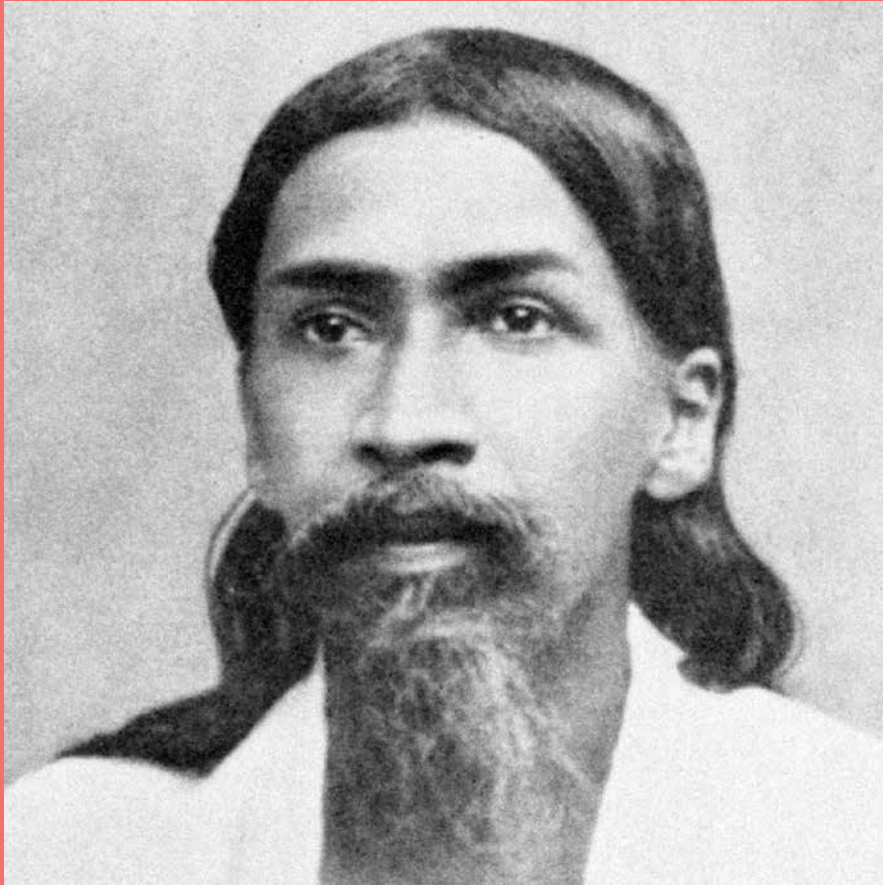


| | BHAVISHYATE | |



THE JOURNAL OF BHARAT NIVAS

THE PAVILION OF INDIA

IV

Bhavishyate



The Journal of Bharat Nivas

The Pavilion of India

IV





Thus will the masked Transcendent mount his throne.
When darkness deepens strangling the earth's breast
And man's corporeal mind is the only lamp,
As a thief's in the night shall be the covert tread
Of one who steps unseen into his house.
A Voice ill-heard shall speak, the soul obey,
A Power into mind's inner chamber steal,
A charm and sweetness open life's closed doors
And beauty conquer the resisting world,
The Truth-Light capture Nature by surprise,
A stealth of God compel the heart to bliss
And earth grow unexpectedly divine.¹

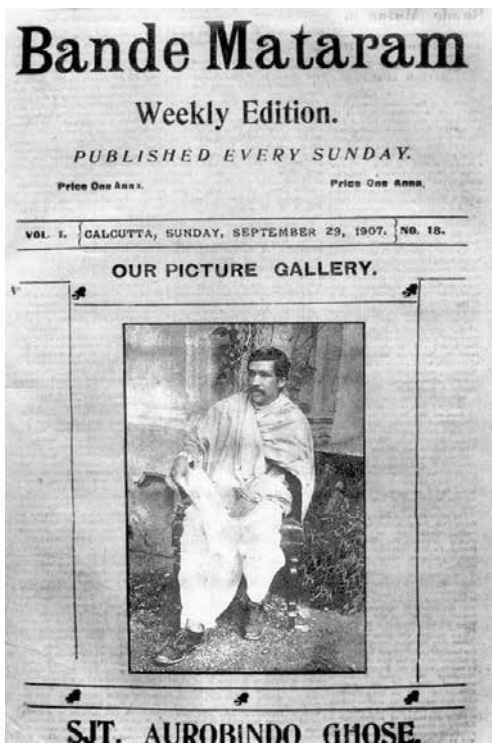
|| Sri Aurobindo's Action ||

● What Sri Aurobindo represents in the world's history is not a teaching, not even a revelation; but a decisive action direct from the Supreme.

In this 4th issue of Bhavishyate, Bharat Nivas offers seekers a massed assemblage of Sri Aurobindo's words. His work belongs not to past dawns; it is the future marching towards its realisation. Sri Aurobindo is the harbinger, as promised in *Savitri*, of a transformative material change. The future he accomplishes is a bringing down of soul-power into the mind, an awakened charm and sweetness in the domains of life, and the birth of a material world that would reveal itself as an embodiment of beauty and Truth-light. There is no better moment than now, the 150th year since his birth, to seek in his own words an understanding of the great evolutionary task he set himself to achieve.



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Top: the famous weekly journal *Bande Mataram* in which Sri Aurobindo wrote so many articles.

Below: Calcutta, August 1907

|| The footsteps of the Undreamed Idea ||

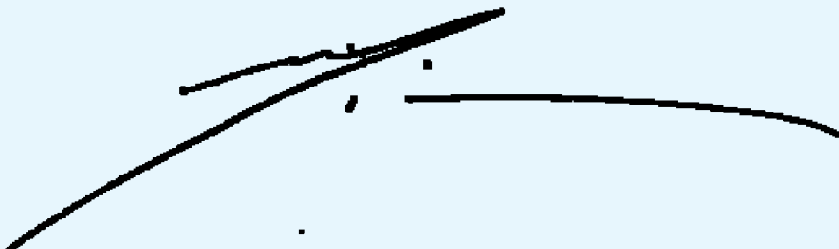
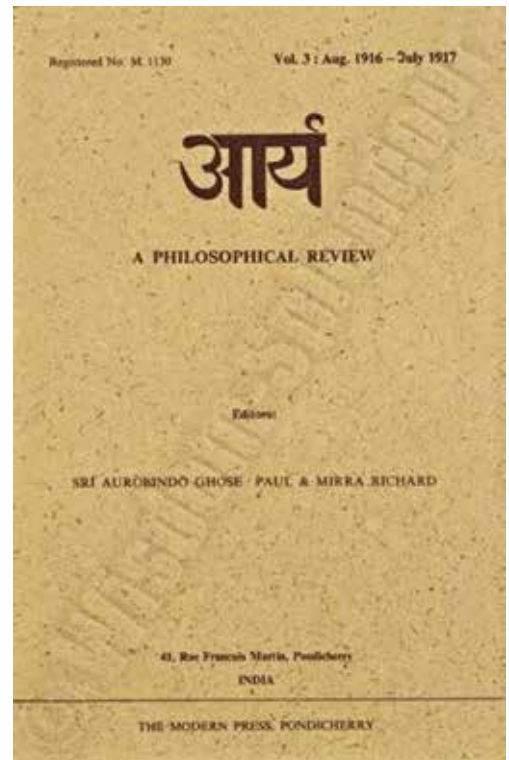
*He gazed across the empty stillnesses
And heard the footsteps of the undreamed Idea
In the far avenues of the Beyond.²*

From its commencement, Sri Aurobindo's personal yoga followed a distinct trajectory. His very choice of turning inwards was seemingly provoked by a wish to acquire the yogic force needed to liberate Mother India from its colonial stranglehold. Yet what this set in motion was unanticipated. His yogic journey, starting with the truth-perception of the mind as a mere receiving station of thoughts, led in three days to a state so completely void of thought as to bring him to the status of Nirvana.

