

Collaboration

Fall 2005

Journal of the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother

Vol. 30, no. 3



Inside the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Archives



About the cover

Shelves of documents cover the wall of a large ground floor room of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Archives. (Photo by Larry Seidlitz)

The authors and poets

Grace Aroha (gracearoha@hotmail.com) lives at Sri Aurobindo Sadhana Peetham in Lodi, California. She is working to improve communications among Sri Aurobindo centers.

Richard Carlson (rcarlson@olympus.net) is President/CEO of Pacific Weather Inc., and was the main organizer for AUM 2005.

Bhavana Dee (bhavana@auroville.org.in) directs the Village Action Project in Auroville, which assists villagers in the Auroville area develop their communities.

Joseph Kent (sunli8@msn.com) is a member of the Cultural Integration Fellowship in San Francisco and an author of two books of poetry.

Shyam Kumari, an Ashram member for 36 years, is an author, poet, editor, and managing director of a Sanskrit school in Pondicherry (shyamkumari@auromail.net).

Rick Lipschutz (rlipschutz@pedcard.ucsf.edu) is a medical transcriptionist in San Francisco, and a member of the Cultural Integration Fellowship.

Navaja Llope (navaja6@yahoo.com), a long-time devotee from the U.S., is a graphic artist who lives in Pondicherry, India.

Manas Pati (manasranjanpati@india.com) is a graduate student at the University of Hyderabad, India, and is a frequent visitor to the Ashram in Pondicherry.

Sraddhalu Ranade is a life-long member of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, and a gifted speaker on the Integral Yoga (sraddhalu@auromail.net).

Larry Seidlitz (larry_seidlitz@hotmail.com) facilitates online courses for Sri Aurobindo Darshan: The University of Tomorrow, Pondicherry, and is editor of Collaboration.

Table of contents

Collaboration, vol. 30, no. 3, Fall 2005

From the office of Collaboration

Notes on this issue	3
---------------------------	---

Current affairs

AUM 2005: Breaking through barriers at Fort Warden	Grace Aroha	4
--	-------------	---

AV almanac

Work on the Matrimandir progressing quickly	6
The ultimate relief: the gift of peace Bhavana Dee	7
A tapestry of the Divine Sraddhalu Ranade	8

Chronicles

Inside the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Archives	Archives Team	11
--	---------------	----

Essay

Technology and the titan (conclusion)	Richard Carlson	23
---	-----------------	----

Source material

The problem of human disunity	Sri Aurobindo	30
The collective and the individual in the supramental manifestation		
.....	The Mother	30

The poetry room

From Love and death	Sri Aurobindo	32
She truly loved	Shyam Kumari	32
A quarry lagoon	Joseph Kent	33
Before dawn, at the sea	Navaja Llope	34
September	Larry Seidlitz	34
Perch fishing	Rick Lipschutz	35
When I look at Her	Manas Pati	35
Trust the dream	Chandresh Patel	35

Apropos	36
---------------	----



From the office of Collaboration

In this issue, we feature a lengthy interview with six of the members of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Archives and Research Library. Three of the members are American, Bob Zwicker, Peter Heehs, and Richard Hartz; one is from The Netherlands and is well-known in the U.S., Matthijs Cornelissen; and the other two are Indian, Ranganath Raghavan and Raman Reddy. Despite their pressing work, they were very gracious in granting my request for the interview and opening their doors and minds to our readers. After some preliminary discussion on the idea for the interview and providing me with some background reading, we spent the latter part of a Friday afternoon in the Archives offices discussing the history and work of the Archives department. After my transcription of the tape-recording and first pass in editing it, several of the members carefully went through it and clarified and elaborated on some of the dialogue. The result is, I think, a very readable and interesting account of the history and work of the Archives.

The major project with which the Archives has been involved during the last eight years is the publication of the *Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo*, which is coming out a few volumes at a time and is still underway. This edition differs from the previous collection, The *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library* edition, in two main respects: it includes more material, and all the material is being carefully examined for accuracy using all available manuscripts, typescripts, and printed editions. It is a huge job, and one that is based on an enormous preliminary work of scrutinizing, organizing, and cataloging many thousands of documents. In the interview, we discussed this new edition at length—the work involved, how it is progressing, and some of the new material that it contains. We also discussed the historical development of the Archives, the preservation of manuscripts, and other important projects that are underway or are planned for the future.

We also feature the second and concluding part of Richard Carlson's essay, "Technology and the titan." In the first part, Richard introduced us to the idea of technology as a "medium that allows us to flawlessly interface with phenomena that otherwise would remain physically or psychologically distant." We were shown an array of new technologies from the frontiers of science that pose fascinating possibilities for good and evil. At its best, the medium of technology becomes virtually invisible, an extension of human consciousness. But this invisibility has its dangers, in that technology can and has been usurped by forces intent on power and profit. In the second part, Rich examines more closely the relationship between technology and these forces aimed at power and profit, and the future possibilities resulting from the misuse of technology. We are also shown, in contrast, the future possibility for mankind presented by Sri Aurobindo, and the assistance that technology may provide in its realization.

In addition to these feature articles we have a report on the AUM 2005 conference by Grace Aroha, and three essays pertaining to Auroville. The first of these later three essays gives an update on the work of the Matrimandir. The second, by Bhavana, relates an interesting and heart-warming account of one result of the relief efforts being made in Auroville following the devastating tsunami. The third article is an inspiring opening address made by Sraddhalu Ranade, a respected member of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, to the Auroville International Conference that was held earlier this year. In it, he helps us to see the significance of Auroville, its deeper nature and intent, and its connection with the divine work in the world outside.

As usual, we also present source material from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, a good selection of poetry, thought-provoking apropos quotations, many photographs, and in this issue, a digital art piece by Margaret Phanes.

The artists and photographers

Lynda Lester (lyndalester@earthlink.net) is a gifted speaker on the Integral Yoga and is former editor of *Collaboration*.

Nilauro Markus (photography@nilauro.com) is the former coordinator for Auroville International-USA and an avid photographer.

Margaret Astrid Phanes (phanes@ieee.org) teaches digital media at Maui Community College and uses her art as a focus for meditation.

Larry Seidlitz (larry_seidlitz@hotmail.com) is editor for *Collaboration*.

www.sxc.hu provided stock photographs.

Collaboration (ISSN 0164-1522) is published by the Sri Aurobindo Association (SAA), a California nonprofit religious corporation, P.O. Box 163237, Sacramento, CA 95816 USA; e-mail: saa@collaboration.org; phone: 209-339-3710, ext. 6; fax: 916-451-9039. Copyright © 2005.

Photos of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, passages from their works, and excerpts from the books published by the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust are © Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust unless otherwise noted, and are used here with the kind permission of the Ashram. The opinions expressed in *Collaboration* are not necessarily those of the editors or the SAA.

Staff for this issue: Larry Seidlitz, editor and layout; Kim Agrawal, proofreader.

Subscriptions: A one-year subscription (three issues) to *Collaboration* is \$20 (\$32 for airmail outside the USA; in India only, Rs. 150 to Larry Seidlitz, 39 Vanniar St., Vaithikuppam, Pondicherry 605012). A patron subscription is \$40 or more for three issues; a sponsorship subscription for residents of India is \$4.

Submissions: *Collaboration* welcomes writing, photos, and artwork relevant to the Integral Yoga and spirituality. Submit material by email to: editor@collaboration.org; by fax at 209-339-3715; or by post to *Collaboration*, P.O. Box 163237, Sacramento, CA 95816 USA. *Collaboration* cannot be held responsible for loss or damage of unsolicited material. Letters to the editor may be published unless you indicate otherwise. Letters and articles may be edited for style and space considerations.

About SAA: The Sri Aurobindo Association distributes information about Sri Aurobindo, the Mother, and Auroville and supports various projects related to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Auroville, and Integral Yoga activities in America. Current officers: Theresa Boschert, coordinator; Kalpana Patel, treasurer; Chandresh Patel, secretary.

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



Current Affairs

AUM 2005: Breaking through barriers at Fort Worden

By Grace Aroha

The All USA Meeting (AUM) is a collective gathering of devotees from the U.S. and abroad. It occurs in a different city each year, hosted by the local Sri Aurobindo center or study group in that locality. This year's conference was hosted by Rich Carlson and his delightful wife, Nishi, in Port Townsend, Washington, about a two-hour drive northwest of Seattle.

This was my first AUM, so I don't have a previous point of reference for comparison. However, my first impression was that the entire conference seemed to be carefully synchronized by Mother and one might wonder, upon looking back at the event, if it was necessary to carefully plan and schedule all the activities at all. In fact, the preset schedules magically reformulated themselves to meet the mood of the moment, the lines between the seasoned speakers and the attendees blurred, and new presentations and workshops were re-created on cue.

My experience of the event began at the Seattle airport. I arrived expecting to find a car or perhaps a small mini-van waiting to carry me and a handful of people up to Port Townsend. Instead, I was greeted by a crowd of about thirty fellow "Aurobindo family members" patiently waiting as each flight arrived and added one or more members to the troop of devotees queuing up to board the luxury chartered bus arranged by Rich Carlson.

Many of the attendees and speakers were well acquainted; others, like me, were not. Nonetheless the whole clan seemed to merge together like instant family—a phenomena that was reinforced by the cheery bus driver who repeatedly referred to us as the "Carlson family reunion" group as she graciously whisked us up the scenic winding path to our final destination.

As to be expected with the any carefully scheduled event, we arrived at the Fort Worden State Park Conference Center to find organizers and helpers frantically scurrying about as the busload of "family members" exited the bus and searched for direction. This temporary period of adjustment worked in our favour by allowing each member of the "family" to bond with others, and small groups to disperse in various directions to map out the area and create what would become our "nest" for the next few days.

Our nesting ground, Fort Worden State Park, is a 433-acre multi-use park with 11,020 feet of saltwater shoreline and a wide variety of services and facilities. The park rests on a high bluff overlooking Puget Sound. Many historic buildings remain at this



Some of the Mother's soldiers at AUM 2005. (Photo by Lynda Lester)

19th century military fort. I found it interesting that even the historical physical environment upon which our group had chosen to converge graciously lent itself to the orchestrated formation that we were to create over the days that followed.

Our dormitory-style sleeping accommodations were housed in what used to be a military barracks—a cozy foundation for the "Aurobindo troops" to rest, meditate and recharge before each day's busy schedule.

Our wake-up call each morning, as opposed to the militant blare of a brass bugle, came in the form of the beautiful, melodious sound of inspired traditional Indian music graciously offered by Devi Karunamayee from the New Delhi Ashram. Her divine gift nourished our souls in preparation for the day's activities.

The 100-year old Victorian building that became our main gathering abode contrasted nicely with the newly built dining hall and conference room facilities between which we alternated throughout each day. This daily alteration reflected the transition that occurred in our discussions between the historical evolution of man and the evolutionary process that we face today as we move toward the future.

This year's conference was entitled "Science & Spirituality: A community dialog on emerging culture." According to the program, the purpose of its theme, "The Promise of the Future," was to "explore the promise of the future envisaged by Sri Aurobindo and the evolution of consciousness as it manifests in culture, science and our daily lives." Wow. But how were we to take hold of and conquer such an overpowering topic in only three days?

Fort Worden, along with the heavy batteries of Fort Flagler and Fort Casey, once guarded a nautical entrance to Puget Sound. These posts, established in the 1890s, became the first line of a fortification designed to prevent a hostile fleet from reaching such targets as the Bremerton Naval Yard and the cities of Seattle, Tacoma and Everett. Similarly, the "Aurobindo troops" battled away within the safety of the conference room, putting



heads and hearts together to discuss, debate and aspire toward understanding, solutions and collaboration around the complex topics put before us.

Fortunately, we had been well-armed with a winning line-up of sincere devotees cum speakers well-equipped to unload their knowledge, experience and aspiration with the troops. Presenters and panellists from the more well-known “Sri Aurobindo family” included: Debashish Banerji, Aster Patel, Alok Pandey, Matthijs Cornelissen, Lynda Lester, Rod Hemsell, Neeltje Huppel, David Hutchinson, Ameeta Mehra, Michael Miovic, Savitra (Alan Lithman) and Lakshman Sehgal. In addition, we welcomed special guests Allan Combs, author of *The Radiance of Being*, and Joe Subbiondo, President of the California Institute of Integral Studies.

The conference theme was strategically divided into sub-topics that were presented by speakers and panel groups. The line-up included: The promise of the future: Sri Aurobindo’s epistemology and cognitive science, Integral Yoga and the ecology of speed, Future community, The psychic being and the evolving body, The body in its search for the future, Structures of the brain and evolution of the psychic being, Integral Yoga and the future paradigm of science, Integral education, and Science—the new paradigm: mind to supermind.

The emphasis of the conference format was on café-style conversations of small groups and panel discussions. Unlike a typical military unit, this allowed the “commanders and chiefs” to merge with the “soldiers” and all became one smooth functioning machine. In tune with our historical setting, we militarily divided ourselves into smaller units by sounding off a number from one to ten and obediently rendezvousing with our assigned group. I share with you Richard’s view of this less traditional conference format. “What I believe the small groups did besides breaking up the natural tendency to form cliques with people you already know was to distribute the responsibility for providing insights to the whole community who were present. Everyone’s thoughts, ideas and feelings were given honor and value. I believe that the break-out into randomly organized groups both adds to more intimate relationships of the community and, in an integrative manner, honors everyone’s experience of doing the integral yoga.”

The knowledge-sharing, ideas and inspirations that came out of this could fill a book (or several books). I share with you here only a few of the ideas and questions that my logical brain will allow me to coherently discharge two weeks after the event.

- We are now in the “Common Era” where the world of God is all around us and there is no longer a need to become a priest to experience God.

- We reside in an intelligent universe with a new spirituality which is also a new materiality. Is there another future that co-exists with this?

- What is the future? The future is not the present extending itself. We are not the creators of the future, we are beings created in the image of the future.

- The future is always present and the past is always present.
- We are what we know and we know what we are.
- The psychic being is the divine kernel in us. It is here where the transformation will take place. The supermind cannot be based in the sense mind. The sense mind is made up of reflections. Knowledge of reality comes from within.

- How does the exponential advance of scientific/technological evolution complement or contrast with integral yoga for the future evolution of the species?

- We are the ones we are waiting for. We need to survive long enough to transform.

- What is it that matter is telling us?

- The secret of harmony is union in the Mother. Organize collective life around Her (not the concept of her).

- Remember the Mother in every activity, consecrating each act to the Mother with a will to surrender.

- Science separated from spirituality is a very dangerous thing. The will to power and omniscience drives science.

To further insure that all aspects of our being received training towards the divine transformation to come, we were also supplied with a creative array of mini-workshops to choose from: creative dance, art and meditation, devotional vocal music, hatha yoga, integral education, exploration of the planes and parts of the being, and *Savitri* for the post-modern consciousness.

All this in three days! Perhaps we had overcome the “ecology of speed,” or perhaps we had reached the point of no return. Certainly, like the massive fortifications that had once dominated the landscape of Fort Worden, we had managed to further break through the barriers to human unity and conscious evolution.

Until next year, I leave you with a battle cry from the words of Sri Aurobindo written in *Bande Mataram*, “The little that is done seems nothing when we look forward and see how much we have yet to do.”



Going over battle plans at Fort Worden. (Photo by Lynda Lester)



AV almanac

Work on the Matrimandir progressing quickly

This article is reprinted with permission from the June 2005 Matrimandir Newsletter

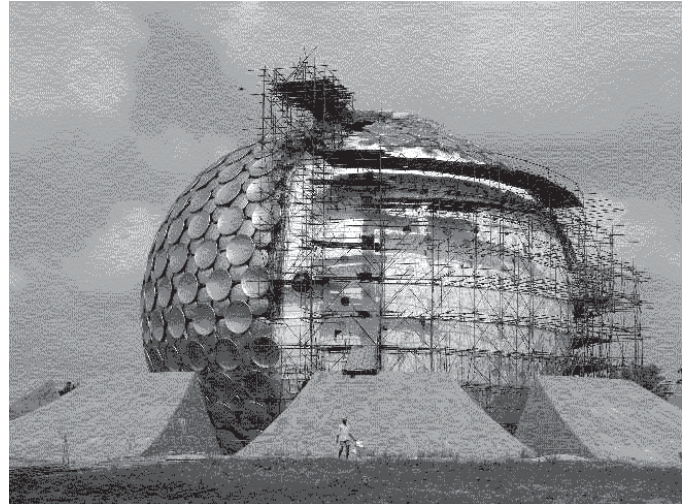
The Matrimandir is pushing ahead towards completion with an increasingly remarkable and visible speed. In the month of May, when the temperatures climb to 40 degrees Celsius, and the human beings on the scene tend to drip with sweat and droop in the blazing sun, it's as if the Matrimandir itself had decided to counterbalance this season's natural slowdown by moving things ahead at an even faster pace.

Take, for example, the scene that is visible any morning from a vantage point 100 meters from the main sphere on the North axis: some 70 people, divided into three teams, can be seen busy at work up on the structure. They start work at 6 a.m. to beat the heat of the day. One team, on the left, is putting the discs back up on the outer skin, for on that quadrant the new waterproofing layer has been applied from top to bottom. Row by horizontal row, the shining golden discs are being remounted on their stainless steel legs.

