, the doubts, all those "no's" that are piled up in us as so many "little deaths" that one day will make our "big death"! Mother said, "Man carries in him the key to open the doors and windows, but he

doesn't want to use it. He is afraid of losing his identity. . . . He wants to remain what he calls 'himself.' He loves his falsehood and his slavery. He feels that without his limits, and the suffering they represent, he would not exist. That is why the journey is so long and so difficult."

When one has crossed these final mortal layers, one opens out upon a cellular consciousness where death no longer exists. At this level, consciousness has transcended death. This does not mean that we will remain eternally in the same skin, for this consciousness has a transforming power that will change matter itself. . . .

Mother said, "Death is not the opposite of life." To be precise, there is no death. Rather, there is a certain phenomenon of life that must take a new direction in order to be able to live always, keep growing always. . . . What is really doesn't die at any level, not even that of the body.

Lui: And yet, Mother died. . . .

Satprem: It is true, she left, and the doctors declared her dead. But she had told me, "I see better with eyes closed than with eyes open. They will think I am dead because I will no longer be able to move or speak, but you who know, you will tell them." Indeed, what was it she did if not to prepare in the cells of her body the thousand eyes of our little cells which one day will undoubtedly awaken everywhere without our knowing how? For she directly perceived the supramental in her body. She realized that the physical world—and the physical body—as we know them—is a tremendous falsehood programmed by a limited mind which has conditioned our relationship with the world. Mother died in 1973, twenty-three years after Sri Aurobindo. They put her in a rosewood box beside him. All I know is that the cells of Mother's body are living because she fully experienced this consciousness that is free from death. . . .

Lui: In this world full of peril, is your message a message of hope?

Satprem: As long as we do not feel the walls, it's hopeless; as long as our civilizations think that we are going to perform miracles, it's hopeless. But now that the whole world is up against a wall, yes, it is full of hope—it's a sign that we are going to break it down. Then the supramental vibration will grow in our consciousness and in matter. "So incredibly rapid, yet motionless, warm as though made of love," said Sri Aurobindo. It is pouring forth from every pore of the earth's great body. It is what we are living through at this moment. . . .

What is there to say to a caterpillar? It must become the butterfly.