From this point on, Sri Aurobindo was no longer a thinker: his mind became a windless receiving station of revelations from higher planes. Note the prodigious work he undertook when circumstances left him solely responsible for the already subscribed to and recently launched *Arya* – the prospective 75 page spiritual journal. This monthly publication, he brought into being directly upon his typewriter. He then proofed and edited it, and had it sent to subscribers through the years 1914 to 1920. It is in the *Arya* that he framed, in monthly instalments, the bulk of his great prose writings: *The Life Divine*; *The Synthesis of Yoga*; *Essays on the Gita*; the 3 volumes of his Social and Political Thought; *The Future Poetry*; The two volumes each of translations and comments on the Veda as also the Commentaries on The Isha, Kena and Other Upanishads. Such a feat is beyond the bounds of possibility for a thinking mind.

*His centre was no more in earthly mind;
A power of seeing silence filled his limbs.³*

What Sri Aurobindo represents in the world's history is not a teaching, not even a revelation; it is a decisive action direct from the Supreme

Sri Aurobindo's yoga began with what is popularly regarded as a culminating realisation! He has described this experience in a sonnet entitled Nirvana. Here is a fundamental truth about Sri Aurobindo. Poetry remained his chosen medium of self-expression. He calls himself a poet, not a yogi, not a philosopher, – though he has written what is the most comprehensive synthesis of yogic processes and created the profoundest philosophical treatise! Sri Aurobindo finds the poetic form most expressive. In *The Future Poetry* he suggests that inspired, rhythmic speech, *Mantra*, will be the mode embodying best the truths of the future. Indeed poetic form remained his preferred vehicle to convey both the deepest truths of his personal experiences as also his seer-visions for earth's future. In *Savitri* principally, but also in his shorter poems, we may discover rich, succinct descriptions of these experiences.



Top: Front cover of the Arya
Below: Red lotus. The Mother gave the name Avatar (the Divine incarnated in matter) to the red lotus. "The red lotus represents Sri Aurobindo", said The Mother



|| Transmuting an Age ||

|| *One soul's ambition lifted up the race
He drew the energies that transmute an age.*⁴

Do we truly comprehend what constitutes Sri Aurobindo's Yoga? When we turn to him we have to put aside customary ideas about spiritual processes. The very manner in which his own inward journey unfolded was revolutionary. Quietly and with no undue drama, he broke the barriers of traditional rules. The initial Nirvana experience began an ascending series of realisations – *siddhis* that arranged the trajectory of his advance. He chose to call what he was evolving *The Integral Yoga* and stated unequivocally that it was 'new' compared to previous approaches.

Our exploration will highlight what differentiates it from yoga systems that have been practiced since time immemorial. We will explore how its specificity of aim and of process make it unique? We will study both its commonalities and its differences with previous systems. In his letters to disciples there are extensive explanations about the Yoga he and The Mother are developing. Always, it is a dynamic, transformative action that is sought:

● *This yoga aims at the conscious union with the Divine in the supermind and the transformation of the nature. The ordinary yogas go straight from Mind into some featureless condition of the cosmic silence and through it try to disappear upward into the Highest. The object of this yoga is to transcend Mind and enter into the Divine Truth of Sachchidananda which is not only static but dynamic and raise the whole being into that truth.*⁵

● *In the former yogas it was the experience of the Spirit which is always free and one with the Divine that was sought.*

The nature had to change only enough to prevent its being an obstacle to that knowledge and experience. The complete change down to the physical was only sought for by a few and then more as a “siddhi” than anything else, not as the manifestation of a new Nature in the earth-consciousness.⁶

Sri Aurobindo argues that transforming the consciousness of the earth, – a new Nature in the earth-consciousness, – has never yet been considered a realisable collective aim. Spiritual solutions have been extra-terrestrial in aim; the body and the material life seen as something to be discarded. Sri Aurobindo categorically rejects this idea. He sets forth physical transmutation of matter as the ultimate aim. The newness of his yoga is to be found in this far-reaching aim and in its resulting standpoint as well as in the totality of its method. The highest Force has to be brought down into matter. The ascension of consciousness is merely the first step in this radically reversed approach.

Earlier, yoga systems were upward paths. Practiced for millennia, their methods are organised and macadamised. Guidance on how to step above into higher reaches of consciousness, or to step behind into deeper inward spaces are elaborate and innumerable. In Sri Aurobindo’s yoga, seekers must arm themselves with the highest light so they can journey into the darkest reaches of the inconscience. The inward and subsequently the upward movement are merely the first steps – the descent is the key. How else can material transmutation take place?

Through the 30’s, Sri Aurobindo gave elaborate responses to the many questions his disciples were raising. Patiently, he separated what was similar and what different in the yoga he was bringing into being. From the isolation of his room he spent endless hours responding unwearingly to every question, be it repeatedly raised. These letters, a veritable treasure trove for us, were for the disciples the only means of material contact with their guru. They were his method of ‘working upon’ the individual consciousnesses of those early sadhaks. Thanks to this prodigious work, we have today the many volume gift of his *Letters on Yoga*. Some letters were pages in



length. In the letter that follows, he breaks down every differentiation of this yoga from previous attempts. In a brief list he presents its newness:

● *By transformation I do not mean some change of the nature – I do not mean, for instance, sainthood or ethical perfection or Yogic Siddhis (like the Tantrik's) or a transcendental (cinmaya) body. I use transformation in a special sense, a change of consciousness radical and complete and of a certain specific kind which is so conceived as to bring about a strong and assured step forward in the spiritual evolution of the being and advance of a greater and higher kind and of a larger sweep and completeness than that smaller though decisive achievement of emerging consciousness when a mentalised being first appeared in a vital and material animal world. If anything short of that takes place or at least if a real beginning is not made on that basis, a fundamental progress towards this fulfilment, then my object is not accomplished. A partial realisation, something mixed and inconclusive, does not meet the demand I make on life and Yoga. ...*

I have never said that my Yoga was something brand new in all its elements. I have called it the integral Yoga and that means that it takes up the essence and many processes of the old Yogas – its newness is in its aim, standpoint and the totality of its method. ...

It is new as compared with the old Yogas:

- 1 *Because it aims not at a departure out of world and life into Heaven or Nirvana, but at a change of life and existence, not as something subordinate or incidental, but as a distinct and central object. If there is a descent in other Yogas, yet is it only an incident on the way or resulting from the ascent – the ascent is the real thing. Here the ascent is indispensable, but what is decisive, what is finally aimed at is the resulting descent. It is the descent of the new consciousness attained by*

the ascent that is the stamp and seal of the Sadhana. Even the Tantra and Vaishnavism end in the release from life; here the object is the divine fulfilment of life.