To their right, two other teams are at work: the one lower down is applying the fresh waterproofing coat to the outer skin, while a third team is busy, some ten meters higher, building the scaffolding and preparing platforms for the team that will remove the discs.

As if one group were chasing the other, each team works quickly to stay ahead of the one behind it, for nobody wants their team to be accused of holding up the work! These acrobatics on the Matrimandir are well coordinated now that we have the hang of it, and the progress of the work is very visible.

Coming back to our position on the North axis, and listening, one can hear the steady rumble of a large diesel-fuelled air compressor which sits on the West axis, just beyond the large petals surrounding the Matrimandir. It is supplying air to the sand-blasting gun of a fourth team which is at work early today. This team is busy inside the Matrimandir, removing the paint from a section of one of the two spiral ramps that lead from the second level up to the Inner Chamber. Sandblasting is the first step in the process of repainting the ramps. The project creates a huge amount of dust inside the building, despite the elaborate plastic-and-gunny bag enclosures that have been set up around the work area to contain it. It is urgent that this work is done now because it has to be completed before finishing the work on the inner skin. In any case, it is clear now that the work on the Inner Chamber will not be completed before September, and even if it were ready sooner, the access



The golden discs have been removed to enable waterproofing underneath. (Photo courtesy The Matrimandir Newsletter)

via the ramp would not be possible until both ramps have been sandblasted. This and the subsequent repainting of both ramps may take about four months . . . and only then will we be able to move on to the works which require a dust-free environment for their execution.

The Inner Chamber is sealed off from this dust storm and has its own temporary A/C machine to cool and dry the air inside while the work on the ceiling and the installation of the new A/C ducts is going on. The Chamber's center has been filled by the aluminum scaffolding, built up over the well-shielded crystal globe to reach the top of the ceiling where the modification work is proceeding smoothly.

On 3 May the original cone at the apex of the ceiling through which the sun's ray has descended up to now was opened and the large lens used for focusing the ray was removed. The cone has now been rebuilt in a new form to accommodate several changes in the ceiling design. The new central opening will house not only the ray-focusing lens, but will also accommodate the artificial light to be used when there is no sun, as well as allowing the cooled A/C air to pass through space into the Chamber below. This job is quite complex and will take a few more months to complete.

Returning to our station on the North axis outside the Matrimandir, we cannot help but notice the other activity which is going on at this early morning hour: the constant back and forth movement of tipper lorries (dump trucks) passing just behind us on the Oval road that encircles the gardens area. The trucks are busy on the eastern edge of the Oval carrying loads of soil that a powerful excavator is carving out of the earth on a section of the Oval road.

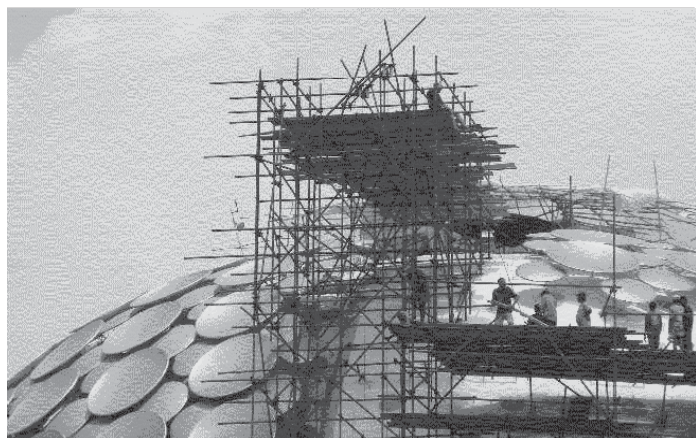
Until recently this area was occupied by the old workshops and offices of Matrimandir. Over the last one year all these structures have been moved outside of the Oval, allowing the present operation to get underway. The excavator has been in action for



Amidst work on the apex, the stateliness of the inner chamber remains unperturbed. (Photo courtesy The Matrimandir Newsletter)

three weeks to bring the ground down to the “zero” level, the average horizontal level given for the whole ring road. On the western end of the gardens, where the old Workers Camp used to be, the level of the ground is below this zero level, so the lorries are busy carrying the excavated earth to that area, to bring it up to the desired level. It is a huge work, one that would have taken hundreds of men months to do by hand, as it was done 34 years ago when the crater for Matrimandir’s foundation was excavated.

With this step completed, the gardens area will have been brought roughly into the shape required by the original design. Though there is still a lot of fine tuning of the levels to be done in this freshly excavated section, the bulk of the work is over. And the stage is thus set for the next phase: the laying down of the garden infrastructure, the water and power lines that will feed the irrigation and lighting systems of the future gardens. The creation of this infrastructure is a big job which will be tackled in the coming months, while continuing the many other works now underway to complete the structure by the end of next year.



High up on the scaffolding: Matrimandir “acrobats” at work. (Photo courtesy The Matrimandir Newsletter)

The ultimate relief: the gift of peace

by Bhavana Dee

The two fishing villages of Thanthirayankuppam and Nadukuppam are located next to each other on the coast. They have been feuding for years—the young people refuse to speak to anyone from the other village, just like their elders.

After the tsunami of last December, all the fishermen up and down the coast decided they would not go fishing until the government paid the compensation – they didn’t want them to say it was all fine now, and back to normal, and delay forever their receiving all the money which they know has been collected in their favour. That gave those of us in the rehabilitation scene quite a challenge: it has not been possible to just go ahead with getting everyone back on their feet, to get over the trauma by getting on with life as usual, to work off the shock with lots of hard work. Faced with so many healthy young men in enforced idleness, we took up their request to organise a cricket tournament between all the cricket clubs of the 23 “kuppams” (fishing villages) which Auroville is working with. The elders promised that they would maintain law and order.

Alas, when it looked like Thanthirayankuppam would win against Nadukuppam (the home team) the youth and even the grown-ups couldn’t control their emotions, and a brawl broke out. The game had to be called off, the tournament was stopped, and the elders felt embarrassed and disgraced. Thanthirayankuppam leaders even drew up plans and an estimate to build a big wall between the two communities.

But it didn’t end there. When Moris, the Coordinator of Village Action, went to discuss this with the elders, it came out that they had been feuding for years and wanted to take the opportunity of Auroville’s presence to settle it. Several preliminary meetings had to be held, and several postponements occurred, but eventually the elders of both villages, together with the respected elders of the other villages as well, met. They brought up stories from 10 years ago, they screamed and shouted. Moris was afraid the Kuilapalayam villagers, in whose Cultural Centre the meeting was being held, might come and protest, adding to the fire, but they didn’t. And finally, they agreed to bury the hatchet, give up their old resentments, and carry on freshly. It was wonderful to see the handshake between the two leaders, the sense of relief as if a great burden were being removed from their shoulders, and to see immediately the young men slapping each other on the back and talking animatedly together.

A few days later, the headman of Chinnamudliarchavadi Kuppam told Moris, “This is by far the most valuable thing you have given us, it is worth more than all the food and boats and houses.” We think so too, and feel that the mutual recognition of this is a tiny step toward human unity, which is our Aurovilian goal.



A tapestry of the Divine

by Sraddhalu Ranade

This talk was given by Sraddhalu on the occasion of the opening session of the Auroville International meeting in Auroville, on 14 January 2005.

Two years ago at the beginning of the new year I was in the Tibetan Pavilion to attend the “thousand lights” ceremony. It wasn’t the first time I had come to Auroville, but somehow, the moment seemed special. There was a feeling of something achieved, something alive. We were together, but somehow the individual faces didn’t matter. In the general outline of the silhouettes, one saw that each person there presented a state of consciousness linked to millions all over the world. In that gathering, I felt that all these different beings of different countries, nationalities, cultures, types and threads of human consciousness had been drawn together by some divine presence, and were tied up, bound together. I had the distinct sense that something had been accomplished, that for the future of the world, unity is safe, is really accomplished here. The rest is a question of “unfoldment” in a certain sense. This is the purpose for which Auroville has been established: to manifest a practical, working human unity well before its time, something that for the rest of the world is still impossible.

All these elements which have been gathered here, which are present here through each of us, form part of a thread that has existed for thousands or even millions of years. Nature has struggled for ages to develop specialised lines of consciousness so that these lines could split into further specialisations. Sometimes they have merged to then split again. Sri Aurobindo refers to this constant principle of Nature that she takes a single trait and opens from it many lines of specialised development. When each line has been fulfilled to its extreme, lines which may

even appear to be opposite, she brings them all back together to unite them in a richer, wider, larger harmony. In the present phase of human evolution all these lines are being brought together. But precisely because these lines often have specializing, contradictory directions, the struggle to find the harmony is greater.

There is a certainty of a success because nature has drawn each line from an originating truth. But to tie them all together and harmonize and unite them, Nature has to struggle. It is as if Nature is weaving together a tapestry with all these lines, and in that tapestry an image is to form, an image of the Divine. But that image is not a static image. That particularly unfolding pattern will be one of divine delight and freedom in which all these threads will not be statically bound as in a carpet, but will continuously flow through each other, uniting, merging, playing, twisting, and uncurling in a movement of constant, growing delight.

If this is the future towards which humanity is growing, nature has still one great challenge to surmount. Although the entire tapestry is woven around the globe, through some way she must bring these threads together and bind them. Perhaps she concentrates on one small patch of the carpet. It is a little like what we do in a chemistry experiment in which in a liquid where sugar is dissolved, one plants one grain of sugar, around which all the mixed molecules coalesce to trigger off a reaction that leads to the granulation of all the sugar dissolved in that water. It is as if the divine sweetness, now fragmented in chaotic lines dispersed all around the world, needs one tiny grain as a catalyst, which will spark off so many such crystals of the divine sweetness. That grain is Auroville.

The ideal of Auroville, the Reality that it manifests, has been in existence ever since the universe was born. It has waited through many billions of years. Every time that it seemed as if the ideal might lose its hold on the possibility of manifesting itself, the Divine has precipitated it upon earth—even when circumstances were not ready, simply to keep that ideal alive. You

may know of the Mother’s reference to an attempt in Egypt, which was ahead of its time, but which was necessary to keep the ideal alive. People were drawn to that ideal, and became aligned to it. They had come together for that purpose and had to pass through the pain of its failure.

The Mother observed once that everyone who has come here, be it the Ashram or Auroville, has been brought here because they were promised, long ago, that when the time came for the fulfilment of the ideal they would be given a chance. All of us have been brought here. We do not remember it, but something deep in our hearts knows. When we ask ourselves why we came to Auroville, we probably will find no rational reason, or perhaps a chance event, but the event was only a trigger to bring forward something which knew. And even now it is that thing that knows, that keeps us here, that makes us struggle against the odds. It is that promise that the Divine has kept with us. The time has come for that fulfilment. The whole of evolution has waited for this moment. The human age is about to dawn. And here in Auroville a nucleus, a seed, has been established.

Why here? Long ago, long before even the idea of Auroville had touched the human mind, when the Mother used to drive on what is now the East Coast road, she has on several occasions stopped and stared in this direction. When one of her attendants asked what it was that she was seeing, she said “One day a huge city will be established here.” At the time it was considered a strange idea because this was desert land, nothing was growing. Why here? She *saw* it, she didn’t choose it, she *saw* it. Because the divine will had already chosen this space and prepared it for centuries.

Recall the Mother’s observation that all the world’s problems have been brought to India because it is in this laboratory, where a spiritual culture already exists, that a resolution to the problems of humanity has to be found. But if those problems of human nature have been brought to India, there is a still greater



problem, on a more external level, which is the problem of various cultures and nationalities. This is more complex than just the human type. How shall we bring together so many distinct and even opposite cultures in a way that a larger harmony can be established—a dynamic unfolding harmony—without letting one culture swallow another, enabling the distinctiveness of each culture to co-exist and enrich each other, without dilution? So within India a special space had to be chosen: that is Auroville.

But why then? Why not earlier, why not later? Again we find that there was a great preparation before Auroville could be established. The Sri Aurobindo Ashram was established first. In that concentrated atmosphere a space was created in the consciousness where the supramental consciousness could descend and commit to physical matter. Once the link to the supermind was established in that concentrated space and the supramental manifested on earth, only then it was possible to work on Auroville. It still took the Mother a decade before that possibility could be organised in external circumstances. The right people had to be found to build the city of the new age, the catalyst, the seed of the sweetness of the future. And the location had to be found, which had been prepared over thousands of years.

The new age is not to be built from existing forms; it has to be built from scratch, from its very foundation up. Only barren land would do. You have to begin by planting trees, by changing the climate, by bringing the water. With not a single rupee, you have to gather all from scratch. What will you create, where will people live, what kinds of houses? Nothing of the old is to be working, every step is new on earth, newly perceived, newly created. The first school that was established here Mother named “Last School”—the end of a mind-set, the beginning of a new line of development.

Then the time came for Matrimandir to be made. You will recall, someone cycling through had a vision of the Matrimandir and reiterated it to the Mother. Thus far



“The new age is not to be built from existing forms; it has to be built from scratch, from its very foundation up. Only barren land would do. You have to begin by planting trees, by changing the climate, by bringing the water.” (Photo by Nilaurio Markus)

she did not know, but the fact that it was received by a human being was an indication that the time had come for its foundation. That thing waiting had managed to touch the mind of a human being. And the work began soon thereafter.

Each individual here represents a focal point of humanity’s aspiration. And therefore, every problem one sees here is also a problem that humanity has to resolve after it has been resolved here. So even if you come with the best of intentions, with the clearest of consciousness, the fact that we come for this purpose makes us a representative of humanity. Problems *will* manifest around us, whether we like it or not, because that is precisely the role Auroville has to play. The problems in Auroville seem to be ever exaggerated because they must be solved in the most intense conditions. It doesn’t help when the problem is solved when it is not intense. If you look from this perspective at the problems in Auroville you may wonder, “Is it worth living in a space where all problems are going to be in the most ex-

treme?” But that’s the fulfilment, the challenge, the adventure that our souls have chosen. And those very extreme problems can be resolved here because the base of this entire project is the spiritual consciousness; it is the supramental consciousness of unity.

Yet, in our first efforts, as human beings, we have to pass through a few layers in between. So we will try to solve our problems by rules and regulations, by compulsion, by imposition, by conflict, discussion, strategy, and we will have to exhaust those possibilities. We have to come to a point where we feel “I just can’t solve it,” and that’s where one will turn to something else, to someone else to solve it. As long as I think that I can do it, it doesn’t work. When I give up and ask for help, then I find that, miraculously, the situation will be solved; it will change and recast itself. Immediately after that happens, I fall back into my old ways and illusions, I start believing in myself again. But after this kind of thing repeatedly occurs, I learn to attune myself to this inner way and



when enough of us can be conscious of this attunement, then within Auroville the crystallisation of truth in concrete physical form will take root.

I find new possibilities constantly emerging in the struggle for the new consciousness to gain its grip on matter. It is happening here. In the light of Auroville's ideals, new homes have to be created. How do we relate to each other? How do we greet each other? How do we relate to Nature? How do we organise the layout of the township? New forms have to be found. It is a continual adventure where the Divine does not give you a preset form. It is not as if the Divine has a concrete plan, a master plan which we just have to look at and copy its features. The truth which is manifesting in space and time casts itself into form, and its form changes constantly until it comes to the point where it can settle. In the first shock of that contact there is a resistance from matter and the truth has to change its form, mould itself to the needs and capacity of matter to receive it. If we are conscious instruments and help it to manifest, it can mould itself more easily. If there is resistance, it needs to draw back and come back with a modified form. So there is no form that is pre-set. Our task is to discover the new forms and the seed to unfoldment. A form that was created and tried out ten years ago and partly succeeded is not necessarily the same form that is needed now.

"Auroville is a field", as Sonia Dyne said earlier. It is a field in which the concentration of that consciousness has been projected upon earth. The fact that we live here, the fact that we struggle here, have results; our efforts automatically "ripple out" and affect humanity.

A very interesting experiment that is going on is called the "global consciousness project," in which computers around the world are connected to a single computer at Princeton. Each of those computers measures the vibration of a single pattern, the vibration of the atom, and all those random pulses are brought together in alliance. Each time the vibrations of those atoms harmonise, a graph rises, each

time a separation occurs, the graph falls. And it is astonishing to see that whenever there is a global event in which the mind of humanity connects to a single idea the graph rises. In the world of football, just when someone is about the kick the goal, and the attention of a million people are on a single idea, the graph rises. Or in the world of the Oscars, when the speaker announces, "and the winner is . . ." and pauses a moment, the graph rises. The graph moves. It was at its highest just after September 11th. That day gave a shock to the world, and for a few days it stayed high when the world connected, united in its revulsion to terrorism. Perhaps after the recent tsunami something like that will happen, it will be interesting to see.

What is important about this rising of the graph is that it represents the harmonisation of the vibrations of the atoms of the universe. It means actually that every atom on earth is somehow vibrating in harmony, that the mind of humanity is united in a single idea. Matter itself is morphous to our thoughts, to our collective aspiration. In Auroville, in this special field, that response of matter is in itself more conscious. When we unite our aspirations for the success of this ideal, even matter responds. Every atom here throbs, shares in that aspiration, and the effect of that radiates out into the world.

Mother spoke of Auroville as one of her steps to manifest the future. This project, the small nucleus that already has been established, is a new beginning. Auroville is a consciousness, is a revolution. Those of you who live elsewhere in the world but are part of this consciousness are also living in Auroville. What you do, the way you live, the way you think, have their effects on the world as if you were here. They have their effects on situations here, because you are part of the consciousness, and for this consciousness distance does not matter.

It is this larger identity of Auroville that I want to emphasize, because those of you who have gone out from here also have an effect on the world. Your constant contact with your inner beliefs in life cre-

ates the kind of communication, communion, by which this consciousness spreads out to other hearts, other minds. You may not speak it in so many words, you may not give out literature, "Here, this is Auroville, read about it." But what you are somehow sprinkles into their hearts and minds like a possibility for them, a newness.

During these last few years one can see the ideal of human unity concretely taking form on a vast level in the mind of humanity. The worldwide response to the tsunami relief is an example of that. Many people simply took the first plane to come and see how they could help. There is no comparison with that; this never has before happened in human history. We are at a transition period in human history. The Divine has promised us the chance to be part of the fulfilment of this ideal. Let us keep this big picture in mind when over the next few days we discuss plans, problems, initiatives, strategies. It is not what we plan, what solutions we strategize that will matter. That is not Auroville. It is the consciousness with which we approach the problem, the consciousness with which we stick to the solution. That is Auroville.

We are bound together; it is such a thread, this one consciousness. If there's anything that creates human aspirations, it is this thread around the world, this boundless communion of consciousness worldwide. It does not matter if you are not physically represented here in physical space. One does not need to think of it as a ritual, and yet, that concretisation of the physical space ensures the connection of the spiritual truth in matter. Every person here serves the same purpose—connecting that ideal with one more link to matter. With each passing event of such focal points linked to matter, the ideal of Auroville establishes itself more strongly on earth. The future comes nearer.

Let us sit for a few minutes, consciously aspiring, collectively, that during the discussions of the coming days the ideal may inspire us with the forms that it seeks.



Chronicles

Inside the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Archives

Editor Larry Seidlitz interviews Peter Heehs, Bob Zwicker, Richard Hartz, Matthijs Cornelissen, Ranganath Raghavan, and Raman Reddy of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Archives and Research Library, Pondicherry. The interview took place on a hot afternoon in June 2005 around the table shown at right in the central room at the Archives office.

The start of the Archives

Collaboration: When did the Archives start?

Peter: We don't have a founding date, but it probably started in 1973. From 1971, I and later Shipra and others were working under Jayantilal, and that seamlessly evolved into the Archives. But there was no Archives when we joined.

Raman: Kiran and Kamal came in 1972.

Peter: Right, and then Ashwin came the next year, I think. Jayantilal was looking for people. He had the idea, and he needed people. He had a good organizing mind.

Collaboration: I am interested in how it developed out of the previous work for the *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library (SABCL)*.

Peter: We were here and doing that, working on the *SABCL*, and that work had not yet finished. There was an office in existence.

Collaboration: But that work must have taken a long time?

Peter: The printing of the *SABCL* took three years, from 1970 to 1972, an extraordinary thing, if you think about it. The whole Ashram press was doing nothing but that at the time, and everyone was proofreading and all. There wasn't much editorial work for the *SABCL* because they



All in white. Seated: Matthijs, Peter, Richard. Standing: Bob, Ranganath, Raman. (Photo by Larry Seidlitz)

were just reprinting things that had already appeared. In a few cases they had to put volumes together. For example, *The Harmony of Virtue* had to be put together. But the texts were taken straight out of wherever they had appeared before.

Ranganath: There was no reference to the manuscripts at that stage.

Peter: There were no manuscripts available, most of them were kept by Nolini-da. Actually, the idea of just an archives was what Jayantilal started off with; it was to preserve the manuscripts physically and also photographically. What happened was that Kiran and Kamal were supposed to do microfilming of Sri Aurobindo's documents, and there was nothing to microfilm at first. Kiran and Kamal went up to Delhi to learn about microfilming. Then we went to Nolini for the manuscripts, but he wasn't so willing to give them. It was Ashwin Barai who said, "We need the stuff, we need the stuff." Then finally Nolini just started sending boxes full of manuscripts. The idea was that we would prepare them for microfilming. This was probably in 1973.

Then they would come to me, because we had to find out what was there and what was not, and some sort of numbering and labeling had to be done. Then we found things that hadn't been published. So things began to evolve.

In a sense, the Archives editorial work began with volume 27 of the *SABCL*, the *Supplement*. A few manuscripts had begun to come, and people were tearing their hair out. The Motilal letters had already been published in an *SABCL* volume, and then we got the original letters, which were about 100 pages. That had to go in the *Supplement* because some of the material had not been published. The other work of receiving manuscripts for preservation purposes was going on around the same time, and we realized that there were more things that needed to be published.

Finally, Jayantilal said we would have a continued supplement, and that was the birth of the journal, *Sri Aurobindo: Archives and Research*. That is why *Archives and Research* has the same physical format as the *SABCL*. Because printing technology was not very ad-



vanced then, the idea was that we would just photographically reproduce the pages in *Archives and Research* and use them when the time came for later editions of books. So that project for the *Supplement* evolved into the *Archives and Research*, which subsequently evolved into the *Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo* which currently is being published. So there is a continuity there.

Bob: Regarding the founding of the Archives, there is a document we have, dated 25 October 1971, in which Jayantilal wrote to the Mother:

“I have long thought of writing to you that it has become necessary to make a serious and organized effort to collect all the manuscripts of Sri Aurobindo, make photographic copies of them, prepare a catalogue of all the writings, and finalize copies which all can refer to in the future. If this is not done, many mistakes will begin to creep in. This process of deterioration has already started, and if it is not checked, one does not know where it will end.”

Bob: We don’t have any record of whether Mother replied to this letter, but it shows what was in Jayantilal’s mind. Then he wrote her again on 15 January 1973:

“Mother, I have often suggested that we build up a kind of archives where microfilms of all of Sri Aurobindo’s and Mother’s manuscripts, photoprints of the various editions of their works, and important letters and documents are preserved. To this must be attached a library of the books of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. I wonder what the Mother thinks about such a project.”

Bob: To this request the Mother said, “All right, yes.” We have it in the hand of the secretary who took Jayantilal’s letter to the Mother. It might be taken as the date of the founding of the Archives.

But the big thing is this: in the early

1970s a large portion of Sri Aurobindo’s manuscripts came to us. Peter took two years to organize them. Then in August 1975, he became editor of the *Bulletin of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education*, and from that time on—he was editor for five years—the *Bulletin* was packed with new material, especially new writings from Sri Aurobindo.

Peter: In between, we started the journal *Archives and Research*, because we were being called upon by all the Ashram journals to give this and that new writing, and it was becoming very chaotic. So in 1976 we decided to start the new journal, and we started publishing in April 1977. It was decided that we would no longer give

tion. Purani had made a partial glossary, but collecting and compiling all the translations that Sri Aurobindo had done, and finding the English equivalent of each Sanskrit word, had not been done. So Jayantilal recruited Richard for that because that was another pending project.

Richard: In the end it was good that the Vedic glossary didn’t get published at that time, because it included a lot of material that only now is going to be published. Since it is based largely on unpublished materials, it makes more sense for it to come out after we finish publishing all of Sri Aurobindo’s Vedic translations.

The Complete Works

Collaboration: Would you describe the general process of editing that you went through for publishing the *Complete Works*?

Peter: First something was identified as needing publication—a new letter, or a new essay, or a version of something that is obviously a later revision of something that had been published. And this was based on a very large work of inventory that had already taken many years. The first thing we did was to go through and identify the material, and see what its relationship was to things already published and

see whether it was new and ought to be published. So that was the first thing: to find something that needed to be published.

Historically speaking, what generally would happen is that we would first prepare it for publication in the *Archives and Research* journal. So it meant typing a copy of it, in those days on a typewriter, and checking it, and checking it, and checking it. That is actually what we do, we check. There are a few people who transcribe directly from the manuscript, some people who are very good at this. Sue Crothers, an Australian, is perhaps the



Raman and Ranganath checking the text of the *Vedic Studies*.
(Photo by Larry Seidlitz)

material to other journals. And that’s when our editorial career really began. In each issue we would do about 100 pages, and that was done with the specific idea of carrying on the *SABCL*.

Richard: I joined in 1980, but at first I was working on a Vedic glossary. I had done some work for *Archives and Research* already when I came on a visit in 1978. When I joined in 1980 it was specifically for doing Sanskrit work, and at first I didn’t do much work in the Archives itself.

Peter: The Vedic glossary was another project that Jayantilal was pushing forward, though it still has not come to frui-



best. Then the thing would be on paper. And then it is just a matter of reading it over and over again.

Richard: We have this system of one person reading to another, that is, reading the manuscript to the person who is holding the transcript in order to check the transcript.

Collaboration: So this is for the publications that came out in *Archives and Research*?

Peter: Historically, most of it came out in *Archives and Research* before it went into the *Complete Works*. But it is a typical case of how things that had not yet been published ended up in printed form.

Collaboration: But what about for something like *The Synthesis of Yoga* or *The Life Divine*?

Peter: Then it is kind of similar in that you still have to identify what is the most reliable version or combination of versions to use for this particular text, with Sri Aurobindo's latest revision. So, again, there is an identification of the correct manuscript or printed edition to follow.

Richard: Work on the major books was actually started with scanned texts.

Peter: In other words, we didn't have to type them. By this time we had computers. Instead of reading from the base text to a typed copy, we'll read to a computer print-out that had been produced through scanning.

That is just verification of the accuracy of our new copy. Simultaneously, we are looking and seeing whether everything is the way it should be. For that you have to use your judgment. That is where you get into the very difficult part of editing.

Richard: Actually we don't do what most people think of as "editing." We are only concerned with establishing the authentic text and we don't try to improve on what Sri Aurobindo wrote. We get into difficult situations, though. Sometimes we don't have anything to read against except the *Arya*, for example. So if there seems to be a misprint in the *Arya*, there is no manuscript to check for the correct reading. *The Secret of the Veda*, for example, was just printed in the *Arya* and that's that. For *The*

Synthesis of Yoga, part of it is like that, Parts Three and Four are straight from the *Arya*, but other parts Sri Aurobindo revised very extensively and rewrote. Part of that was published during his own lifetime. So each text has its own history. But if there is a manuscript written by Sri Aurobindo in his own hand, then we generally read from that, taking into account the later stages in which he revised the typescript of it.

Collaboration: So it is not the case that for everything there is a written manuscript?

Richard: There is not always a manuscript, no. There are many books for which the beginning of the text is the *Arya*, but then many of the works published in the *Arya* were revised by Sri Aurobindo on pages torn out of the *Arya*. And so we read against the revised *Arya*.

Peter: It often means that there is not one single set of papers that is the manuscript for a given book. For part of it we have to rely on one source and for another part we have to rely on something else. When Sri Aurobindo revised something and didn't see it all the way through to print, sometimes problems arise. In a simple case he might not have put a period at the end of a sentence. Editorially, you have to put the period at the end of a sentence, but that's already an editorial decision.

Richard: Even if he did see it all the way through to print there is the problem of what to do if we discover that the very first typescript that he revised already contained a mistyping of what he had written in his original manuscript. Then we have to decide whether to go back to the manuscript or accept whatever was incorporated in the revised version even though it began as a transmission error.

Peter: This has been explained in something like a hundred pages in *Archives and Research* where we talk about various editorial difficulties. But essentially it is a matter of confirming the text by having the material on one side, having a transcript on the other, and confirming the text of the transcript. Nowadays we check a laser print that has been produced

through scanning the best available version of the text. So it is kind of a straightforward thing, we just check text A against text B; but there are a multitude of difficulties and complexities that can enter in.

Collaboration: Can you give a timeline for completion of the *Complete Works*?

Peter: Everyone is smiling because it is difficult to do.

Matthijs: There is a sliding timeline.

Peter: We would have liked there to be no timeline at all, and those of us who were involved in editing knew that it would stretch out. On the other hand, Jayantilal wanted the whole *Complete Works* done in three years! And so that three years has gradually stretched out. There is a kind of tension between the need that we all recognize of getting the thing done—the needs of the press, the needs of the distributors, the demands of the readers to have their final product—and then our recognition that a great deal of work is needed for any text.

Richard: In fact, the whole difference between this edition and the *SABCL* is due to the fact that we are taking a lot more time.

Bob: Our general situation is this. We started the *Complete Works* in 1997. It is now eight years later. We have put 25 books into the press. We have a dozen more to go, and we have done a lot of work on almost all of them. Whereas in the *SABCL* there was one volume *On Himself*, there will now be two volumes: *Letters on Himself and the Ashram* and *Autobiographical Notes and Writings of Historical Interest*. One volume of that is among the next things coming. *Collected Poems* will also come soon because we have read most of the poems twice and they need just a finalization. Then the book *The Mother with Letters on the Mother* will come. Then the four *Letters on Yoga* volumes will come; there won't just be three volumes, there will be four, and they are so packed that each volume will run to 700 or 800 pages. Then will come *Hymns to the Mystic Fire* and *Vedic Studies with Writings on Philology*.

Collaboration: Will the latter works



be substantially enlarged?

Peter: Whereas before there were two volumes, *Secret of the Veda* and *Hymns to the Mystic Fire*, now we have three. *Secret of the Veda* is made up entirely of things that were published by Sri Aurobindo in the *Arya*, and the new edition is pretty much like the old one. That has been out for some time. *Hymns to the Mystic Fire* was partly published by Sri Aurobindo and partly not. What identifies it is that the hymns in that book are addressed to Agni. We also have a lot of other Vedic material that needs to be published. That would have properly gone into one volume that we are going to call *Vedic Studies*, but it just became too big. It would have been over a 1000 pages. So we are reducing the size of it by putting anything from Sri Aurobindo's notebooks that has to do with Agni in with the other material in *Hymns to the Mystic Fire*.

Bob: So we have a dozen volumes to go. It is 2005. Sri Aurobindo enters the public domain in 2010. After that point, anyone can use his works the way they want to. By 2010 we would like to have everything wrapped up, so that when Sri Aurobindo does go into the public domain, it is all accurate, orderly, and as complete as possible.

Peter: He doesn't go completely into the public domain. For anything that was published after his passing, it would be 60 years from that point, and not from 1950. That is how I understand it. But anyhow, yes, we want to get it finished.

Bob: So we hope to wrap it up in five years. We should be able to do that.

Richard: We certainly will have 35 volumes out, which is what we promised people. There may be a couple of volumes still to go.

Peter: We had to add two volumes to what we originally thought—a volume of letters on yoga and a volume of material on himself and the Ashram.

Behind the scenes

Collaboration: Do you have enough people and resources in the Archives?

Peter: In a way we have a kind of balance now, because things are going forward on different books at different speeds and in different ways. So maybe we could use more people for proofreading, but then someone here would have to produce something to feed them text to proofread, and that person is busy with something else. It is not like having huge numbers of people doing one thing.

Richard: And most aspects of the work take a lot of experience. You can't just bring in anybody new.

Bob: The truth is that the general organization and final editing of all the volumes is done by our two main editors, Peter Heehs and Richard Hartz. They are both superb organizers, readers, and editors. The work of the rest of us is largely to support them, give them time to work, and assist them in every way we can. And they, in turn, put on us every responsibility they can, realizing that they only have a certain amount of time.

Peter: That makes it too "editor-centric." The one factor you haven't brought into this is the technical side. I said that we started with typed sheets and ink, and now we have scanners and computers. When Matthijs came in 1992, we really didn't have a computer program or an idea about how we were going to handle all the electronic text that we were producing. With his experience in this sort of thing, he was able not only to set up the particular program that we were going to use, but also to fit it in into the whole publishing program that the press had.

Bob: When a book goes to the Ashram Press for publication, it has been not just edited here and proofread, but also completely laid out down to where the hyphens appear on the page.

Matthijs: I've mainly been contributing to the typesetting of the book, and trying to keep all the editorial information as part of the texts. So we have a program that allows us to keep all the editorial history in the text without it affecting the final typeset pages that go to the press. So it will all be there, even though it doesn't print.

Richard: That is one of the big differ-

ences between this edition and any previous edition. For previous editions, all we have is what was printed; we can only guess how it came about. Whereas in this edition, we have a record of how everything happened and it is all there in computer files.

Peter: As well as on all the paper that we have produced; we are saving a huge collection with the various stages of our editorial work.

Matthijs: For most books that go to the press, we have about five versions here, with all our notations in the margins. And the file format is plain text, so it will also be readable after 20 years when all these programs are not available any more. If you do everything in Microsoft Word, after 10 years you are lost. But these are very simple text files.

Peter: To get away again from the editorial-star approach, I may mention that to identify the proper text takes an enormous amount of inventory work and study that is done beforehand. The best example of that is the *Letters*. Raman has done a lot of work over the years to organize the *Letters*, and it is a very vital thing, but the kind of thing that doesn't attract anybody's attention.

Now when we go to a letter, say a letter written on 3 July 1936, we have a record containing every version of the letter, every handwritten copy, typewritten copy, and printed version of that letter. And maybe there was a letter that was written by Sri Aurobindo and revised for one purpose and then revised by him for another purpose. All those things have been brought together from various sources—from so and so's manuscripts, from typed copies over here, and the proofs of a book over there. All of this material has been brought together through years of work. There are at least 6000 letters.

Raman: There are 5966. (*Laughter*)

Bob: When Peter takes a decision today, persons like Raman have been working for 25 years to prepare the background.