- 2 *Because the object sought after is not an individual achievement of divine realisation for the sake of the individual, but something to be gained for the earth consciousness here, a cosmic, not solely a supra-cosmic achievement. The thing to be gained also is the bringing in of a Power of Consciousness (the Supramental) not yet organised or active directly in earth-nature, even in the spiritual life, but yet to be organised and made directly active.*
- 3 *Because a method has been precognized for achieving this purpose which is as total and integral as the aim set before it, viz., the total and integral change of the consciousness and nature, taking up old methods passing on to others that are distinctive. I have not found this method (as a whole) or anything like it professed or realised in the old Yogas. If I had, I should not have wasted my time in hewing out a road and in thirty years of search and inner creation when I could have hastened home safely to my goal in an easy canter over paths already blazed out, laid out, perfectly mapped, macadamised, made secure and public. Our Yoga is not a retreading of old walks, but a spiritual adventure.⁷*

It's important to remind ourselves of Sri Aurobindo's insistence that his yoga takes up old methods only as 'a part action and present aid'. All previous systems, even the life-affirming *Tantra* and *Vaishnavism* aim at a release from life. Moreover, in this yoga, there is the need to bring down a Power that has not been organised or active in earth-nature, even in spiritual life. This is the power of the Supermind. Most importantly, he seeks the total and integral change of consciousness and nature not as an individual achievement which was the main purpose of past methods, but rather as something to be gained for the earth consciousness. As he asserts, he would hardly



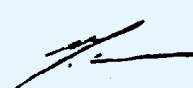


have spent thirty years hewing out a road, – thirty years of search and inner creation, – if organised pathways were available! Thus, as anyone who embarks upon his yoga can affirm, his path is indeed NOT a retreading of old walks – it is a spiritual adventure.

Sri Aurobindo does not
belong to the past nor
to history

Sri Aurobindo is the Future
advancing towards its realisation.

Thus we must shelter the
eternal youth required for a speedy
advance, in order not to become
lagged on the way.

Blessings 

|| Matter as the Spirit's Firm Density ||

*There Matter is the Spirit's firm density,
An artistry of glad outwardness of self, ...
There substance was a resonant harp of self,
A net for the constant lightnings of the spirit.⁸*

Perhaps we may have a better understanding of this veritable 'god's labour' if we study his own diary notes of personal practice. As a result of a considerable work undertaken by the Sri Aurobindo Archives, – the repository at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram of all archival material, – we have today a two volume document entitled "*Record on Yoga*" to be found in the Collected Works of Sri Aurobindo (CWSA), the definitive and comprehensive edition of all he wrote. This two-volume Record constitutes the personal diary notations Sri Aurobindo maintained to keep track of the quotidian progress of his own unique sadhana. They comprise, for the most part, shorthand personal notes, a sort of aide memoire of progress, that extend over many years. The notations start soon after he comes to Pondicherry and continue, with large interruptions, for near on two decades. In these dry jottings, we see the extraordinary programme he set before himself and the rigour with which he tracked his own progress. Sri Aurobindo's yoga demonstrably constitutes a complete reversal of previous life denying aims. The chosen field, matter, is approached as the firm density of the spirit – not a trap, not an illusion, nor something to be abandoned. Evolution, in its deepest truth, is understood as a progressive unfolding of Spirit emerging out of this density of material consciousness. Sri Aurobindo's action is directed towards accelerating this evolutionary process.

What emerges in these notes is a most elaborate plan of action ever yet recorded. The chosen field, *kshetra*, is not to be encountered in the processes of previous yoga systems. There is also the simple fact that through India's spiritual history, experiences, if at all recorded,

have been concealed in an esoteric, aphoristic style. Secret words to be grasped only by those capable of similar heights of knowing, Observe inter alia the continuing miscomprehension that still exists about the Vedas.

● *'ninya vacamsi – seer wisdoms that utter their inner meaning to the seer – kavyani kavyaye nivacana'.*⁹

This is a yoga of transmutation. And the processes it demands are reversed in their importance. The consciousness must indeed rise to highest inward heights; but the aim is to descend armed with this illumined purity into the subconscious, into the very nescience, the dark source of manifestation. The endeavour is to bring to each and every abysmal recess, the transmuting light, consciousness and power of the highest possible planes. This is the essential necessity. Sri Aurobindo's life-work was a herculean effort to bring about the manifestation of the hitherto unmanifest power of the Supermind, the Truth Consciousness. To accomplish this aim, he lists out a plan of action for himself, which he calls the '*Sapta Chatusthaya*': literally, the 'seven fours'. This constitutes a programme of almost thirty different '*siddhis*' he must acquire. Taken all together, these create an ascending series of realisations which are sought not merely as an end in themselves but to serve as a means to bring this new power into manifestation. What this prodigious effort entailed may be underscored by presenting here the very first steps of these esoteric processes.

|| Sapta Chatusthaya ||

in The Record of Yoga

Summarised here, in a selection of his own words, are the elements which constituted the very first Chatusthaya. This is the first quaternary of the seven chatusthayas to be achieved. He calls it the: *Shanti* or *Samata Chatusthaya*:

● *Samata shantih sukham hasyam iti shanti chatusthayam*

There are 2 forms of Samata, passive and active, samata in reception of the things of the outward world and samata in the reaction to them.

He elaborates then the passive form of samata which is constituted of three things:

"Titiksha, udasinata, nathih iti samata"

Titiksha, he says, is a bearing firmly all contacts pleasant or unpleasant, not being overpowered by that which is painful, not being carried away by the pleasant. *Titiksha* is an attitude of calm and firmness to receive, hold and bear; it is to be stronger, greater than any attack of the world.

When this is settled in the being, the next stage is *Udasinata*, a condition of being literally seated above; indifferent to dualities. Free from desire, joy or grief, it is a state of being superior to all physical and mental touches which may yet be felt in the body and mind but not in oneself, as one is different and seated above the play of the gunas.

Nati is a state when submission to the will of the Divine is embodied by the soul and it accepts all touches as a play (*lila*). When these three conditions are achieved there is the firm fixity of

समता शान्तिः सुखं हास्यमिति शान्तिचतुष्टयं ।

तितिक्षोदासीनता

नतिरिति

समता ।



Shanti and the fullness is achieved of the negative or passive aspect of samata. This is the very first condition of this chatusthaya. Sri Aurobindo then turns to the active aspect of this state:

रसः प्रीतिरानन्द इति सर्वानन्दः

Rasah, priti, anandah iti sarvanandah.

Rasa is when one can experience the appreciative perception, the taste and quality which the Ishwara of the lila enjoys in all that is created. *Pritih* is the pleasure the mind experiences in all *rasa*, whether pleasant or unpleasant, sweet or bitter. And thus we may arrive at the experience of *Ananda*, a condition of delight which is superior to all mental pleasure. In this state the dualities entirely cease.

● *If there is the least disturbance or trouble in the mentality, we may be perfectly sure that there is a disturbance or defect in the samata. ... The buddhi, the manas, the heart, the nerves (prana) the very bodily case must be subjected to the laws of samata. Shanti may be a vast calm based on Udasinata or a vast joyous calm based on Nati. The former is apt to associate itself with a tendency to inaction and it is therefore in the latter that our Yoga must culminate.*

He then goes on to elaborate the state of *Sukham*: “The perfected Yogin has never in himself any touch of sorrow, any tendency of depression, cloud or internal repining and weariness, but is always full of *sattvic* light and ease.”

Finally we come to stage 4 of this first Chatusthaya,

● *Hasyam is the active side of sukham; it consists in an inner state of gladness and cheerfulness which no adverse experience mental or physical can trouble. Its perfection is the stamp and seal of God on the siddhi of the samata.¹⁰*

Significantly, we find oblique references, here and there, in his published writings to this rigorous personal programme.

For instance, in the *Synthesis of Yoga*, in a small paragraph, he does describe these four soul conditions of the first Chatusthaya.

● *There are four things that he must have; first, equality in the most concrete practical sense of the word, samata, freedom from mental, vital, physical preferences, an even acceptance of all God's workings within and around him; secondly, a firm peace and absence of all disturbance and trouble, Santi; thirdly, a positive inner spiritual happiness and spiritual ease of the natural being which nothing can lessen, sukham; fourthly, a clear joy and laughter of the soul embracing life and existence. To be equal is to be infinite and universal, not to limit oneself, not to bind oneself down to this or that form of the mind and life and its partial preferences and desires.*¹¹

Considering this first Chatusthaya is the very basis upon which his yoga is built, anyone who turns to his yoga can measure for themselves their own progress in this regard. In this yoga there can be no imbalance, no excitement of ecstasy. Steadiness, poise and complete equality are the base conditions upon which the growing equilibrium of the nature is developed. Even so, to achieve that joy and laughter of soul while embracing and not withdrawing from life and existence, seems a near impossible task for the present state of human consciousness. Perhaps it is the reason why Sri Aurobindo does not put forward for his disciples or his reading public, all the steps of his intense, rigorous personal discipline of the seven fours.

Perhaps if we could but arrive collectively at a sense of spiritual ease accompanied by a seeking for common well-being, we would become living examples of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga!





|| A Spiritual Adventure ||

*One Soul's ambition lifted up the race
He drew the energies that transmute an age.
He made great dreams a mould for coming things
And cast his deeds like bronze to front the years.
His walk through time outstripped the human stride.¹²*

As guru and master of the yoga, Sri Aurobindo seems to have an unique approach. One hardly encounters prescriptive guidance. In his letters, we find him saying something to this effect: here is the Truth I have seen, lived and embodied. I offer you a broad framework, philosophic, psychological and experiential, aimed at transformation of your nature. Yet, the work you have to do is within your own consciousness. You must discover therein the combination that gives rise to your own personal methodology that can best lead you to union and self-perfection.

Why is this so? It would appear, such transmuting change necessitates a free choice both of the individual and then of the collective human consciousness to take or not the next step in evolution. The guidance available is extensive and comprehensive. Answers are there to just about any difficulty, so wide ranging are Sri Aurobindo's writings and letters. The key question we may ask ourselves is: have we measured up to the demands this freedom proffers? Why does Sri Aurobindo insist so much on this freedom of self-discovery when he is aware of the present state of collective human consciousness? Humanity it seems, is confronted by an evolutionary choice: it has to consent to being spiritualised. Is this the sole way to harness a complete collaboration of the habitually recalcitrant external human nature for the work of transmutation?

He seems aware of the pressure his presence exerts upon the collective condition. We find a remark in an early letter where he suggests, somewhat ruefully, that he seems 'inconveniently' ahead of

his times. : *"But my mind has a habit of running inconveniently ahead of the times,—some might say, out of time altogether into the world of the ideal."*¹³

Yet, in spite of the insuperable obstacles he encounters, his Will for realisation remains. All his action is directed to achieve what he seeks in the here and the now – *ihaiva*, as the Upanishad says. This is what he has come to fulfil – and fulfil he will!

Sri Aurobindo is seldom bound by past practice however authoritative the source. He brings the scientist's discerning eye and questioning mind to every process he encounters. He argues that the traditions of the past may be excellent, indeed he has written most appreciatively about them, but their place is where it is – in the past. Why should they not be followed by something new, he asks. When he speaks of hewing out new pathways, it is a literal truth. Always the quest is to seek the highest way. There can be no false coin, no admixtures, no acceptance of short-cuts in the path he adopts: the Truth-Consciousness he seeks will break any vessel that has the least impurity.

His concern is for the earth; it is a terrestrial realisation he seeks:

● *The traditions of the past are very great in their own place, in the past, but I do not see why we should merely repeat them and not go farther. In the spiritual development of the consciousness upon earth the great past ought to be followed by a greater future. ...*

*I am concerned with the earth, not with worlds beyond for their own sake; it is a terrestrial realisation that I seek and not a flight to distant summits. All other yogas regard this life as an illusion or a passing phase; the supramental yoga alone regards it as a thing created by the Divine for a progressive manifestation and takes the fulfilment of the life and the body for its object. The supramental is simply the Truth-Consciousness and what it brings in its descent is the full truth of life, the full truth of consciousness in Matter.*¹⁴

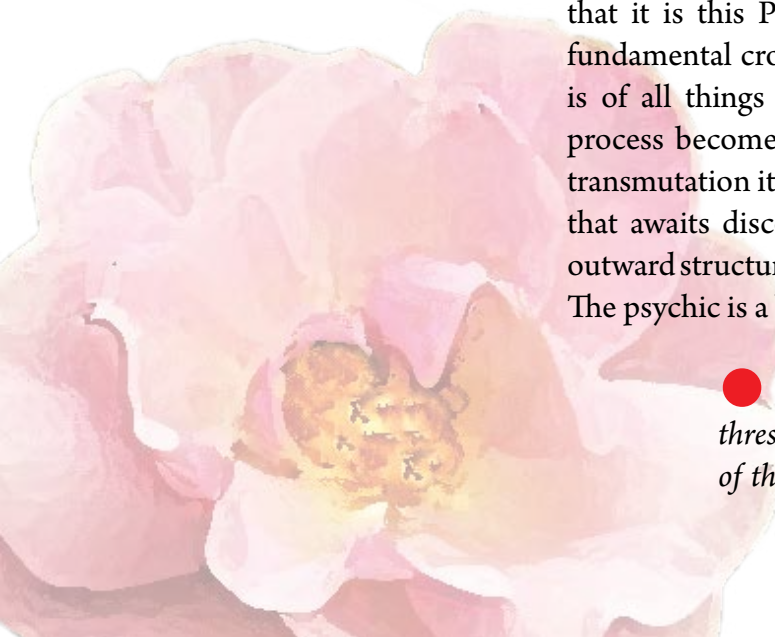
|| A Terrestrial Realisation ||

● *My yoga is not for myself but for the earth consciousness.*

In Sri Aurobindo's yoga therefore, it is not enough to purify oneself and lift one's consciousness to a higher state of being. That is merely the initial step. This higher light and power has to be brought down into the most outward personality. It is this habitually resistant, petty ego-self that has to consciously open itself to the processes of transmutation. The more one rises in consciousness the deeper one may descend. It is this descending movement which acts as the transformative power. Yet, we may ask: are there specific processes he suggests for those who turn to his path?

The one method Sri Aurobindo proposes is the simplest of all things, perhaps its very simplicity is an issue. The fundamental demand in this yoga is complete surrender. The only method, Sri Aurobindo proposes is to concentrate in the heart and call the Universal Mahashakti, the divine Conscious-Force, and offer to Her in utter transparency one's whole being to do her marvellous work within in every corner of the being. Sri Aurobindo repeatedly asserts that it is this Power alone which can transmute human nature's fundamental crookednesses. But abdication of ego and of self-will, is of all things the most difficult for human consciousness. The process becomes magical only once one recognises the liberating transmutation it brings! The key is the psychic being. It is this being that awaits discovery behind socio-cultural, hereditary and other outward structures of the external personality, who is the true person. The psychic is a being of harmony, of sweetness and mutuality.