Raman: It is not only me, there have been so many people like me working as storekeepers, organizers, arrangers. I have



personally worked on this database of letters since the very first day I came here in 1976. I was looking for work and Peter said, "Give him the letters." So he gave me the letters, and I didn't even know what it meant. (Laughter)

So you had to try find the original letters that went into the many volumes of Sri Aurobindo's printed letters. The Centenary Edition had been published. There were five or six volumes, and you had to find the original letter. It was really difficult to find. You either had to read the entire thing and keep it in memory or you had to have a practical arrangement.

So the first thing that came to mind was to make a card index. I wrote on plain chit pads the first line of every letter. I had 6000 cards and I put them in alphabetical order. It became a kind of finding game. Then gradually the cards got typed, so we had a typed index. Then we put it on the computer. I learned the elements of database and created a plain database program. It worked, and then in time this database became more and more sophisticated, and we eventually got control over all the data.

Now, in this database we have the first line of every letter, its date, and the source of that date—how we know it was that date. It will refer to a certain manuscript (if we have it), to the person to whom the letter was written, whether there are early typed copies of it, where it is published, and other things. With this information the database becomes a very powerful tool, able to do anything. Now we can play about with this database and we will be able to produce a whole new reedited edition of *Letters*.

Peter: The database contains anything that might be of interest when we are trying to finalize the text. There are cross-references if a letter has been published in more than one volume—often they were duplicated—and of course, mention of



Peter working at his desk in the Archives office. (Photo by Larry Seidlitz)

where the letter is in the *SABCL* and where it will be in the *Complete Works*.

Raman: There are often several manuscripts of a single letter. So all these had to be collated together.

Matthijs: For each of the 6000 letters, there is a folder which contains a copy of all the manuscripts related to that one letter.

Peter: Now it takes only a tenth of a second to bring up the record on that letter. But to produce that took 20 years or so to go through all the hundreds of boxes, and say, "Ah, this is a version of A1," and then put it in the computer and have it available. So now this is on our computers and any of us can consult it. It would be absolutely impossible to do work on these letters without this information. Actually, this is a database of all our holdings, not just things related to manuscripts.

Raman: It is an inventory of the Archives. There are about 10,000 items in the Archives. When Matthijs came, he went through all the items, listed them, and dumped them into one big database. Now we have access to every item. We know at once whether Moni Chakravarty has six boxes or five boxes, where they are, and what sort of material, whether it is primary material kept in the cold storage, or secondary material stored elsewhere.

Matthijs: There were others who contributed to that database before me.

Sri Aurobindo's correspondence

Collaboration: How do the letters in this edition of the *Complete Works* differ from those in previous editions—in terms of publishing more letters, or publishing more of the questions?

Raman: Each letter has been checked against the manuscripts.

Bob: There will be about 25 to 30 percent new letters, and with the old ones, we are

checking each letter to make sure it is accurate. And sometimes we are including portions that had been left out previously. As for questions, they will go in some volumes and not in others. In the four *Letters on Yoga* volumes we won't have questions, but in the volume *The Mother with Letters on the Mother*, for example, there will be questions. Also in the two volumes containing letters of Sri Aurobindo on himself there will be questions. In the *Letters on Poetry and Art*, which is about 750 pages long, certain sections have questions.

Collaboration: Have there been systematic attempts to solicit letters?

Peter: Routinely, people have given their letters to the Ashram authorities and then they have come to us. I don't know that any advertisement had to be done.

Bob: We have put notices on the bulletin board in the Ashram, but it hasn't brought us much. It is more often the case that when people pass away the trustees send their manuscripts to us, or when people know that our work is good, they voluntarily come and say, "Here are my letters." Madhav Pandit did that, for example, he brought his whole collection of letters.

Peter: This is a major portion of what we have. Many things either came from Nolini or from Madhav Pandit. Nolini-da gave all his papers, all his letters, all his



manuscripts. Madhav Pandit entrusted his collection to Jayantilal and the team he built up.

Collaboration: Do you think there are a lot of letters out there that still that have not been collected?

Bob: I don't think there are a lot, no.

Peter: For the major correspondents, who were just a dozen or so, their material is with us. A lot of letters never left the Ashram, because if it went outside, what Sri Aurobindo wrote by hand would remain with Nolini, and only a typed copy went out. So all those things were with Nolini. And there were no great losses, I think, because they were treated as something sacred.

Raman: For some correspondences, we do not have the correspondent's questions—the questions were destroyed by the person after receiving Sri Aurobindo's replies.

Peter: There are a number of correspondences where all we have is signatures, or "yes," "no," because people would cut that out from the letter, which they then destroyed.

Collaboration: Is there more correspondence on literature and poetry and things like that that you have collected?

Bob: Yes. In the *SABCL*, the letters on poetry came out in four different volumes: some in *On Himself*, some in the back of *The Future Poetry*, the Savitri letters in the back of *Savitri*, and some letters in the *Supplement*. We brought them all together and added many new letters in the volume called *Letters on Poetry and Art*.

Some of the great collections of letters had been fragmented, like the letters to Amal Kiran. So although this book is organized by subject, there also has been an effort to keep the sadhaks' letters together within the subject. This book came out about two years ago and was organized by Peter.

The Record of Yoga

Collaboration: Can you tell us about the *Record of Yoga*? I would be interested in hearing about the history of that.

Peter: I'll do the early history, then Richard can take it up. The notebooks in which the *Record* is contained include about 30 that are primarily or only *Record* material, and portions of other notebooks. These came along with all the other notebooks from Nolini in the mid-1970s. This was the main discovery when we were going through those notebooks. There had been rumors about this material, but no one really knew if it existed. They didn't know there were almost 1500 pages of material. Finally, when the inventory of the notebooks was done, a certain number were set aside as being only or primarily *Record* notebooks. They were numbered and put aside as being a different category of things. Then a typed transcript was made, just because we wondered what was there. There was some question about whether it ought to be published at all. Sri Aurobindo certainly didn't write it for publication. On the other hand, there were plenty of things he didn't write for publication that had been published. That includes drafts of essays that never got worked up.

Collaboration: Who made the decision?

Peter: We wanted to publish it ourselves. We thought this was great stuff. But we had to ask Jayantilal what he thought about the idea. A characteristic of Jayantilal that was remarkable is that he would never push anything. He would sort of suggest. He knew everyone in the Ashram, he was well-respected. He would just kind of say, "Well, this seems like this might be a good thing to do." I sometimes contrast it to Satprem's approach with the *Agenda*, which is that you take it and ram-bash and push it through, and damn what anybody thinks. Jayantilal just very slowly brought the idea forward. I think he might have published one or two pieces of it and nobody seemed to object. He talked about the project to Nolini who would make the decision, and also to other people who might conceivably have opposed it. He prepared the groundwork. It wasn't until 1986 that we began to bring out little pieces of the *Record* in *Archives and Re-*

search. At first we would select from a given period things that seemed interesting. And this was a time at which anyone who had objections could object, but no one did. And Jayantilal said, "Well, it seems all right. We can't really say that Sri Aurobindo didn't want it to be published along with all his other unpublished material." So we went ahead, and finally, without too much outcry, we got to the end of it, in a good nine years.

Collaboration: Was it a fairly straightforward project in terms of gathering the material and putting it in chronological order?

Peter: Fortunately, there were two aspects that made it easier than some things. First, it was all dated, or largely dated. And the undated pieces, with only a little work, could be fitted in with the dated ones. Second, there is only one version. He hardly rewrote anything. So it was just a matter of reading it. Of course, there are difficult portions—we are talking now just about reading the words on the page. Actually, he wrote rather slowly, so that the words are pretty well-formed. So producing a transcript wasn't all that difficult on the whole.

It was prepared for publication in the way we did everything: making a typed copy, checking that, rechecking, getting it printed in *Archives and Research*. We now had 1500 pages in print. Most of this was being done by Richard; for a while that was his primary job in the Archives besides *Savitri*, to produce the two installments of the *Record of Yoga* that would come out every year. By the end of 1994 it had all pretty much come out. More material was added mainly near the beginning and the end when it was published as two volumes of the *Complete Works* in 2001.

Collaboration: I would like to ask about the substantive contents of the *Record*. Are there important elements of the Integral Yoga that are described only there and not in *The Synthesis of Yoga* or the *Letters on Yoga*? Are there some important elements of the yoga for which one has to go to the *Record*?

Richard: It depends upon how much you want to know. There are certain as-



pects which Sri Aurobindo discussed in a general way in the *Synthesis*, about which there is much more detail in the *Record*. Also, there is the fact that he did not complete Part Four of *The Synthesis of Yoga*, “The Yoga of Self-Perfection,” which is the part that corresponds most closely to the *Record*. He explains a lot of the terminology of the *Record* in the portion of Part Four of the *Synthesis* that he did complete. For the topics that were to be covered in the unfinished remainder of the *Synthesis*, in some cases all we have is the *Record*, where, because he was only writing for himself, he didn’t really explain some things. We know, for example, that he was experiencing five different kinds of physical ananda, which he hardly talks about elsewhere. There are other aspects of the sadhana that he was recording in the *Record*, which he didn’t write about anywhere else in such detail, but these are mostly quite advanced and probably not of much practical importance for most of us.

Peter: I see it as different forms of presentation of his experience and his conception of the thing. In the *Record* he was writing for himself, just straightforwardly, what he had experienced that day. In the *Synthesis* it was a public knowledge that he was creating. And then in the *Letters* he was writing to his disciples. So if you look at these three presentations, they are all quite different in a way, but of course they are all based on the same body of experience.

Richard: One of the most interesting things is to put these side by side. We see how what he was writing in the *Synthesis* and even *The Life Divine*, which sometimes sounds rather abstract, corresponds to concrete, day-to-day experiences.

Collaboration: Can you tell us what was left unfinished in *The Synthesis of Yoga* that he wrote about in the *Record*?

Richard: In the last part of the *Synthesis*, “The Yoga of Self-Perfection,” Sri Aurobindo started to go very systematically through what he called the *sapta chatusthaya*, although he didn’t call it that in the *Synthesis*. For his own purposes he was calling it the *sapta chatusthaya*, the seven tetrads. These formed the structure—he called it the program—of his sadhana, which he received soon after he came to Pondicherry. “The Yoga of Self-Perfection” starts off with the last of the seven *chatusthaya*s, the *siddhi chatusthaya*. There are chapters on *shuddhi* and *mukti*, that is, purification and liberation,



An urgent meeting of some key Archives personnel. The person seated in front with his back to the camera is Mr. Pattegar, one of the administrative heads. (Photo by Larry Seidlitz)

and a general explanation of what he meant by *siddhi*, integral perfection. He more or less skipped over *bhukti*, liberated enjoyment, which in the *Record* is the third member of the *siddhi chatusthaya*, but in the *Synthesis* is listed last and he may have intended to come back to it at the very end. Then there is a chapter called “The Elements of Perfection,” in which he summarizes the first six *chatusthaya*s. He doesn’t use the word *chatusthaya*, but it is very clear, because he talks in several places about the four elements of each *chatusthaya*. Then he takes them up systematically, and he gets to the second member of the third *chatusthaya*, the *vijnana chatusthaya*.

thaya. The second member of that is *trikaladrishti*, the triple-time-vision—meaning the knowledge of the past, present, and future. And that is where the *Arya* stopped. That means that he was less than half way through, or about half way since he had already talked about the last *chatusthaya*.

Reference material

Collaboration: One of the tasks of the Archives, as I understood from the background reading you gave me, was gathering biographical information on Sri Aurobindo, some of which was done for the SABCL.

Peter: As far as the SABCL went, it was Jayantilal who suggested that we have at least a chronology of Sri Aurobindo’s life to be published with the index and glossary in volume 30 just as basic information. For that, someone got some material from Delhi at the National Archives, and Jayantilal encouraged me to get material from other Archives. I did a lot of that sort of work in the 1970s and 1980s. It is not, strictly speaking, one of the main projects of the Archives.

Collaboration: Is there more of that kind of material in this edition?

Peter: Actually, we are letting Sri Aurobindo speak for himself, because one of the volumes is going to be called *Autobiographical Notes with Writings of Historical Interest*. That corresponds to a certain type of material that was published in *On Himself*, part of which was a collection of biographical documents. So more biographical material is coming out, gathered from different places. Also, letters of the 1930s in which Sri Aurobindo referred in passing to himself, some of which had also appeared in *On Himself*, are coming out in another volume called *Letters on Himself and the Ashram*. So that is part of the work with the letters—to isolate those letters on



Sri Aurobindo and the Ashram and bring them together.

I don't know that we have any plans to do much in the way of biography in the reference volumes of the *Complete Works*. Inherently, writing a biography is interpretive, and I have personally taken on that work, which I do apart from the Archives work. Collecting materials is another thing. Something that I would like to publish is a series called "Documents in the Life of Sri Aurobindo." Much of it has already appeared in *Archives and Research*, which has about 150 pages of straight historical documents. A project to be taken up is to complete that, to print the raw data without any historical interpretation, just as they came, and leave it for the reader to make use of. That is something we will do in the somewhat distant future.

Collaboration: Regarding reference material, I understand that there is going to be some reference work pertaining to the *Record of Yoga*?

Richard: Yes, there will be a fairly extensive glossary. No other volume of the *Complete Works* will have its own glossary, but the *Record* poses unusual problems for readers. Peter had already done a lot of work on the technical terminology of the *Record* before I joined the Archives. Then when we began to publish it serially in *Archives and Research*, I took over the job of preparing for each issue a glossary defining the Sanskrit terms that occurred in that installment. The definitions in those glossaries were just the minimum that was necessary to have some idea of what the words meant. When the *Record* finally came out in two volumes, ideally there should have been a glossary along with it, but we didn't want to delay publication until the glossary was ready. So as soon as those two volumes were published, I started working on the glossary (besides my other work). At first the idea was essentially to combine the glossaries that had appeared in *Archives and Research* and add some definitions of terms occurring in new material that had been included. But gradually the scope of it has expanded and I have started going into more depth. Now

some of the definitions of the most complex terms come to almost half a page. And there are between two and three thousand terms, including compound expressions which sometimes need to be defined apart from the separate words they are composed of.

Peter: We should also explain that there are two parts to the glossary.

Richard: Besides the glossary proper, there will be an outline of the terminology of the *Record of Yoga*. Peter had already prepared something he called a Structural Outline, and I took that up and elaborated on it. It is an outline of a few hundred of the important terms based on the structure of the *sapta chatusthaya*. One can go through it and familiarize oneself with the terminology, before trying to grapple with the *Record* itself. Or it can be used in conjunction with the alphabetical glossary, which refers to the outline by the numbers of the items. The problem with a glossary is that you can't read through it, because there is no meaningful sequence; you can only look up individual words. With the outline, you can glance through it and see the relations of the different terms for any aspect of the yoga you are particularly interested in. Then if you want to go into it more deeply you can find the terms in the glossary.

Peter: The outline follows Sri Aurobindo's own structure.

Richard: Yes. We have simply filled in that structure with related terms so that it has become more detailed. But he himself laid out the seven *chatusthaya*s and their members—the elements of the Yoga of Self-Perfection as he called it in the *Synthesis*—in a kind of outline form.

Collaboration: The glossary will be a volume of the *Complete Works*?

Richard: It will be part of the set, yes, but it won't be numbered as a volume.

Peter: It will be an appendix as it were, so it can sit on the shelf next to the *Record of Yoga*. It will be sold separately also, so that people who have bought the *Record of Yoga* separately can obtain it.

Richard: The fact that it will be part of the *Complete Works* is one reason I don't

want to rush it. Once it is done it will be there for all time. I feel that it should be done as well as possible.

Collaboration: What is the timeline for getting it out?

Richard: Recently a problem has come up with regard to the publication of the glossary, in addition to the fact that it is taking longer than expected and is delaying other work. Many quotations from Sri Aurobindo's writings occur in the definitions—I try to use his own words as much as possible because it is the only way to bridge the gap between his consciousness and ours. Some of the writings quoted have not yet been published in the *Complete Works*. In order to give proper references, those volumes should be published before the glossary which contains quotations from them. So at a meeting with the Publication Department it has been decided to give priority to completing the regular volumes of the *Complete Works*. The glossary to the *Record* will be brought out along with other reference material at the end. Meanwhile it has been proposed that a simpler glossary could be put on the Ashram's website for those who cannot read the *Record* without a glossary. The Ashram doesn't want to print and publish something that is only a stopgap, but putting it on the Internet would be a temporary solution until the definitive glossary is available. This possibility has just been suggested and is being considered.

Perceptions of the Archives

Peter: There is something that is interesting to me that I would like to discuss. Ranganath has been in the Ashram a long time, he has been here since he was a child. He saw the Archives taking shape, but joined it only recently. At first the Archives wasn't much in view and now it seems sometimes too much in view. Ranganath, as someone who has seen developments in the Ashram over a long period of time, how does the Archives appear to people outside the department?

Ranganath: I think the Archives is doing a very important job. For one thing,



there were imperfections in the printed books, mistakes you can call them, so all that is now being corrected. We are trying to produce an accurate edition for the future so that this work doesn't have to be redone. I think that there is a recognition in the Ashram that the Archives is doing an important work.

Peter: For a while, back in the early days when Jayantilal was here, nobody knew that anything was going on here.

Ranganath: Nobody knew the details of what was being done. I was working at the press, but even I did not know so many projects were going on.