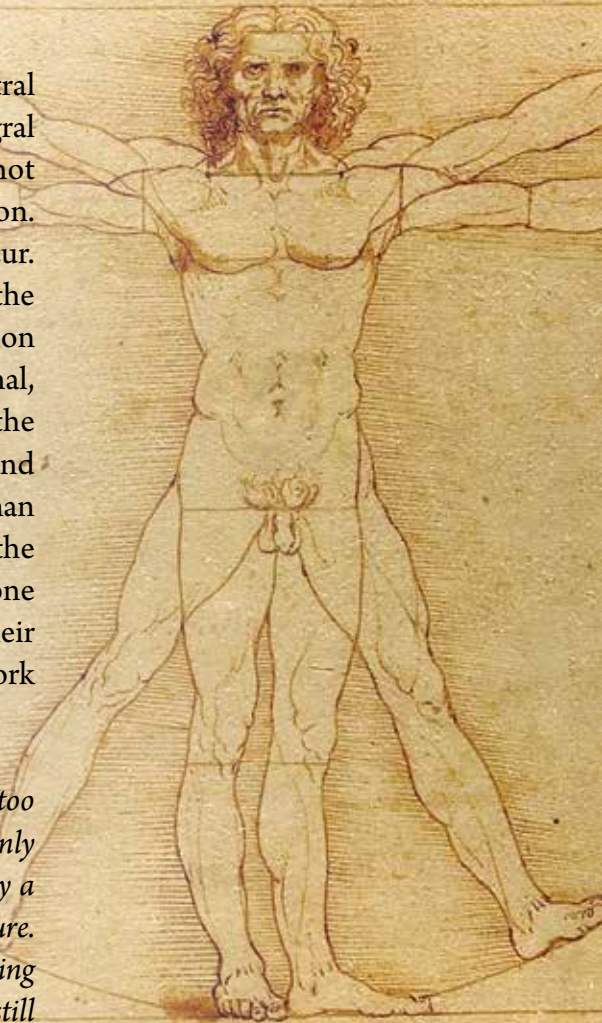
● *The true soul secret in us ... is not situated below the threshold of waking mind, but rather burns in the temple of the inmost heart behind the think screen of an ignorant*



*mind, life and body, not subliminal but behind the veil, – this veiled psychic entity is the flame of the Godhead always alight within us ... it is a flame born out of the Divine, and luminous inhabitant of the Ignorance, grown in it till it is able to turn it towards the knowledge.*¹⁵

This true self has to be brought forward and made the central person if one wishes to meet the demand of a total and integral transformation. All other parts of us however high and true do not create the reversal of consciousness that is essential for conversion. To achieve an integral transmutation two movements must occur. There is a process that moves vertically through all the states of the being. At the same time there is also a sort of horizontal progression as this transmuting force works its way through all the infinitesimal, different, even contradictory layers of the outer nature. This is the unique demand and challenge. The descending force acts upon and changes the very structure, personality and character of the human individual. There can be no sitting upon or escaping from all the petty impulses generated by life. The moment a searchlight is shone upon them, they demonstrate their seeming stranglehold with their small contradictory desires, preferences and inclinations – the work in this raw, crude, individual nature is laborious but unavoidable.

● *Our Yoga can succeed only if the External man too changes, but that is the most difficult of all things. It is only by a change of the physical nature that it can be done, by a descent of the highest light into this lowest part of Nature. It is here that the struggle is going on. The internal being of most of the Sadhaks here, however imperfect still, is still different from that of the ordinary man, but the external still clings to it old ways, manners, habits. Many do not seem to even have awakened to the necessity of the change. It is when this is realised and done, that the Yoga will produce its full results in the Ashram itself, and not before.*¹⁶





|| The Hollow Reflective Mirror of Mind ||

*All else is shadow and flash in Mind's bright glass,
Mind, hollow mirror in which Ignorance sees
A splendid figure of its own false self
And dreams it sees a glorious solid world.¹⁷*

What is the role of the mind in these processes? It is not the head-centre which has wings but rather the heart-centre, the seat of the psychic being! The mind does have a most significant function. Its active collaboration or lack thereof can accelerate or slow down yogic processes. Sri Aurobindo has written extensively on the true role of each part of the being – mind, life and body. He explains why it is not a mental realisation he seeks. The call is rather for an integral illumination down to the very physical as invoked by his Gayatri mantra. A short paragraph in *The Synthesis of Yoga* is quite illuminative of the mind's limits.

● *The mind by its very nature cannot render with an entirely right rightness or act in the unified completeness of the divine knowledge, will and Ananda because it is an instrument for dealing with the divisions of the finite on the basis of division, a secondary instrument therefore and a sort of delegate for the lower movement in which we live. The mind can reflect the Infinite, it can dissolve itself into it, it can live in it by a large passivity, it can take its suggestions and act them out in its own way, a way always fragmentary, derivative and subject to a greater or less deformation, but it cannot be itself the direct and perfect instrument of the infinite Spirit acting in its own knowledge.¹⁸*

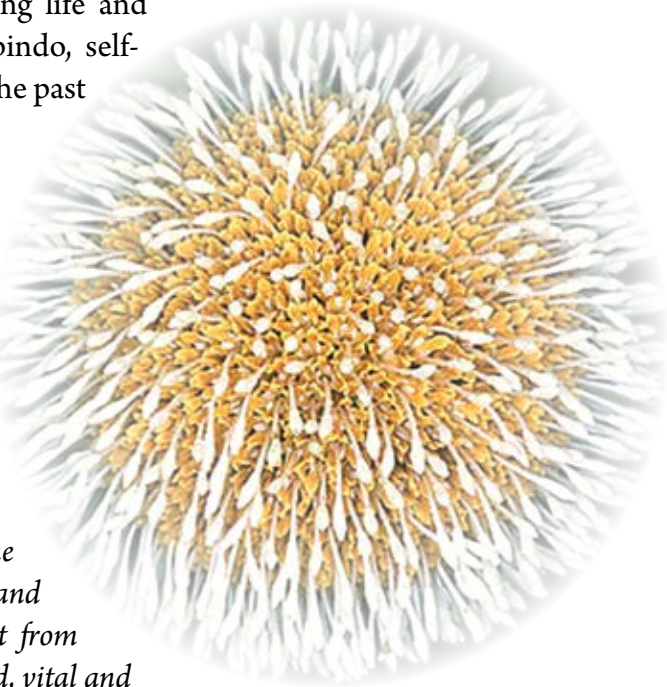
The mind's true role is to reflect the Infinite to dissolve itself into and live in a large passivity. The truth of the future brought out in innumerable ways in Sri Aurobindo's writings is to be what he calls a "Willed Automatism" – a condition created when the mind becomes an immobile and illumined zone of transmission. Even so, a questing mentality may find a remarkable, deeply satisfying delineation in his writings of all the many planes of this complex manifestation. Previously, realisations that concluded with abandoning life and the world needed no such descriptions. In Sri Aurobindo, self-realisation is not the issue: any of the great pathways of the past are perfectly effective at achieving this.