Peter: Did it seem strange that some relative newcomers had come along and were given work like this?

Ranganath: In certain quarters there may have been that feeling, it may be there even now. But overall, I think that the perception is good.

Bob: When the *Record* came out, did you hear any comments like, "Oh, how could they publish it?"

Ranganath: Yes, that, of course, because, as you rightly asked, "Who took the decision?" There was some question of whether it should be published at all or not. I personally feel that a principle of keeping private what Sri Aurobindo wrote, which was not intended for public viewing, would have had a relevance when he was in his body. That is how I see it. Now when you see the texts, it could help a lot of people. So how could it *not* be published? And that is what Jayantilal told me. I asked him, "How did you get the permission to publish this?" He said, "How can we *not* publish it? How can it remain hidden forever? At some point in time it has to come out." And I think I agree with that. In fact, I was very happy that it was published, because I got to go through the whole thing and enjoyed it very much. There are a lot of things that are just so interesting.

Generally, there is a recognition here that the Archives is doing good work. There are pockets of resistance here and there, which are largely, I think, ignorant, ill-informed, but that also slowly is changing. There have even been court cases and all that. But I think the Archives has taken that very well in its stride.

Collaboration: Are the court cases an ongoing problem?

Peter: We don't really feel it that much. Richard, if he is called upon, has to explain one thing or another, for some reason or another.

Richard: At one point it was taking up

towards us.

Ranganath: That is because it is generally recognized that whatever is being done is very legitimate, and there is no tampering with the texts. There was this misunderstanding: some people thought that now it is not Sri Aurobindo, but what somebody else has substituted. But that idea was very ignorant and ill-informed.

Bob: Yes. Our main work at the Archives is to remove any mistakes accidentally made by people while transcribing and publishing Sri Aurobindo's works in the past. We simply restore what Sri Aurobindo actually wrote.



Shanta, one of many behind-the-scene workers at the Archives, works on the volume of Vedic Studies. (Photo by Larry Seidlitz)

When Jayantilal passed away, Manoj-da came forward and took his place. Manoj-da is a respected member of the community who trusted and appreciated our work. He wanted to be informed of all that we were doing, and we invited him and the other trustees, regularly, for briefings on what we were doing. Especially Manoj-da and Dr. Dutta showed real interest. We would sit here at this same table and spend a whole afternoon together. Peter and Richard would make presentations, show the manuscripts, explain what we do. They appreciated that we were open with them. We

quite a bit of my time and slowing down our work. Actually the legal harassment has been by fundamentalists outside the Ashram, though it stirred up controversy in the Ashram too. Most of it has been directed against the 1993 edition of *Savitri*, whose text was finally decided not by the Archives but by Nirodbaran and Amal Kiran, just like previous editions.

Peter: Basically we do our work just like we have done from the 1970s. We were first shielded by Jayantilal, and even now after his passing the trustees are 100 percent behind us. They have wanted to know what is going on, but they have never taken a hostile or prosecutorial attitude

have always had their support. It hasn't been easy for them to support us when there was misunderstanding and opposition, but they have always given us full support—moral support, legal support, and financial support. It is a very beautiful thing to have the support of your respected elders.

Peter: I think that generally people think that the Archives is doing a good job. Most people in the Ashram aren't busy-body types. As long as there is a general feeling that we are members of the Ashram, are doing our work, and we are supported by the authorities, they let us go about our business, for the most part.



There is a vocal minority, of course, and vocal minorities tend to get heard.

Raman: I think it is the general atmosphere of the Ashram that is responsible for everything that goes well here. We don't realize that we have a special environment of the Ashram. In the Ashram you have the Archives, which is not different, basically, from the other departments. It gets a protection. And it is the Mother who is running it. Maybe I am being a little sentimental and emotional, but basically it is that. Everybody is working for the Mother.

That is something concrete. If you take that element out, we will just fall apart. I have seen other centers where this feeling is not strong, and they just fall apart. And this is very concrete. It is fine to say I am working for the Mother and all that, just to say it, but to feel it and do it is different.

Peter: No one here feels that he or she is working under somebody else. We really don't have a head of the department in that way. Legally, Manoj, the Managing Trustee, is the head.

Richard: I don't think there is another department that is so decentralized.

Peter: We have Bob and Mr. Pattegar as administrative heads. Some people give work to other people, but nobody has the sense that they are working for another.

Bob: That is one of Jayantilal's great contributions. He gave us freedom and support and encouragement.

Peter: And then he just let things develop, so that before he passed away in 1999, we had 25 years of just doing what we were doing, with his encouragement and behind-the-scenes direction. So the thing had developed as a kind of self-starting proposition, and continued that way.

Bob: Jayantilal decided to start publishing the *Complete Works* in 1997. We thought, give us a little more time, let us develop a larger body of books so that when we begin we will have more material ready. I thought, and a few others thought, that 2000 would be a good starting date for publication, with the new millennium and



The Mother resided for a time in the back of the present Archives, where Bob now stays. (Photo by Larry Seidlitz)

all that. He wanted to start right away. We started in 1997, Sri Aurobindo's 125th birthday. Jayantilal passed away in 1999. By then, things were well under way. Up until then, it was he who protected us and defended us. And soon after he passed away, there was criticism of our editorial methods and even court cases against our work. Yet, by then, things were so well underway that there was no going back. If we had waited until 2000 and there had been many objections against our editorial methods or what we planned to do, the project might not even have gotten off the ground. Jayantilal got the thing going in 1997; now we will continue our work and complete it.

Matthijs: It needs to be mentioned that all those court cases fall flat because our methods are so meticulous. The whole editing process is one of sticking strictly to what Sri Aurobindo wrote himself. We are not doing fancy work. And finally it goes smoothly because our work is solid and transparent and we keep detailed records of all the things we do.

Peter: We can't be criticized for trying to pull something over on anybody because we are perfectly clear about what we are doing. We have written hundreds of pages in *Archives and Research* and elsewhere explaining everything about our editorial method, and now we write these notes in the back of every book telling what is going on. So it is not as if there is a mysterious little cabal producing things

and not being accountable to anybody. We feel we are accountable to everybody, in fact. On the other hand, we have to do our work too.

Matthijs: It doesn't go in any way against what has been said about the Mother's protection, and that everybody is basically working for the Mother. But the work is also solid in its own way.

Preservation of manuscripts

Collaboration: Would you describe the present state of Sri Aurobindo's manuscripts with regard to their preservation?

Matthijs: I think we do what is technically state-of-the-art at the moment. This climate is the worst you can have, and so the manuscripts are now stored in a place where they are kept as well as anybody could keep them. They are kept at a totally regulated temperature and humidity.

Peter: They are kept in a place that Matthijs helped to design with a custom-made air conditioning and dehumidifying system, and it is very impressive.

Matthijs: It is interesting in that the trustees gave us their meeting room for storing the manuscripts, which by itself is very sweet; they are kept in the old room where the trustees used to meet.

Collaboration: How do the manuscripts look now? What condition is the paper and the ink in?

Matthijs: They deteriorated quite a bit in the early years. Many of the pages from the *Arya*, for example, are completely brittle. With the loose editions of the *Arya* which are kept outside, you cannot turn the pages without breaking them. But the ones that have been kept in cold storage are in better condition. That is impressive. For every five degrees that you bring the temperature down, the life of the paper doubles, more or less. If you bring the temperature down from 35 to say 20 Celsius, then the life becomes eight times as long. So that is a considerable improvement.

Collaboration: Are all the handwritten manuscripts in the cold storage?



Matthijs: All the handwritten manuscripts of Sri Aurobindo are in the cold storage and kept in acid-free handmade-paper folders. The main enemy of paper is the acidity in the paper itself, so if you keep them protected from each other, interleaved with acid-free paper, they last longer.

Peter: Incidentally, we don't touch the manuscripts anymore ourselves. All the work that we are doing is done with xeroxes or scanned copies, so now those manuscripts in principle will remain there forever without being touched again.

Collaboration: Is there anything more being done with the manuscripts?

Matthijs: There are methods to preserve them, more aggressive methods, to deacidify the paper. But not all of the methods are 100 percent reversible, so we are not using them, because we try to be as cautious as possible. Anything you do to the paper involves a risk, so we don't do anything aggressive or irreversible.

Collaboration: So now they are stored and nobody is doing much with them?

Matthijs: Yes, we are still in the process of storing them a little more carefully with still more acid-free and acid-absorbent paper in between. But that will be basically it.

Bob: Barbie does manual repair of the pages, but there is not a wholesale attempt to deacidify them.

Peter: If the technology improves, we might at some point take that up.

Matthijs: But we have learned to be extremely cautious with active preservation, because what has happened very often in history is that people found a fantastic method to keep things, and then ten years later discovered that it was a disaster that you cannot reverse.

Collaboration: What is this new machine you showed me for destroying insects?

Peter: It is a glass chamber that receives the sun's rays, and then holds the heat in, and you keep it at a level of 60 degrees centigrade. It produces extreme heat that kills the bugs through the heat itself and through desiccation.

Matthijs: The traditional method in-

volves pesticides, but we try to do it entirely without pesticides. And this works. This is absolutely the minimum you can do to the manuscripts and still remove the bugs.

Collaboration: But this is only for new manuscripts that are coming in?

Matthijs: Yes. Whatever we already have is free of bugs.

Peter: It is more for books that we are going to use this solar chamber. Anything that sits on a bookshelf in India tends to get infected with insects. So now, say, we get a nice early edition of one of Sri Aurobindo's books; it will probably be infested with bugs, so we can't put it in our library without first killing the bugs.

Matthijs: And even if we don't see that a book or piece of paper is infected, it is safer to treat it, because you don't want to introduce bugs into the general storage.

Collected works of the Mother

Collaboration: My understanding is that when *The Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo* are finished the Archives will begin work on the Mother's Collected Works?

Bob: Yes, we will try to do the same thing with the Mother's works that we did with Sri Aurobindo's works.

Peter: But that has been going on concurrently for a long time. It is not like one will finish and the other will start.

Bob: Yes, that's right, but I would say that the Mother's works are on the back burner at the moment. We publish some things of the Mother which come out in the *Bulletin*, but we really haven't taken up the Mother's works with the idea of checking everything for accuracy, checking the translations, and incorporating new material. We are too busy finishing up *The Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo*.

Collaboration: It sounds like that could be a work of similar scope to that of *The Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo*?

Bob: The scope will not be as large, but it would involve a similar treatment. We will have to look at each text. There is some material that has not yet been pub-

lished, but not a huge amount.

Peter: Many of the texts are oral, so it is a different thing, and many of the texts are written in French, so we have to have a different set of people doing the editing.

Collaboration: Regarding the oral texts, what is the condition of the tapes, of the recordings? Is that part of the Archives?

Bob: No, it is done by the Projector Room, the Ashram department in charge of audio recordings. I believe Steve Webman has been working with Arunkumar to put the old tapes onto CDs.

Matthijs: It has all been digitized, so it is all there digitally. And it has also been put onto analog tapes. But the original analog tapes are in an amazingly good state, much better than anybody could expect.

Collaboration: You say they have been digitized, but have they also been cleaned up in terms of removing static and extraneous noise? I imagine the original recordings were of pretty poor quality.

Peter: They are studying that problem.

Matthijs: First you copy it exactly as it is. Then you make secondary copies on which you do the cleaning.

Collaboration: Are they doing that?

Matthijs: You have to talk to Steve Webman or Arunkumar about that. They also have state-of-the-art equipment.

Collaboration: If you were checking against originals, presumably you would be checking against these recordings?

Matthijs: Yes, but for a lot of the texts there is no recording anymore.

Peter: Transcripts were made and that is all we have.

Matthijs: Because they used the same tapes again and again. They would make the transcript of a talk and then use that same tape again.

Bob: We have got boxes of early transcripts, including many that were edited by Satprem. They haven't been looked at carefully, but they will become very valuable primary material. But we have Mriyjunjoy's collection of typescripts of the Mother's *Entretiens*. They are very valuable. We also have Sanat Banerjee's col-



lection, which is fairly extensive, and others. We have a copy of the *Entretiens* in which Satprem has made his revisions, so by studying it you can see his method of editing the Mother's talks for publication in the *Bulletin* and for publication as they have come out in the *Entretiens* series.

Peter: And his work would be quite legitimate, because oral things do need to be edited. You don't speak in full sentences. So there is nothing wrong with that work having being done, but it can be checked now.

Collaboration: So you will go over those things again?

Bob: Yes, we will. That is the work. Whether we change it is something we will have to decide when we see.

Peter: But it would be French speakers who would be doing the decision-making.

Richard: The translations also need to be looked at.

Bob: The translations are often awkward; they are not fluid.

Collaboration: So new translations would be made of all these things for the new edition?

Bob: We will look at everything and see if it needs revision and retranslation. But this is still years down the line. First we will finish up the *Complete Works*.

Other work of the Archives

Collaboration: Is there other work being done by the Archives that we have not touched on?

Matthijs: There is the digitization of the manuscripts. We are making images of each and every one. That has started, but it is still in its early stages.

Raman: There is also Kiran's photography.

Bob: We are doing the same with the photographs—digitization and storage.

Matthijs: All the photos of Sri Aurobindo have been done, but the photos of the Mother are still in the process of being done. That is a huge job.

Peter: Also historical photographs, photographs of the Ashram, photographs of disciples will be done.

Collaboration: All of that is stored here?

Peter: Yes. More and more we are trying to put things in the cold storage.

Matthijs: We have a lot of collections, but some collections are spread out. They are not all in one place.

Collaboration: Do you have access to them?

Matthijs: The Archives has good relations with all the people in charge of them.

Bob: Here is another thing. In the *Complete Works* we will have altogether seven volumes of letters. Some, like the *Letters on Yoga*, won't have the questions of the disciples with them. In the future, we want to bring out these letters in their chronological order with the disciple's questions and comments. Nirodbaran has done a good job of that with his own correspondence in two volumes. In the same way there are many other valuable correspondences: Dilip Kumar Roy, for example, and Dr. Naik, whom nobody even knows about—these are major correspondences. We would like to bring out all of them in a question-answer format in the natural day-to-day order, because then you get a feeling for the person, for the difficulties they have, and Sri Aurobindo's answers take on more texture and appropriateness than when they are divorced from the question or the comment. It is a large work. It will take a long time to do this rightly because we will follow the same process that we have for the *Complete Works*. Each letter will be read two times carefully.

Matthijs: And it involves a lot of editorial decisions, because for most of the correspondences you cannot simply publish them exactly verbatim as they are.

Bob: You have to take only the relevant part of the question.

Peter: The questions are often terribly long, rambling, and written in bad English, which isn't surprising because English was not the correspondent's native tongue.

Matthijs: There are often five or ten pages of question and just one or two words by Sri Aurobindo.

Peter: If you took a good selection of the questions, it might come to 15 or 20

volumes.

Collaboration: So that is what you envision doing?

Bob: Absolutely.

Matthijs: That should be done. But we have first to finish what we are doing.

Bob: In the *Bulletin*, we now have a policy of editing the correspondences in this way. We are doing Dr. Naik at the moment, his questions with Sri Aurobindo's answers. But we cannot put much in an issue of the *Bulletin*. So we will start bringing out the correspondences in separate books, disciple by disciple; but again, it will take years because it is a large work.

Collaboration: What does the Archives do for researchers who come and want to do research on Sri Aurobindo? Do you make things available? Do you have people coming to do research?

Peter: If they come and they want printed material, we will tell them where they can get it. If what they want is material that is archival, we will make it available to them if they are bonafide researchers—usually in the form of xeroxes. Say it is someone researching a particular disciple, we will give them access to that disciple's papers and correspondences. But often we don't allow people to work here itself because we don't have room and it is a bit of a distraction. But we help people if they have a legitimate need. So long as it is material that only we can supply, we'll help them out.

Bob: You see at the moment, our main work is publishing Sri Aurobindo's *Complete Works*. It takes all our time and attention. We try to help people who do come. In editing the works, we are organizing all this information that later will be available on a larger scale to more people. But that organization work takes time and is being done slowly. We're not in a position where we can advertise ourselves as a service for anything people want to know. Each question takes the time of an important person. Jayantilal used to say that ours is a quiet work, and it is to our benefit that it is quiet so that we can do the foundational work. Then later on we will be able to help more people.



Essay

Technology and the titan: Reflections on Sri Aurobindo's observations of civilization and barbarism (conclusion)

by Richard Carlson

When speaking the language of digital technology one must not become too reliant on words and text but must be prepared to adopt the current planetary language. Although software programming languages are also an international idiom, the new language referred to here is that of images. These images confront us wherever we turn, on billboards, magazines, television, film, and the Internet. In fact, a human being living today digests as many images in a single day as did a person in the Victorian era during an entire lifetime.

Images are a form of digital Esperanto that the world's population instantly comprehends. Images are a language whose every frame, each of the billions upon billions of them, is worth a thousand words. Due to the trans-alphabetic nature of images globally, we all have come to share similar reference points regardless of geographical separation because identical images are fed to us all, no matter where we live. In fact, we all reside in a global village in which our relationships are mediated by twenty-four hour coverage of a shared electronic grid. This grid is the central nervous system of our planet, a global commons of information that transcends any terrestrial limit set by national borders.