In a letter he clarifies :

● There are many planes above man's mind,—the supramental is not the only one, and on all of them the Self can be realised,—for they are all spiritual planes. Mind, vital and physical are inextricably mixed together only on the surface consciousness—the inner mind, inner vital, inner physical are separated from each other. Those who seek the Self by the old yogas separate themselves from mind, life and body and realise the self of it all as different from these things. It is perfectly easy to separate mind, vital and physical from each other without the aid of supermind. It is done by the ordinary yogas.

The difference between this and the old yogas is not that they are incompetent and cannot do these things—they can do this perfectly well—but that they proceed from realisation of Self to Nirvana or some Heaven and abandon life, while this does not abandon life. The supramental is necessary for the transformation of terrestrial life and being, not for reaching the Self. One must realise Self first, only afterwards can one realise the supermind.¹⁹

*Tat savitur varam rupam jyotih
parasya dhimahi,
yannah satyena dipayet*



**Let us meditate
on the most auspicious
form of Savitri,
on the Light of the Supreme
which shall illumine us
with the Truth.**

नमो नैव नरे रूपां ज्योतिः परम्
(दीप्तिः)
यन् सत्यं दीपयेत् ॥



|| A Dynamic Transmutation of Life ||

● *Hard it is to be in the world, free, yet living the life of ordinary men; but because it is hard, therefore it must be attempted and accomplished.²⁰*

The supermind is not essential for self-discovery; it is indispensable to bring about the transformation of terrestrial life. The struggle to bring it into manifestation was not for the individual consciousness. It was for the earth consciousness as a whole. Such was Sri Aurobindo extraordinary dream for humanity. He set out to achieve this first in his own person. Individual work necessarily takes the lead; the collective change must follow. The Integral Yoga places very rigorous demands both on the individual and on the group. A significant truth of manifestation is the interdependence between the collectivity and the individual. Especially in any collective endeavour, there is a spontaneous check or restraint exercised by the collective state upon the advancing individual. To achieve a happy balance, each one needs to be doing their conscious individual growth and change of nature. If only one person in a group does a conscious yoga – that person needs must do it for the totality. In such a case, the state of the whole impedes and even pulls backwards any individual forward movement. There is always a subconscious influence.

Perhaps this is one significant reason that withdrawal from life into monastic orders or distant, isolated mountain retreats has been considered the optimum condition for any sort of aśkesis – the very exclusivity and isolation giving rise to visible change. But it remains a change at best, limited. This is not what Sri Aurobindo and The Mother posit. In their yoga, there can be no splendid isolation; life itself in all its dark and difficult parts has to be the field of progress. Such is the true meaning of a ‘collective realisation’: the

essential prerequisite for the realisation of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga. In a marvellous passage from his *Synthesis of Yoga*, Sri Aurobindo argues that universal life is the domain of divine power not yet fully unveiled. However seemingly impossible the task, life itself must be made the helper. In a delightful turn of phrase, he suggest that it is a 'booty' that needs essentially to be wrested back from the powers that oppose!

● *Life is the field of a divine manifestation not yet complete: here, in life, on earth, in the body,—ihaiva, as the Upanishads insist,—we have to unveil the Godhead; here we must make its transcendent greatness, light and sweetness real to our consciousness, here possess and, as far as may be, express it. Life then we must accept in our Yoga in order utterly to transmute it; we are forbidden to shrink from the difficulties that this acceptance may add to our struggle. Our compensation is that even if the path is more rugged, the effort more complex and bafflingly arduous, yet after a certain point we gain an immense advantage. For once our minds are reasonably fixed in the central vision and our wills are on the whole converted to the single pursuit, Life becomes our helper. Intent, vigilant, integrally conscious, we can take every detail of its forms and every incident of its movements as food for the sacrificial Fire within us. Victorious in the struggle, we can compel Earth herself to be an aid towards our perfection and can enrich our realisation with the booty torn from the Powers that oppose us.²¹*

In Sri Aurobindo's yoga, each aspirant has to take up a work and do it as a yoga. Karma yoga which addresses the dynamic side of action keeps you turned towards life. In this yoga, work is offered to the divine as a prayer of the life-spirit and the body. It is the primary method by which material life is made to grow in consciousness.



|| The Yoga in the Physical ||

|| In Matter shall be lit the spirit's glow,
In body and body kindled the sacred birth;²²

Sri Aurobindo's yoga demands a reaching up and finding of the highest light for an illuminated descent into the deepest recesses of the lower nature. It is an ingress into the Vedic caves of Vritra and the Panis, – such intuitions can be found in the symbolic mantras of the Veda. A truth Sri Aurobindo highlights in *The Secret of the Veda* and *Hymns to the Mystic Fire*. Indeed Agni, the mystic fire of the Veda, can be seen as symbolic of the Psychic Being. In the Veda a primary importance is given to Agni, the leader of the march, the priest of the sacrifice, 'the son of heaven by the body of the earth' – a description that could be applied equally to the psychic being, the evolutionary soul, that becomes 'ready' over many thousands of births. In earlier spiritual texts one does not encounter descriptions of this evolutionary soul person, *Chaitya Purusha*, Sri Aurobindo names it in Sanskrit. Traditional texts speak of the Jivatman, which Sri Aurobindo calls the Central Soul. He says the central soul presides over but does not manifest into the evolutionary process.

The psychic being is the key instrument that will lead the transmuted individual nature on the pathways of the future. Sri Aurobindo prescribes no elaborate methodology for calling it forward as the '*leader of the march in the front*'. The work takes place in the material physical being, yet it would appear that the methodology has to be discovered individually. Perhaps this is because everyone has in themselves a slightly different nature combination and therefore a particular difficulty to be overcome. It is the Conscious-Force, the Mahashakti, manifesting in the individual being that can do this minute work of transmutation. Each life needs to perfect itself in its own way. The commonality is in the seeking for sincerity which creates the speed or the retardation of the process. Sri Aurobindo



explains why in this letter:

● *What is a perfect technique of yoga or rather of a world-changing or Nature-changing yoga? Not one that takes a man by a little bit of him somewhere, attaches a hook, and pulls him up by a pulley into Nirvana or Paradise. The technique of a world-changing yoga has to be as multiform, sinuous, patient, all-including as the world itself. If it does not deal with all the difficulties or possibilities and carefully deal with each necessary element, has it any chance of success? And can a perfect technique which everybody can understand do that? It is not like writing a small poem in a fixed metre with a limited number of modulations. If you take the poem simile, it is the Mahabharata of a Mahabharata that has to be done.²³*



|| A Triple Transformation ||

|| The master of existence lurks in us
And plays at hide and seek with his own Force;
In Nature's instrument loiters secret God.²⁴

What is the meaning of the word transformation in the Aurobindonian context? Sri Aurobindo uses words, be they nouns or verbs, very deliberately and it is always important to understand them in their specific context. As the realisation sought is dynamically life-affirming, we do need to have a living sense of what is intended.