This global commons of information burns the signs, symbols, simulations and simulacra of mass media into the shared screens of our collective consciousness; a consciousness whose gaze is increasingly

absorbed in video images. We download these images daily from our local Internet server, CNN, Fox, Comcast, or one of other multi-national media corporations. These commercial sources of information mainline images edited for consumption directly into our passive brains so as to make pattern recognition of desired products or preferred political agendas an unconscious affair.

These unceasing images have been well-digested by us all: the World Trade Center, Osama, Terminator, McDonalds, Coca Cola, Nike, and the ten thousand others, all are streamed through fiber optics or satellite into the comfortable viewing space of our living rooms. Our emersion in the content of these media broadcasts has allowed us all to share a planetary language encrypted in the digital Esperanto of images.

Therefore, when considering how the vital will to power incarnates in technology, using an image from a Hollywood movie only seems fitting. The image here is from the opening scene of the movie *2001: A Space Odyssey*. The image is of an ape pondering a skeleton of a dead animal before the mysterious monolith; he picks up a jaw-bone questioningly, unsure of what to do with it, and then, there is an abrupt flash in monkey consciousness, and presto, the bone is a tool. It is a weapon! And it is the weapon that proves effective in killing other apes. The dominant apes will survive into the next generation, and thus, it is the weapon that announces the evolution of consciousness!

This is to say that as fundamental as, or even simultaneous with, the cunning of the ratiocinating mind that creates technology, is technology as a vehicle of



Envision. (Digital Art by Margaret Phanes)

the "Will to Power" as spoken by Zarathustra's disciple, Nietzsche. Only now this is not the divine will but the vulgar human will to rule. As an instrument of the vulgar will to power, technology becomes a tool of domination. This should surprise no one, because technology as an efficient weapon has determined the course of human history.

Many major advances in technology have been funded by researching its utility as a military application. The greatest inventors have all added something to the inventory of destruction. For example, the genius of Da Vinci's was most often engaged in dreaming up inventions meant for military applications. Although a pacifist, Albert Einstein contributed to the knowledge needed to create the most horrific weapon in human history. The space program, which itself was largely an instrument of military expansion, has given us thousands of inventions with consumer applications. The most famous of all con-



sumer inventions, first developed for military application by the United States Department of Defense, is the Internet.

Today, in this age of hyper-capitalism, global corporations drive this ferocious will to power as well as the power of the state. Therefore, when locating the will that animates technology today, we must turn to one whose expertise in wedding both state and industry is well-known. Thus, Benito Mussolini's dictum needs to be remembered: "fascism is the marriage of corporate wealth to state military power." If the proposition be true that the power of technology is largely the servant of a new form of fascism, then we are witness to a mutation of fascism, one which can be called "virtual fascism." (Kroker, 2004, p. 41) It can be called virtual fascism because this variety of fascism works out its will to power in a reality not determined by the three dimensions of physical experience, but rather in the non-localized sphere of cyberspace, or the recombinant and transgenic life forms of the petri dish.

In one way, this new form of fascism is enacted by "battlefield managers" (the new buzz word for military command) who in a manner reminiscent of video games, direct smart bombs, and GPS-guided cruise missiles into pixel images of whole villages and with one press of a button wipe them out entirely.

In yet another way, the power of technology follows an insatiable lust for corporate profits. This is the will to technology which exploits medicine, genetic engineering, recombinant DNA, computer networks, and the World Wide Web to facilitate the quarterly profits of Fortune 500 corporations, irrespective of the ethical boundaries such profit-taking may cross.

Consider the following: "Researchers at a small biotech company in Boston want to produce a disabled human embryo—fatally flawed but capable of living for several weeks—just long enough for scientists to harvest the primitive stem cells so coveted for brain and heart research.

Michael West, the president of the biotech firm "Advanced Cell Technology" (www.advancecell.com), had this to say about the production of disabled embryos. "The trick will be to do just enough damage to preclude cells developing into a viable being, but not so much to interfere with the growth of stem cells for harvest." (West in Kroker, 2004, p. 183)

Although stem cell research may hold the promise of providing cures for some of the most disabling conditions besetting humanity such as Parkinson's disease, one must not be a fundamentalist Christian minister to argue that the preceding statement by C.E.O. West poses serious ethical questions to matters concerning life and the "common good."

If the intention of some stem cell re-



searchers sounds ominous, the unintentional consequences of biotechnology gone awry can have even more harrowing implications. These were described by Bill Joy of Sun Microsystems:

"The twenty first century technologies—genetics nano-technology and robotics—are so powerful because they spawn whole new classes of accidents and abuses. While replication in a computer network can be a nuisance, at worst it disables a machine or takes down a network service, uncontrolled self-replication in these newer technologies runs a much greater risk: a risk of substantial damage to the physical world." (Joy, 2000) Joy was referring to nanotechnology which, if in pathogen form were to escape from the

laboratory and run amok into the environment, could reduce the biosphere to a gray goo in a matter of days.

Just as technologies of physical self-replication threaten to create cancerous organisms in the human body and the body of the planet, the all-pervasive electronic video screen often serves to widen the empathetic gulf which distances us emotionally from each other. The influence of video technology is felt not only mentally but throughout our whole being. Although the cybernetic translation of planetary communication signals into electronic impulses which race through the brain at light speed no doubt affect post-modern thought processes, these electronic technologies also reach deep into the vital being.

A sense of alienation has become profoundly apparent in our increasingly urban species. A Heideggerian boredom permeates the sentient qualities of post-modern existence. The consequence of such alienation and boredom can be enormous. For example: the World Health Organization reports that in the last 45 years—a period with unprecedented advances in science and technology—suicide rates have increased 60 percent. (www.befrienders.org/suicide/statistics.htm)

In considering how a future humanity can maintain psychological fitness and still keep its co-evolutionary fit with an ever-accelerating, socially chaotic global environment, which James Joyce called a "chaosmology" (Joyce, 1939), an interesting comparison to make is between the pessimistic boredom of Heidegger, and the boredom of enlightenment as defined in Zen and other traditions of meditation. Post-modern humanity is in desperate need to know the technique by which the alienation of boredom can be transmuted into the boredom of enlightenment.

Although enormous expanses of the planet have been fiber-optically traversed, the physical separation between us as audience and the action we view still leaves



us a buffer of a few milliseconds between the transmission of the signal to the server and the viewer. This is not much time, but it is enough to maintain a psychological boundary layer and shield us from the swirl of electrons and the phenomena they represent coming at us from distant places at speeds approaching light.

Indeed the virtual realms of cyberspace are not only illuminated by a Nietzschean “will” in vulgar form but, by a Berkleyian “idealism” as well, in that what we apprehend with the aid of our optical devices are signal, source code and simulation, and not the flesh and bone existence embodying our present. Therefore, one suspects that cyberspace or virtual reality cannot be an authentic arbiter of the here and now, its very design may facilitate alienation.

Moreover, our ability to empathize with our fellow beings is often undone by the video game manner in which we come into virtual contact with most of them. For example, Hollywood films allow us to watch scores of people going to their slaughter without it ever deterring the next handful of popcorn in route to our mouths. We set our children in front of the TV or computer screen to pacify them so they will not bother us with their vital three-dimensional demands. We are barraged by an endless stream of propaganda meant to sell us everything from political affiliation, to religious conversions, to unending sexual performance.

This disconnect between human beings is also manifest in the rapidly growing division of the world’s population into groups of haves and have-nots, which increasingly means those with access to technology and those without. The gap in wealth between the world’s richest and poorest citizens is at its greatest disparity in recorded history.

This disparity of wealth has not only resulted in third-world deprivation, but has caused a backlash, often sponsored by fundamentalist religious terrorism. These reactionary movements often draw

sustenance and support by appealing to the dispossessed who have been left out of the technologically enabled global economy. Many anti-modernist movements that appeal to ethnocentric ideals of culture and community are swelling in their ranks. This movement is due in part to a reactionary opposition to a perceived cultural imperialism, largely imported through technological advances of the hyper-capitalist enterprise.

The digital divide is not the only byproduct of technology that separates humankind, an emotional divide also looms large on the horizon. The mediation of technology in human affairs has also increased the emotional distances between us. This emotional distance is reflected in the exponential rise of violence



and mental illness of the past century. While technology grew at its fastest, subduing us with its utopian promise while having its greatest successes, it out-paced our ethical reflections and overwhelmed our emotional perceptions.

During the century of unprecedented technological advance, when science facilitated an increase in our life expectancy and our level of comfort, from out of the blind spot of human history the shadowy projection of the will to power, of the will to technology, reached out to wreak carnage over most of the planet to ensure that this last century would be the most murderous.

So what happens now at the dawn of a new millennium? What is our promised future? Will it be a future in which technol-

ogy, both informational and biological, ultimately fulfills the project of a perverse form of Nietzschean “completed nihilism,” of “the will to power” manifesting a reactionary vision of the “ubermensch” in the marriage of multi-national corporations and military power? What is the future promise of the will to technology?

Before considering this question let’s explore the future as conceived by Sri Aurobindo. The future promise which is made to us by Sri Aurobindo and Mother or the promise *de l’Avenir* can be succinctly put in a few lines from *Savitri*:

When superman is born as Nature’s king
His presence shall transfigure Matter’s
world:

He shall light up Truth’s fire in
Nature’s night,

He shall lay upon the earth

Truth’s greater law;

Man too shall turn towards the
Spirit’s call.

Awake to his hidden possibility,
Awake to all that slept within his
heart

The hidden possibility in mankind to surpass its own humanity is made possible by the manifestation of a gnostic being who is endowed with a consciousness superior to mind, known aptly as the supermind. Sri Aurobindo describes the traits of the gnostic being, and cautions against confusing this new type of individual with other prophecies of supermanhood:

A life of gnostic beings carrying the evolution to a higher supramental status might fitly be characterized as a divine life; for it would be a life in the Divine, a life of beginnings of a spiritual divine light and power and joy manifested in material Nature. That might be described, since it surpasses the mental human level, as a life of spiritual and supramental supermanhood. But this must not be confused with past and present ideas of supermanhood; for



supermanhood in the mental idea consists of an overtopping of the normal human level, not in kind but in degree of the same kind, by an enlarged personality, a magnified and exaggerated ego, an increased power of mind, an increased power of vital force, a refined or dense and massive exaggeration of the forces of the human ignorance; it carries also, commonly implied in it, the idea of a forceful domination over humanity by the superman. That would mean a supermanhood of the Nietzschean type . . . But earth has had enough of this kind in her past and its repetition can only prolong the old lines; she can get no true profit for her future, no power of self-exceeding from the Titan, the Asura: even a great or supernormal power in it could only carry her on larger circles of her old orbit. (*The Life Divine*, 1949, pp. 1067-68)

In considering the future evolution of consciousness and which track humanity may take, one must be cognizant of the types of future biological mutations that may be in store for humanity. In addition, one must also consider the historical and contemporary attempts that have been made to enhance the human condition.

The first wave of eugenics was determined biologically by Darwin and socially by Spenser as a survival of the fittest. The second wave of eugenics coupled racial theories to the notion of survival of the fittest in the pure blood of the Aryan Nazi, or in the practices of killing or sterilizing people thought to be inferior, be they Jews, aboriginals, lower castes, or the mentally ill. The question now is what will the third wave of eugenics bring? The difference between humanity's prior experience of eugenics and its next incarnation will be that previously it has been the tool of authoritative science and ideological regimes, whereas the next wave of eugenics is certain to be driven by neo-liberal economics following the incentive of profit.

Arthur Kroker has thought through the Nietzschean implications of eugenics and wonders if the world today is facing

twenty-first century engineering with nineteenth century ethics and asks what will be the consequences of the hype surrounding the human genome project and other big science endeavors: "in the field of biotechnology and bio-pharmacology with their delirious schemes for the post-human body in a post-evolutionary time," and asks "are we really ready for the culture of the double? [i.e., clone]" and "do we really understand the fate of the transgenic body?" (Kroker, 2004, p. 209)

Keeping in mind that Sri Aurobindo has written that the advent of the supramental consciousness may also transcend many moral and ethical values that we currently hold, we should expect the unexpected. In considering the moral ambiguity that may surround the coming of the future, we should remember the lines from the haunting poem, *The Hour of God*:

Nor let worldly prudence whisper
too closely in thy ear, for it is the
Hour of the unexpected.

In *Savitri*, Sri Aurobindo reveals the chilling voice of the will to power in the voice of the titanic ego whose unbridled vital being merges with a cunning mind to glorify itself, through its mastery of technology and its domination over the physical life on earth. Always at the mercy of an insatiable hunger for power, this exaggerated ego—like the *ubermensch* overcoming mere humanity—sets its sights on the heavens. Have we yet to encounter such a being?

"I have grown greater than Nature, wiser
than God.

I have made real what she never dreamed,
I have seized her powers and harnessed
for my work,

I have shaped her metals and new metals
made;

I will make glass and raiment out of milk,
Make iron velvet, water unbreakable
stone,

Like God in his astuce of artist skill,
Mould from one primal plasm protean
forms,

In single Nature multitudinous lives,
All that imagination can conceive
In mind intangible, remould anew
In Matter's plastic solid and concrete.
No magic can surpass my magic's skill.
There is no miracle I shall not achieve.
What God imperfect left, I will complete,
Out of a tangled mind and half-made soul
His sin and error I will eliminate;
What he invented not, I shall invent:
He was the first creator, I am the last.
I have found the atoms from which he
built the worlds:

The first tremendous cosmic energy
Missioned shall leap to slay my enemy
kin,

Expunge a nation or abolish a race,
Death's silence leave where there was
laughter and joy.

Or the fissured invisible shall spend
God's force

To extend my comforts and expand my
wealth,

To speed my car which now the lightings
drive

And turn the engines of my miracles.

I will take his means of sorcery from his
hands

And do with them greater wonders than
his best.

Yet through it all I have kept my bal-
anced thought;

I have studied my being, I have examined
the world,

I have grown a master of the arts of life.

I have tamed the wild beast, trained to be
my friend;

He guards my house, looks up waiting
my will.

I have taught my kind to serve and to
obey.

I have used the mystery of the cosmic
waves

To see far distance and to hear far
words;

I have conquered Space and knitted
close all earth.

Soon I shall know the secrets of the
Mind;

I play with knowledge and with igno-
rance

And sin and virtue my inventions are



I can transcend or sovereignly use.
I shall know mystic truths, seize occult powers.
I shall slay my enemies with a look or thought,
I shall sense the unspoken feelings of all hearts
And see and hear the hidden thoughts of men.
When earth is mastered, I shall conquer heaven;
The gods shall be my aides or menial folk,
No wish I harbor unfulfilled shall die:
Omnipotence and omniscience shall be mine.” (*Savitri*, pp. 512-513)

The promises of some future technologies seem to come right out of the pages of Mary Shelly’s *Frankenstein*. These technologies are poised to perversely distort nature, much like Victor Frankenstein’s creature. It is only normal to cringe at the thought of silicon embedded in human flesh, of crossing human genes with those of animals, or cloning a human being. All of these very possible productions of future technologies seem to embody evil itself. But then again, we should expect the unexpected.

Cultural historian William Irwin Thompson writes that what we perceive as evil may well announce the next stage of global evolution (Thompson, 1980). Think again about the ape and the weapon, or about how the Greeks, the Romans, the Vikings, and then the colonial powers destroyed many indigenous cultures, yet through the roads they built and the trade routes they initiated, they facilitated a global culture of trade and interaction which ultimately spread western philosophy eastward and eastern philosophy westward—in other words, they furthered the evolution of consciousness.

This is not to rationalize or excuse the violence that makes imperialism or the transfer of culture possible, but merely to state that the evolution of consciousness proceeds by means that often transcend our notions of good and evil. Although the prospect of cloned human flesh or silicon chips embedded in the brain may seem re-

pugnant to us now, for all we know, these or similar inventions may determine the future passages that the evolution of consciousness will take in exceeding the biological constraints placed upon it by dwelling in the body of the human species.

One can even ask: Would the fulfillment of nihilism in the deconstruction of transcendent values and the triumph of the Nietzschean superman, or the super-organization through technological conquest of global commerce and the cultural Noosphere, be a necessary stage in the transition to the supramental manifestation? Or would it provide a counterpoint to a more spiritually ordered mutation?

Whatever the answers, the technological future is in some respects challenging our notion of what it means to be human. In fact, the current idiom in contemporary culture used to describe the phenomena of transcending the definition of humanity is referred to as “post-human.” How might humanity itself assist nature in creating this new species of post-humans?

In addition to the simple ethical questions raised by the thought of humans creating their successor species, there are real implications here for the integral yoga community. The following quote from *The Life Divine* suggests that on the surface technology will play an important role in the future evolution of consciousness as envisaged by Sri Aurobindo:

Consciousness itself by its mutation will necessitate and operate whatever mutation is needed for the body. It has to be noted that the human mind has already shown the capacity to aid nature in the evolution of new types of plant and animal; it has created new forms of its environment, developed by knowledge and discipline considerable changes in its own mentality. It is not an impossibility that *man should aid nature consciously also in his own spiritual and physical evolution and transformation* [emphasis added]. The urge to do it is already there and partly effective though

still incompletely understood and accepted by the surface mentality; but one day it may understand, go deeper within itself and discover the means, the secret energy, the intended operation of Consciousness-Force within which is the hidden reality of what we call Nature. (p. 844)

Among major western philosophers, none have thought more about technology and its implications than has Martin Heidegger. In his view, technology opened itself to diametric polarities of promise and peril. While perceiving the assault to our feeling life and our ability to care for the things of the world, he condemned technology as a vehicle of fascist propaganda, military domination, and the hyper-capitalist enterprise of power and subjugation. He also realized that it was difficult for any of us not to participate in its ideological program.

Heidegger nonetheless perceived that technology could retain the promise given to it in the original Greek term, *techne*. The term was once synonymous with art as well as with technique. In fact, ideally, *techne* was considered to be the vehicle by which truth manifested beauty. *Techne* was entwined with *poesis*, artistic creativity and meaning-making. Technology was the vehicle that revealed the artistic aspiration for truth and beauty. “Once there was a time when the bringing forth of the true into the beautiful was called *techne*, . . . Once that revealing that brings forth truth into the splendor of radiant appearing also was called *techne*.” (Heidegger, 1977, p. 36) As an example, think again about the skillful use of the technology of photography in the photographs of Sri Aurobindo taken by Cartier-Bresson. There you have it, with its ability to transcend mere simulation or reproduction, the Cartier-Bresson photographs have become technological vehicles of revelation!

Beyond the ability of technology to prove revelatory and a vehicle for the force of truth, it can also enhance and extend human life itself. Indeed, technology has improved the quality of life for most of the



world. Even those left out of the technological gold rush, who are on the other side of the digital divide, are beneficiaries in some manner or other of the wonders of technology. The extension of life expectancy made possible by such advances in medicine as the small pox and polio vaccines, or the cures it has made available for dysentery, malaria, influenza and a host of other ailments that have beset humankind from its inception, are testaments to the miraculous advances of science.

Sri Aurobindo has written that the human mind can aid in the evolution of consciousness, and has said: "Science has already enlarged for good the intellectual horizons of the race and raised, sharpened and intensified powerfully the general intellectual capacity of mankind." (*The Human Cycle*, 1972, p. 70) However, Sri Aurobindo was also a keen observer of society and economics and was well aware of the hidden agendas that could drive scientific research. He knew that science is a production of culture and not solely a dispassionate enterprise. He termed the use of science driven by the motivations of economic self-aggrandizement as a recurrent form of "barbarism," which in earlier epochs had manifested in the rule of the dictator and the power of the conquering nomadic clan.

Science that is funded by the marketplace with its lust for profit, or by military interests that view populations in terms of body counts, gives rise to today's recurrent barbarism. Science as vehicle for the manifestation of the asuric force has beset humanity with the plague of technologies that threaten its own existence. The vulgar will to power intent on insuring its domination fetishes technology, whether the metallurgy of the sword in days gone by or the nanotechnology of the terrorist yet to come. The will to power quite naturally manifests itself in a will to technology.

In the following passage, Sri Aurobindo defines this cultural phenomena of

science as a new type of barbarism: "Science pursuing its cold and even way has made discoveries which have served on one side a practical humanitarianism, on the other supplied monstrous weapons to egoism and mutual destruction; it has made possible a gigantic efficiency of organization which has been used on one side for the economic and social amelioration of the nations and on the other for turning each into a colossal battering-ram of aggression, ruin and slaughter. It has given rise on the one side to a large rationalistic and altruistic humanitarianism, on the other it has justified a godless egoism, vitalism, vulgar will to power and success." (*The Human Cycle*, 1972, p. 111)

So just what are the social implications for integral yoga in an age of Nietzschean nihilism? In writing the *Will to*

The vulgar will to power intent on insuring its domination fetishes technology, whether the metallurgy of the sword in days gone by or the nanotechnology of the terrorist yet to come.

Power a century ago, Nietzsche said that he was writing prophecy for the next two hundred years. (Kroker, 2004, p. 84) In this prophecy, metaphysics completes itself in the pure will of the Nietzschean superman. In this will to power, the asuric qualities of the vital being enforce their will on a world stripped of any and all referents to being, values, or qualities. In this inversion of metaphysics, rationality serves the will in its domination.

Driven by the forces of control and power, imagination will effectuate its creations in worlds of simulations, worlds where the map of the propagandist precedes the reality of actual territory. These worlds will be defined by the conditions of the marketplace. All reference to eternal ideas will be banished in the pure light speed of fiber optics as the pure circulation of power merges man and machine into a species governed by "business at

the speed of thought." (Gates, 2000)

In reaction to the deconstruction of indigenous social value systems, no doubt the poor and those disenfranchised by the lack of technology, subjugated by cultural imperialism, exploited as economic serfs, will become ever more stridently militant. In reaction to the mounting poverty, the perceived servitude to the world's wealthiest nations, and the threat to cultural and religious values, those whose situation appears hopeless will surely attempt to hold on to those ideals and values transcendent to their experience of the world. The world given to them by the global economy and technology will seem profane and a threat to their indigenous cultural existence.

Some who hold fast to the law of the word or the book will be motivated by those whose own vulgar will to power seeks to express itself through the fundamentalism of their faith, and will surely strike back. September 11, 2001 may only be only the first of a series of blows wrought upon the first world by tech-

nologies of their creation. On September 11th it was jet planes that inflicted the damage. There are, however, technologies whose potential for destruction dwarf the damage done on that day in 2001.

Science can have many unintended consequences. Think of the intention of the Internet first as tool of the defense department and which now has become a planetary communication system, or how biological research has morphed into an instrument for creating weapons of mass destruction. This is an especially disquieting thought in that "today anything is possible. As soon as you get beyond hijackings and car bombs, and things like that you entertain the possibility of nuclear, bacteriological, or chemical terrorism. The door is wide open, September 11 opened Pandora's box." (Virilio, 2002, p. 178) Advances in science and their effect on culture may either support or deter an



environment receptive to the completion of Integral Yoga.

Although the organizing ideas driving research and technology will play a decisive role in the outcome of how science shapes culture and facilitates either spirituality or nihilism, one must not overlook the role of the accident or catastrophe in determining the course of evolution. The potential of science and technology to facilitate the transformation of consciousness in its physical, vital, and mental formulations is likely to be determined by the conscious intent of the person or the culture wielding it as a tool. However, all the work of science could be undone by an accident, or a terrorist, who acts as the cybernetic shadow of the will to technology; as an agent of science's unintended consequence.

With its focus on the evolution of consciousness, no other yoga or spiritual practice has quite the same stake in the future of the earth as does Integral Yoga. The issue of the future and Integral Yoga raises some further questions: might a Nietzschean future be a necessary transition toward the superman which Sri Aurobindo heralds? Or is the promise of the future to be gained only by a conscious effort to free ourselves from the barbarism of the will to power manifest in the will to technology?

Sri Aurobindo actively worked for the receptivity of the truth consciousness on the earth, and worked expressly against those asuric forces and conditions of ignorance that could deter the evolution of consciousness. As we find in the book *Evening Conversations*, Sri Aurobindo engaged regularly in discussions about world affairs and the course of history. In his writings on culture and civilization, history, culture, science, and art are all shown as having relevance for spiritual growth in light of the yoga.

The future should be especially relevant to a community whose yoga places so high a stake in it. It matters to the extent technology will facilitate or deter the worldly conditions in which human consciousness evolves, and detracts from or

intensifies the aspiration for world harmony. The question can now be asked, how is all this a matter of concern for the community of Integral Yoga?

Visualize again the film *2001: A Space Odyssey*, in which a computer, Hal, has been so animated with a will to survive by its human programmers that its own survival threatens the existence of the humans it was created to serve. Humans have been reduced to servo-mechanisms for the machine. Or think of a more banal image, that of the IBM calculating machines, which were used by the Nazi's to make possible the systematic round up, transference and slaughter of the Jews of Europe; a simple technology in the service of a society with a perverse eugenic agenda. (<http://www.ibmmandtheholocaust.com>)

When the fascist regimes of Europe in the 1940s posed a threat to the evolution of consciousness, with their lust for global domination and its perversion of the Nietzschean ideal of the superman, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother both materially and occultly intervened to help halt its advance. Although a direct comparison between world events of the 1940s and the technological advances of the early twenty-first century certainly cannot be made, the eras have certain occult correlations regarding their consequences for the evolution of consciousness. The hidden forces driving events in both times share an insatiable lust for the will to power.

The current age of unconstrained global capitalism driven by a hyper-vitality bears a striking correlation to the commercial age described in the chapter of *The Human Cycle* entitled "Civilization and Barbarism." Here Sri Aurobindo writes: "in a commercial age with its ideal, vulgar and barbarous, of success, vitalistic satisfaction, productiveness and possession the soul of man may linger for a while for certain gains and experiences, but cannot permanently rest. If it persisted too long, Life would become clogged and perish of its own plethora or burst in its straining to a gross expansion. Like the too massive Titan it will collapse by its own mass, *mole ruet sua*." (*The Human Cycle*, 1972, p. 73)

If this is the case—keeping in mind the historical interventions in worldly affairs which Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have previously taken—isn't it incumbent on a community which seeks to fulfill the future promise of its founders, of a life divine, of the transformation of matter, to not only concentrate its practice on the inner individual dimensions of the transformation of consciousness, but also, as a reflection of that practice, to acknowledge and critique the processes of science and technology that may either facilitate or thwart the realization of that promise? We can, of course, choose to ignore the yoga in the world, but if we do, it would be best to remain on guard, so as not to be crushed when the titan falls.

References

- Gates, B. *Business at the Speed of Thought*, New York, Warner Business Books (2000)
- Heidegger, M. *The Question Concerning Technology and other Essays*. New York, Harper and Row (1977)
- Joy, B. "Why the Future Doesn't Need Us," *Wired Magazine* (April 2000)
- Joyce, J. *Finnegan's Wake*. New York, Penguin Books (1939)
- Kroker, A. *The Will to Technology and the Culture of Nihilism*. Toronto, University of Toronto Press (2004)
- Nietzsche, F. *The Will to Power*. W. Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale, trans. New York, Vintage Press (1968)
- Sri Aurobindo. *The Hour of God*, Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press (1972)
- Sri Aurobindo. *The Human Cycle*. Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press (1972)
- Sri Aurobindo. *The Life Divine*, Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press (1972)
- Sri Aurobindo. *Savitri*, Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press (1972)
- Thompson W.I. *Evil and World Order*. New York, Harper Collins (1980)
- Virilio P., *Crepuscular Dawn*, Cambridge MA, MIT Press (2002)



Source Material

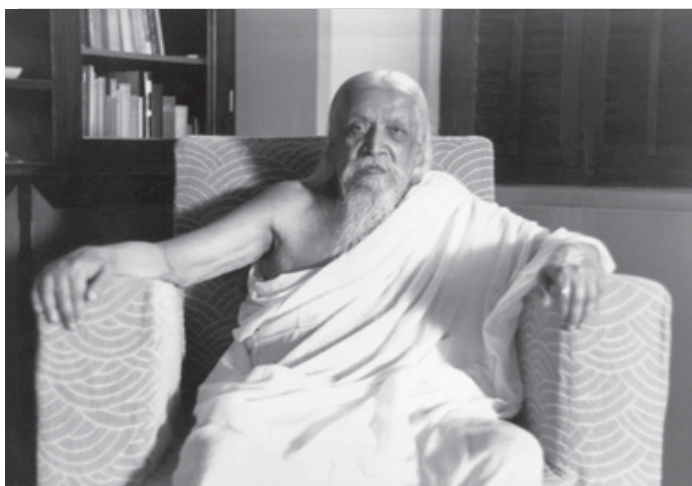
The problem of human disunity

by Sri Aurobindo

Our nature, our consciousness is that of beings ignorant of each other, separated from each other, rooted in a divided ego, who must strive to establish some kind of relation between their embodied ignorances; for the urge to union and forces making for union are there in Nature. Individual and group harmonies of a comparative and qualified completeness are created, a social cohesion is accomplished; but in the mass the relations formed are constantly marred by imperfect sympathy, imperfect understanding, gross misunderstandings, strife, discord, unhappiness. It cannot be otherwise so long as there is no true union of consciousness founded upon a nature of self-knowledge, inner mutual knowledge, inner realisation of unity, concord of our inner forces of being and inner forces of life. In our social building we labour to establish some approach to unity, mutuality, harmony, because without these things there can be no perfect social living; but what we build is a constructed unity, an association of interests and egos enforced by law and custom and imposing an artificial constructed order in which the interests of some prevail over the interests of others and only a half accepted half enforced, half natural half artificial accommodation keeps the social whole in being. Between community and community there is a still worse accommodation with a constant recurrence of the strife of collective ego with collective ego. This is the best that we can do and all our persistent readjustments of the social order can bring us nothing better than an imperfect structure of life.

It is only if our nature develops beyond itself, if it becomes a nature of self-

knowledge, mutual understanding, unity, a nature of true being and true life that the result can be a perfection of ourselves and our existence, a life of true being, a life of unity, mutuality, harmony, a life of true happiness, a harmonious and beautiful life. If our nature is fixed in what it is, what it has already become, then no perfection, no real and enduring happiness is possible in earthly life; we must seek it not at all and do the best we can with our imperfections, or we must seek it elsewhere, in a supraterrrestrial hereafter, or we must go beyond all such seeking and transcend life by an extinction of nature and ego in some Absolute from which this strange and unsatisfactory being of ours has come into existence. But if in us there is a spiritual being which is emerging and our present state is only an imperfection or half-emergence, if the Inconscient is a starting-point containing in itself the potency of a Superconscience and Supernature which has to evolve, a veil of apparent Nature in which that greater consciousness is concealed and from which it has to unfold itself, if an evolution of being is the law, then what we are seeking for is not only possible but part of the eventual necessity of things. It is our spiritual destiny to manifest and become that Supernature,—for it is the nature of our true self, our still occult, because unevolved, whole being. A nature of unity will then bring inevitably its life-result of unity, mutuality, harmony. An inner life awakened to a full consciousness and to a full power of consciousness will bear its inevitable fruit in all who have it, self-knowledge, a perfected existence, the joy of a satisfied being, the happiness of a fulfilled nature. (*The Life Divine*, pp. 1034-1036)



Sri Aurobindo. (photo courtesy Sri Aurobindo Ashram)

The collective and the individual in the supramental manifestation

by the Mother

I think that [the manifestation of the supramental] will happen the moment there is a sufficiently large number of consciousnesses which feel absolutely that it cannot be otherwise. Now, most people, the immense majority among you have to make an effort to imagine what it will be, and at best, speculate upon it and perhaps hope that the transformation will make things more pleasing, more pleasant—something like that. But your consciousness is so attached to what is, that it even finds it difficult to imagine that things can be otherwise. And until what must be becomes for a sufficiently big group of consciousnesses an inevitable necessity, and all that has been and all that still is at present appears like an absurdity which cannot last . . . it is at that moment that this [manifestation] can take place, not before.

There remains a problem, namely, whether it is something which can take place and will take place individually before occurring collectively. It is probable. But no individual manifestation can be



The Mother. (photo courtesy Sri Aurobindo Ashram)

complete nor even approach this perfection if it is not in harmony with at least a group of consciousnesses representative of a new world. In spite of everything there is so great an interdependence of the individual and the collectivity, that the individual realization, despite all, is limited, impoverished by the irresponsive atmosphere—if I may say so—of what surrounds it. And it is certain that the entire terrestrial life has to follow a certain curve of progress, so that a new world and a new consciousness can manifest. And that is why I said at the beginning that it depends at least partially on you.

Have you ever tried to picture what this new consciousness could be and what a new race could be like, and finally what a new world could be like?

By analogy, it is quite obvious that the arrival of man upon earth has changed the earth-condition. I cannot say that from a certain point of view this was for the greatest of all, because there are many who have suffered terribly from it, and here it is obvious that the complications the human being has brought into life have not always been very favorable either for him or for others. But from a certain point of view this has brought about a considerable progress, even in the lower species: man meddled with the life of metals, of minerals; as I said, it was not always for the greatest joy of those he dealt with, but still it certainly changed their conditions of life con-

siderably. Well, in the same way, it is probable that the supramental being, whatever it might be, will considerably change the life of the earth. In our heart and our thought we hope that all the evils the earth suffers from will be at least ameliorated if not cured, and that the general conditions will

be more harmonious, in any case more tolerable. This may happen, because it was the very nature of the mental consciousness which incarnated in man. Who acted for his own satisfaction, with his own development in view, and without much consideration for the consequences of his actions. Perhaps the Supermind will act more harmoniously. In any case we hope so. That is how we conceive of it . . .

So, if it is the right time, this is how the problem is put: there are people who are ready or will become ready, and these precisely will be the first to start on the new path. There are others who, perhaps, will become aware of it too late, who will have missed the opportunity; I think there will be many of this kind. But in any case, my point of view is this: even if there should be only half a chance, it would be worth the trouble of trying. For after all . . . I don't know . . . I told you just now, there is a moment when life such as it is, the human consciousness such as it is, seems something absolutely impossible to bear, it creates a kind of disgust, repugnance; one says, "No, it is not that, it is not that; it can't be that, it can't continue." Well, when one comes to this, there is only to throw in one's *all*—all one's effort, all one's strength, all one's life, all one's being — into this chance, if you like, or this exceptional opportunity that is given to cross over to the other side. What a relief to set foot on the new path, that which will lead

you elsewhere! This is worth the trouble of casting behind much luggage, of getting rid of many things in order to be able to take that leap. That's how I see the problem.