● Transformation is a word I have brought in myself to express certain spiritual concepts and spiritual facts of the integral Yoga. ... What I mean by spiritual transformation is something dynamic (not merely liberation of the Self or realisation of the One which can very well be attained without any descent). It is a putting on of the spiritual consciousness dynamic as well as static in every part of the being down to the subconscious. That cannot be done by the influence of the Self leaving the consciousness fundamentally as it is with only purification, enlightenment of the mind and heart and quiescence of the vital. It means a bringing down of the Divine Consciousness static and dynamic into all these parts and the entire replacement of the present consciousness by that. This we find unveiled and unmixed above mind, life and body. ... It is my experience that nothing short of its full descent can thoroughly remove the veil and mixture and effect the full spiritual transformation. No metaphysical or logical reasoning in the void as to what the Atman 'must' do or can do or needs or needs not to do is relevant here or of any value. I may add that transformation is not the central object

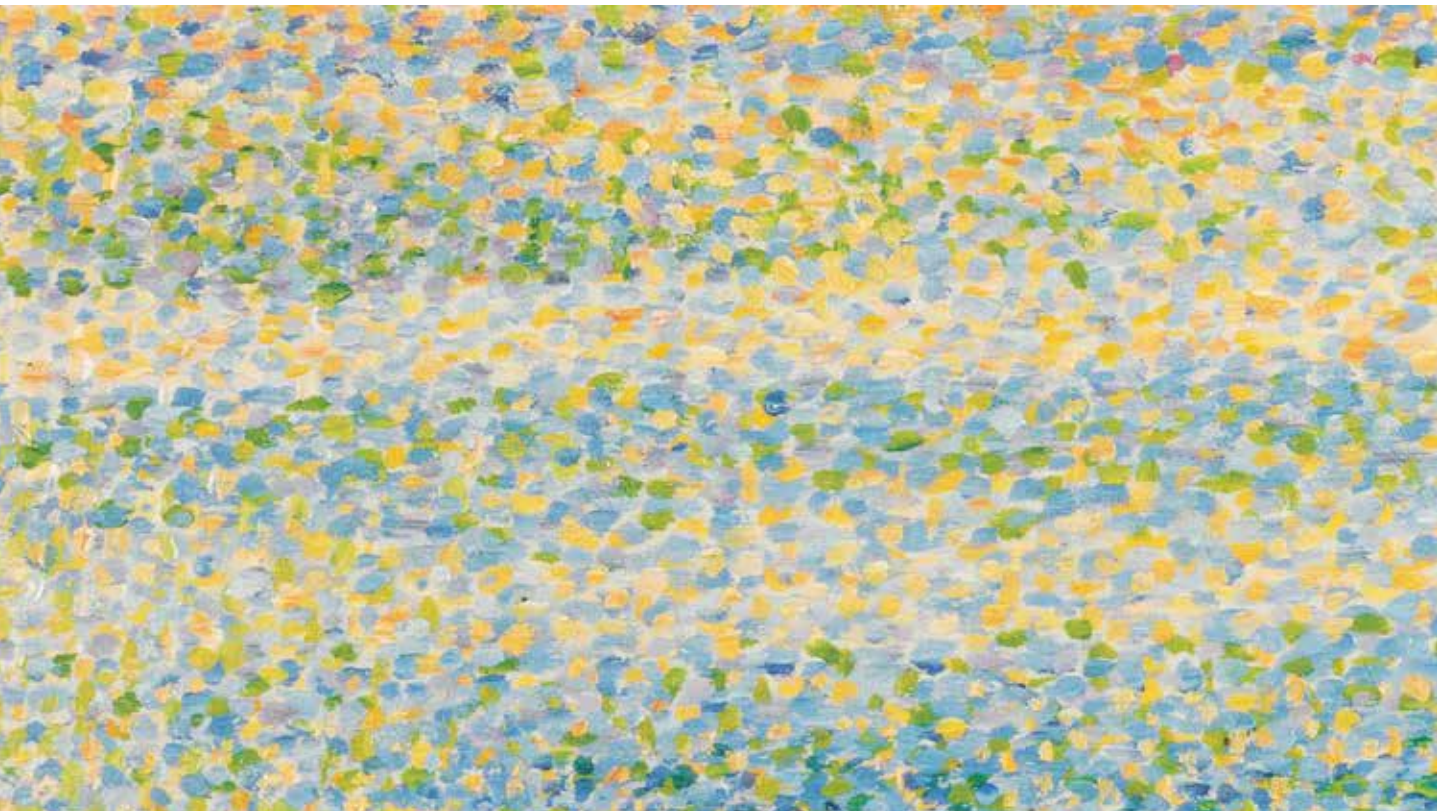
*of other paths as it is of this Yoga – only so much purification and change is demanded by them as will lead to liberation and the beyond-life. The full influence of the Atman can no doubt do that – a full descent of a new consciousness into the whole nature from top to bottom to transform life here is not needed at all for the spiritual escape from life.*²⁵

Sri Aurobindo adds that what is commonly understood as 'realisation' does not transform the being in his sense of the word. He speaks of the necessity for a triple transformation of which the Psychicisation is just the first step. Spiritualisation of the being must follow and that too is merely the pedestal upon which the next step can be built. Thus, this is a yoga where the most important action is to work, simply and quietly, upon the multitudinous layers of one's being. It is this laborious process, carried out in the recesses of one's own material nature that is the best contribution to be made. Public visibility and appearance of expertise is likely to feed the ego. In this yoga, the most effective actions are the most invisible:

● *I do not think realisation by itself, necessarily transforms anything; it may bring only an opening or heightening or widening of the consciousness so as to realise something in the Purusha part without any radical change in the parts of Prakriti. One may have some light of realisation at the spiritual summit of the consciousness, but the parts below remain what they were. I have seen any number of instances of that. There must be a descent of the light not merely into the mind or part of it but into all the being down to the physical and below before a real transformation can take place. A light in the mind may spiritualise or otherwise change the mind or part of it in one way or another, but it need not change the vital nature; a light in the vital may purify and enlarge the vital movements or else silence and immobilise the vital being, but leave the body and the physical consciousness as it was, or even leave it inert or shake its balance. And the descent of Light is not enough; it must be the descent of the*

whole higher consciousness, its Peace, Power, Knowledge, Love, Ananda. Moreover, the descent may be enough to liberate, but not to perfect, or it may be enough to make a great change in the inner being, while the outer remains an imperfect instrument, clumsy, sick, or unexpressive. ...

Finally, transformation effected by the Sadhana cannot be complete unless it is a supramentalisation of the being. Psychicisation is not enough, it is only a beginning; spiritualisation and the descent of the higher consciousness is not enough, it is only a middle term; the ultimate achievement needs the action of the supramental Consciousness and Force. Something less than that may very well be considered enough by the individual, but it is not enough for the earth-consciousness to take the definitive stride forward it must take at one time or another.²⁶



|| Incarnation not the Aim ||

Those who turn to Sri Aurobindo have to understand that the aim here is not the acquiring of *siddhis*. As long as the collective human condition has not discernibly changed, each sadhak, however advanced in any part of the being, is merely one more '*ignorant and imperfect human being struggling with the evils of the lower nature*'. The work to be achieved now is a generalisation into the collective human condition. There has been no need therefore for a spiritual succession; no inheritance or passing on of the spiritual mantle. Sri Aurobindo and The Mother remain clear and present guides. Each sincere seeker has to find their own particular methodology of transmutation – there is no generalised expertise of this uniquely individual process. Simultaneously, an absolute necessity of creating enabling conditions for a critical mass of aspirants is there. It is this demand that brought first the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and later, and more largely, the experiment of Auroville into being. Yet both these represent a collective realisation of a very special kind. On the one side a complete freedom of self-finding is given; on the other side, for the change to be effected, there cannot be the least flaw in the whole.