In fact it is the sublimest of adventures, and if one has in him in the slightest the true spirit of adventure, it is worth risking all for all. But those who are afraid, who wonder, "Am I not going to let go the substance for the shadow?" according to the most banal proverb one can imagine, those who tell themselves, "Bah! After all it is better to profit by what one has than to risk losing everything, we don't know what is going to happen tomorrow, let us take precautions" . . . unfortunately this is very widespread, extremely widespread . . . well, about those who are in this state of mind, I can assure you of one thing: that even when the thing occurs before their very nose, they will not perceive it. They will say, "It is good, in this way I won't regret anything." It is possible. But perhaps later they will; this we do not know.

In any case what I call being sincere is this: if one thinks that this new realisation is the only thing which is truly worth being lived; if what is, is intolerable—not only for oneself, perhaps not so much for oneself . . . but still, if one is not absolutely selfish and mean, one feels that, truly, it has lasted long enough, that one has had enough of it, that it must change—well, when one feels like that, one takes everything, all that one is, all that one can, all that one has, and one throws oneself into it completely without ever looking behind, and come what may! I indeed feel that it would be preferable even to plunge into an abyss in this way than to be on the shore, trembling and wondering, "What will happen tomorrow if I take this rather rash step?" There we are. (From *Questions and Answers*, 24 November 1954)

An entirely new consciousness in many individuals transforming their whole being . . . is needed for the new life to appear; only such a transformation of the general mind, life, body nature can bring into being a new worthwhile collective existence. (The Life Divine, p. 1061)



The poetry room

From *Love and death*

In the woodlands of the bright and early world,
When love was to himself yet new and warm
And stainless, played like morning with a flower
Ruru with his young bride Priyumvada.
Fresh-cheeked and dew-eyed white Priyumvada
Opened her budded heart of crimson bloom
To love, to Ruru; Ruru, a happy flood
Of passion round a lotus dancing thrilled,
Blinded with his soul's waves Priyumvada.
To him the earth was a bed for this sole flower,
To her all the world was filled with his embrace.
Wet with new rains the morning earth, released
From her fierce centuries and burning suns,
Lavished her breath in greenness; poignant flowers
Thronged all her eager breast, and her young arms
Cradled a childlike bounding life that played
And would not cease, nor ever weary grew
Of her bright promise; for all was joy and breeze
And perfume, colour and bloom and ardent rays
Of living; and delight desired the world.
Then Earth was quick and pregnant timelessly;
A free and unwall'd race possessed her plains
Whose hearts uncramped by bonds, whose unspoiled thoughts
At once replied to light. Foisoned the fields;
Lonely and rich the forests and the swaying
Of those unnumbered tops affected men
With thoughts to their vast music kin. Undammed
The virgin rivers moved towards the sea,
And mountains yet unseen and peoples vague
Winged young imagination like an eagle
Top strange beauty remote. And Ruru felt
The sweetness of the early earth as sap
All through him, and short life an aeon made
By boundless possibility, and love,
Sweetest of all unfathomable love,
A glory untired. As a bright bird comes flying
From airy extravagance to his own home,
And breasts his mate, and feels her all his goal,
So from boon sunlight and the fresh chill wave
Which swirled and lapped between the slumbering fields,
From forest pools and wanderings mid leaves
Through emerald ever-new discoveries,
Mysterious hillsides ranged and buoyant-swift
Races with our wild brothers in the meads,
Came Ruru back to the white-bosomed girl,
Strong-winged to pleasure. She all fresh and new
Rose to him, and he plunged into her charm.

—Sri Aurobindo

She truly loved

A sea of serenity, none would suspect
That the worm of doubt could torment
This pure petal of spirituality.
Her fine face was haloed by a luminous grace.
Command and humility were manifest in every gesture.
In her presence the stricken of the world felt
Care fly, and their griefs melted at her merest touch.
A strange flood of joy coursed through their hearts
At a calm word of sage advice from her lips.
Alight with adoration, her eyes sparkled brighter
Than the many candles on different altars.
She whose arms had never clasped a lover or a son,
Who had forsaken soft bed and epicurean delight,
Her compassion wafted over all lives like a caress of incense,
Desire she had none but coveted only to be worthy of Him,
Self-abnegation's monument and patience incarnate.
This flower of Europe's high nobility had been
The belle of a season, the rage of a year,
But bent on an upward path, on her Godward way
Had conquered earthly temptations, renounced sin and virtue.
Today she stood devoid of peace and detachment,
For yesterday when she had gone to inspect the work
Of the great painter of France invited by the church
To sanctify further by beauty's brush
The sanctum sanctorum, she had stood transfixed
At the sublime transformation wrought by his inspired work.
Then she had advanced with a grateful heart to bless him.
The painter beholding her snow-white and delicate pure hands,
Due to deep veneration didn't want them to be sullied
By a touch of his dust and cobweb-covered head.

He also was a noble soul like those
Painters and sculptors of India who gave their lives
To the Lord's adoration, leaving no name for posterity
To remember. Day after day he visited the great cathedrals
To get inspiration and strength for this noble work.
During these months nothing passed his lips except a monk's fare.
Yet in modern times when virtue is at a discount
And goodness is taken as the hallmark of the weak,
He hid his gentle saintly character under a mask of worldliness,
Above all he could not bear to be thanked.
He forestalled the shower of gratitude by saying —
"Mother! come not too near this sinner.
Your robe of virtue will be defaced
By my million stains and lapses.
Last night only I lay with a harlot."

The reverend mother stunned by these alien words
Stopped, her gentle hands half-raised in blessings.
Enjoying her discomfiture, the painter in innocent mischief



Mocked her further, "Mother Superior,
Christ took the sins of all men on Himself,
Can't His daughter do the same?"
Though her heart was shocked, the iron discipline held.
With an outward detachment the Mother said,
"God bless you, my friend." But her steps were
A little too hasty and her departure looked like a retreat.

The painter laughed heartily at his own prank
For he had seen her flesh shrink at his brash admonition.
Ignorant of how sorely he had troubled that gentle soul
The painter's brush became more revelatory and vigorous,
As he painted the last angel in the likeness of the Mother
Superior,
The saintly being whom he secretly adored.

Her vesper prayers done, aves offered,
A simple supper disposed of and night's blessings given to all,
The Mother retired to her room illumed by a single candle.
This night which her soul told her would be her last,
For the shadow of the future sometimes falls on our senses.
She whose life had been purer than the driven snow,
Who had achieved, in her ninety years
More than a mortal can hope or God demand,
Now felt defeated by the painter's taunt.
Inwardly she knew that she had felt a repulsion
At touching the man who had thus loudly proclaimed his sins.

The moment was near for leaving the earthly abode,
The dawn was waiting to usher her to her heavenly home,
But she felt some high task remained unfulfilled,
Something had been left undone.
She knelt before the icon given to her by the Count, her father,
A family heirloom of which all Christendom had heard.
A calm beyond words settled on her,
And a love from heaven filled her heart,
As with a beatific smile she rose
Taking the holy icon from its sanctified niche,
Opening the door, with firm steps she went where
The painter worked tonight to finish his work —
For the morrow's Feast of Redemption.
Her faithful servitor Sister Bernadette,
Dozing on her stool, awoke at the opening of the door,
And was transfixed by the nimbus around the Mother's face.
She could have vowed on Holy Bible
That she saw light linger in the Mother's footsteps.
Oblivious to her follower the saint glided
On her last errand, to her final triumph.
The painter startled by her presence at that hour
And by her radiant face of incarnate love
Involuntarily kneeled. Giving the icon to him
The Mother said, "Friend! Here is a present for you."

Thus rising above sin and virtue she sank
In front of the magnificence which the artist
Just before she came had unveiled. The church
Was inexplicably filled with a heavenly scent,
As all the angels in all the frescoes assumed her likeness.
And the two present heard a divine voice say,
"She truly loved."

—Shyam Kumari

A quarry lagoon

The Quincy quarries at one time yielded the best grades
of granite rock for use around the world. An igneous or volcanic
rock,
granite surfaces under pressure in a volcano.

Hot summer days we would take the bus
or thumb rides or drive from Roxbury
to the Quincy woodlands.

Ages eleven to thirteen, we street kids would climb the trail
up green hills to wild raspberry and blueberry patches
and the water-filled quarries, isolated
rock excavations of granite
and marble, boulders and stones.

The old Granite Railway Company in Quincy once hauled
boulders
for building and stone used for church statues
as in India, quarried granite left from glacial
or prehistoric times, or excavated

for churches and tombstones of Boston
and environs, and lighthouses
of the nineteenth century.

We swam the fresh spring water
and frolicked leaping or high diving
off quarry rock ledges.

A mysterious presence pervaded these abandoned quarries,
an eerie and exotic beauty of reflecting pools,
greenish blue water where floated leaves,

insects, branches, twigs, small logs, dust,
soil carried by winds from rocks,
trees and plants.

Watery pools of bottomless excavations. What were their
depths?



The legend of a shrinking corpse
floating to the surface. Youthful bravado and rash
antics in the *mysterium tremendum*.
Configured granite blocks with high outlook precipices
and Brahmic views of surrounding woods for miles
under a panoply of sky and clouds.

Beneath graffiti rock walls of rugged crags and steep
cliffs forlorn like a jungle lagoon
we swam the quarry fresh
in summer or early autumn, or spring.
We would climb to more elevated rocks
and grey ledges, then dive from the steeper cliff's
high rock landings.

When we reached the very top landing "Rooftop,"
we would survey the view
of Quincy hills and woods and misty
Boston skyline in the distance.

Off this high ledge we would contemplate a swan dive.

I would visualize the dive's steep arc,
poise myself for the tremulous height
then launch a winged swan into shining waters . . .

I now sometimes recall such events, memories
that stay with you.

Those youthful swan dives seemed to hint
at impulses toward transcendence, the moonlit pools to reflect
something tumultuous and Divine.

—Joseph Kent

Before dawn, at the sea

The press of night releases, retreats the dark and dense.
Above, the call from skyey space; ah, the secret opens.
Captured, I stop and wait approaching alchemy, all open to birth.
Now glide pearly masses on moving water;
clouds come for morning's opal drink.
God, what glory anthem!

Against the line of new horizon no sun is seen
but inside my skin its push, its rise is felt.
Breathing, seeing, my sheath expands
I lift and slide into sky's openings beyond these gauzy veils.

On either side of wideness, fading edges stretch
silver on liquid, as paintbrush strokes lay wandering lights,

bright on darkest blue or rosey gray
dark on light and light on dark – both do inward seal the day.

Direct, the frontal waves curl sharp and clear and clean
yes, pale with light, and green
pouring, pouring, come to me;
in them and through I am
gliding and shining the frothy filigree
lace stories entwined in ebb and flow
reluctant to part, to be written on sand;
a mystic language left to tell of travel's end.

While sailing behind in the western sky, still creamy but faint
who saw the mute full moon send its adieu,
a soft salute to dawn in the east?

Then slumbering swan of the sky awakes
with satin exhale to cheek and lips, my face,
caress of curves outside to in, and, oh, the same!

I enter the center, soar above,
companions of long: slow pulse of Love.
Above the air we sail secure,
warm, in unknown tongue of understanding
to the space beyond, far away!
O Beauty!
O Divine.

—Navaja Llope

September

September, that glorious month
Of warm temperate sunshine,
Opened her days of felicity,
Her spacious, peaceful cadences,
Along the banks of a mountain stream.
She lay in sylvan solitude
Framed in willow and towering pine,
And boulders heaped upon the shores,
And above, majestic blue and sun.
The rushing of water over rocks
Commingle with the murmuring pools'
Tones of mystical enchantment.
How rare that release into timeless wonder!
The press of cares, the half-done deeds
Weigh upon the breast, stifle the soul
That slowly, hardly, struggles to emerge.

Now, O radiant Splendor, Come!
Flow down in the wide white spaces,



Fill the golden day with thy Presence.
Whistle thy flute upon the boughs above
And thrill the senses with thy sweet embrace.
Into the moments pass before too late
Thy eternal calm, thy nameless delight.
Hurry, before the shadows fall,
Enter into the tumbling brook,
Into the soft and fragrant air,
Here, into the gray stone, penetrate.

—Larry Seidlitz

Perch fishing

What is ordinary trembles,
what is regular quakes.
Years bend on
rattling the plates,
feet a little surer
each missing step.
What waited cold past snow
comes to a permanent start.
Out folds of a fault
we hope a way along,
stained gull-ridge back,
huge grey-green rock.
Out to catch five yellow
tide peak fed perch
thick pouched pelicans fetch,
we let go both poles
a moment and watch,
after wave claps,
the blinding mist.
With what swift strokes do
you mortally surround me,
cover my eyes
pacific, abate
the pull of the hooked,
the reeling world
then pound troth into faith.
Soul's angel,
one you raised
from the living
long ago
has left these lines
to rock you even now
each lash on our face,
the sound
all the stronger
for our strange past.

—Rick Lipschutz

When I look at Her

when I look at Her,
She smiles at me,
from her womb silencing—
lovable eternal heart.
my mind's unending quest
snares the sprinkling
perfume of musk
from Her shining eyes.
I hold tightly
her lotus feet,
full with petals
of eternal love.
where the vastness of sea
anchors the boat of tide,
night is no more vast
before the awakening dawn,
in the skies of east.
to cheer the world of nature
She flew the streams
of the sunlit path,
where darkness takes
complete rest
in the platinum house.
native to stars and the moon,
I travelled across the universe
holding her wings of fire and peace.
I arrive in air and water,
and my thought's paradise
touches the sky,
when I look at Her.

—Manas Pati

Trust the dream

Auroville is working,
Trust the Dream—
Slowly opening
As a lily in subeam
White and pure
From mud insecure—
Stress at every seam.
Come, hold hands
And lift this dream
Of Truth Supreme.

—Chandresh Patel



Apropos

It is your destiny to see, to know as God knows, to feel as God feels. —Meister Eckhart

Life is a perpetual choice between truth and falsehood, light and darkness, progress and regression, the ascent towards the heights or a fall into the abyss. It is for each one to choose freely. —The Mother.

Come and be Love's willing slave, for Love's slavery will save you. Forsake the slavery of this world and take up Love's sweet service. The free, the world enslaves, but to slaves Love grants freedom. —Rumi

God and I have become like two giant fat people living in a tiny boat. We keep bumping into each and laughing. —Hafiz

Everything I see, hear, touch, feel, taste, speak, think, imagine, is completing a perfect circle that God has drawn. —Meister Eckhart

Do not say, "It is morning," and dismiss it with a name of yesterday. See it for the first time as a new-born child that has no name. —Rabindranath Tagore

I have no object to defend for all is of equal value to me. I cannot lose anything in this place of abundance I found. If something my heart cherishes is taken away, I just say, "Lord, what happened?" and a hundred more appear. —St. Catherine of Siena

Divine Love is not something ethereal, cold and far, but a love absolutely intense, intimate and full of unity, closeness and rapture using all the nature for its expression. —Sri Aurobindo

Divine love will be eternally true to its own being, and its being is giving all it can, at the perfect moment. —Meister Eckhart

We all have a role to fulfill, a work to accomplish, a place which we alone can occupy. —The Mother

I found completeness when each breath began to silently say the name of my Lord. —St. Teresa of Avila

How long will grown men and women in this world keep drawing in their coloring books an image of God that makes them sad? —Meister Eckhart

Wisdom is so kind and wise that wherever you may look you can learn something about God. —St. Catherine of Siena

The conquest of difficulties make up all that is valuable in the earth's history. —Sri Aurobindo

Know the true nature of your Beloved. In His loving eyes your every thought, word, and movement is always, always beautiful. —Hafiz

Commerce is supported by keeping the individual at odds with himself and others, by making us want more than we need, and offering credit to buy what refined senses do not want. —Meister Eckhart

Everyone has a life appropriate to his total development, everyone has experiences which help him in his total development, and everyone has difficulties which help in his total realization. —The Mother

All beings are words of God, His music, His art. —Meister Eckhart

Each object in the universe is really the whole universe in a different frontal appearance —Sri Aurobindo

It is not possible for Love to not hear us, and whatever happens the perfect teacher staged. —St. Catherine of Siena

They can be a great help—words. They can become the spirit's hands and lift and caress you. —Meister Eckhart

The minute one stops going forward, one falls back. The moment one is satisfied and no longer aspires, one begins to die. —The Mother

Man is a born child, his power is the power of growth. —Rabindranath Tagore

What percent of space is this earth in the infinite realm? What percent of time is one second in eternity? Less than that is our knowledge of God. How then can we ever argue about Him? —Meister Eckhart

Like water in jar and river are in essence the same, you and spirit are the same. Your every idol prostrates before you, your every thought-form perishes in your formlessness. —Rumi

To everyone who suffers, perseverance brings good fortune, The Prophet has said that each prostration of prayer is a knock on heaven's door. When anyone continues to knock, felicity shows its smiling face. —Rumi

A thousand souls hear His call every second, but most every one then looks into their life's mirror and says, "I am not worthy to leave this sadness." —St. Teresa of Avila

That which oppresses me, is it my soul trying to come out in the open, or the soul of the world knocking at my heart for its entrance? —Rabindranath Tagore

To see the divine possibility and overcome its play of obstacles constitutes the whole mystery and greatness of human existence. —Sri Aurobindo

If you are irritated by every rub, how will your mirror be polished? —Rumi

You have been put upon earth, in a physical body, with a definite aim, which is to make this body as conscious as possible, make it the most perfect and most conscious instrument of the Divine. —The Mother