What does this mean? Does this put off the realisation in collective conditions to a distant future? Sri Aurobindo has spoken of three hundred years at least, and The Mother has even remarked that it could be a thousand years. The issue here is that this inner change cannot be generated or in any way accelerated by social and political devices!

In a marvellous letter, Sri Aurobindo clarifies why *siddhis*, incarnations, all that constitutes the highest spiritual aims of the past are just not effective, nor the object of Sri Aurobindo's supramental yoga:



● One thing must be said—that an incarnation is not the object of this yoga; it is only a condition or means towards the object. The one and the only aim we have before us is to bring down the supramental Consciousness and the supramental Truth into the world; the Truth and nothing but the Truth is our aim, and if we cannot embody this Truth, a hundred incarnations do not matter. But to bring down the true supramental, to escape from all mental mixture is not an easy matter. The mere descent of the suns into the centres, even of all the seven suns into all the seven centres is only the seed; it is not the thing itself done and finished. One may feel the descent of the suns, one may have the attempt, the beginning of an incarnation, and yet in the end one may fail, if there is a flaw in the nature or a failure to pass through all the ordeals and satisfy all the hard conditions of the perfect spiritual success.

Not only the whole mental, vital and physical nature of the ignorant human being has to be overcome and transformed, but also the three states of mental consciousness which intervene between the human and the supramental and like all mind are capable of admitting great and capital errors. Till then there may be descents of the supramental influence, light, power, Ananda, but the supramental Truth cannot be possessed, organised, put in possession of the whole nature.

“One must not think before that that one possesses the supermind, for that is a delusion which would prevent the fulfilment. One thing more. The more intense the experiences that come, the higher the forces that descend, the greater become the possibilities of deviation and error. For the very intensity and the very height of the force excites and aggrandises the movements of the lower nature and raises up in it all opposing elements in their full force, but often in the disguise of truth, wearing a mask of plausible justification. There is needed a great patience, calm, sobriety, balance, an impersonal detachment and sincerity free from all taint of ego or personal human desire. There must be no attachment

*to any idea of one's own, to any experience, to any kind of imagination, mental building or vital demand; the light of discrimination must always play to detect those things, however fair or plausible they may seem. Otherwise, the Truth will have no chance of establishing itself in its purity in the nature.*²⁷

A stern warning from Sri Aurobindo. It can come to pass that in an aspiring consciousness, some part of the outer nature, with its habitual tropes and inclinations, its preferences and cherished notions, is excited by some seized idea. In such a consciousness this mental construction takes on a 'disguise of truth' and puts upon itself a 'mask of plausible justification.' Therefore the necessity of a great patience, a calm and sobriety – a sincerity that is completely free from all 'taint of ego or personal desire.' How essential this is in any experiment aimed at conscious collective living. The one protection from tangential orientations in a group is to insist upon consensus as the basis and the root condition for growth and development. Harmonious agreements that transcend necessarily any limited individual points of view are the one way forward.



|| A Collective Realisation ||

|| *The voice that only by speech can move the mind
Became a silent knowledge in the soul.*²⁸

For Sri Aurobindo's transformative yoga to be visibly effective, an aspiring collectivity is essential as the holding agency to bring it into manifestation. The work of consciousness has been completely realised by Sri Aurobindo and The Mother. What is now required is a critical mass of beings in a collective setting, working and growing together freely, to materialise it. Every reaching up, reaching behind, reaching inwards to a profounder state of consciousness is followed by a bringing down of this Conscious-Force and Light. This transmuting movement of descent extends within and below into all the recondite spaces, the dark recesses of the being. It is this descending Force that brings the decisive action. To be effective it requires a larger than individual field. The universe is so organised that each person carries within, in their own consciousness the entirety of all they are called upon to transmute. In fulfilling this personal share of our universal work, we generate a mode of vibrations which broaden and multiply to act upon the totality of the particular category, the 'type', we represent. Sri Aurobindo does not mitigate the issue; he is sharply clear about the insuperable difficulty of transmuting this outward nature. Perhaps it is this difficulty that has made all spiritual disciplines settle for other-worldly solutions.

In the *Synthesis of Yoga* he elaborates the issues that the sadhak of the Integral Yoga encounters. There is first the dark and dull inertia of bodily needs accompanied by a trivial mind with its petty desires and emotions. Then there is the vital Will-of-life with its titanic desires and love of melodrama. Next comes the ameliorating mind still situated in the life domains easily attracted by some superficial beauty, and harmony of a life that remains unchanged at its base.

Perhaps we may recognise such attitudes and these many parts within ourselves. This yoga demands that we do. No one can claim to be born free of them – they are the millennial patterns of the human condition and the very thing that traditional yoga processes wish to abandon, so great, says Sri Aurobindo, is their vim and clutch. In this yoga each of these layers have to be worked through with an unflagging rigour, the struggle and combat is so incessant that it ought to leave any sincere person busy with their own nature and no time to judge others.





● A principle of dark and dull inertia is at its base; all are tied down by the body and its needs and desires to a trivial mind, petty desires and emotions, an insignificant repetition of small worthless functionings, needs, cares, occupations, pains, pleasures that lead to nothing beyond themselves and bear the stamp of an ignorance that knows not its own why and whither. This physical mind of inertia believes in no divinity other than its own small earth-gods; it aspires perhaps to a greater comfort, order, pleasure, but asks for no uplifting and no spiritual deliverance.

At the centre we meet a stronger Will of life with a greater gusto, but it is a blinded Daemon, a perverted spirit and exults in the very elements that make of life a striving turmoil and an unhappy imbroglio. It is a soul of human or Titanic desire clinging to the garish colour, disordered poetry, violent tragedy or stirring melodrama of this mixed flux of good and evil, joy and sorrow, light and darkness, heady rapture and bitter torture. It loves these things and would have more and more of them or, even when it suffers and cries out against them, can accept or joy in nothing else; it hates and revolts against higher things and in its fury would trample, tear or crucify any diviner Power that has the presumption to offer to make life pure, luminous and happy and snatch from its lips the fiery brew of that exciting mixture.

Another Will-in-Life there is that is ready to follow the ameliorating ideal Mind and is allured by its offer to extract some harmony, beauty, light, nobler order out of life, but this is a smaller part of the vital nature and can be easily overpowered by its more violent or darker duller yoke-comrades; nor does it readily lend itself to a call higher than that of the Mind unless that call defeats itself, as Religion usually does, by lowering its demand to conditions more intelligible to our obscure vital nature.

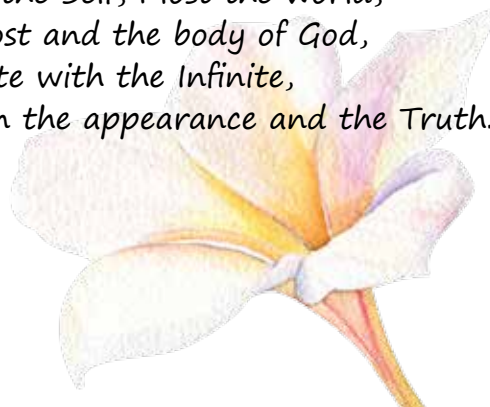
All these forces the spiritual seeker grows aware of in himself and finds all around him and has to struggle and combat

incessantly to be rid of their grip and dislodge the long-entrenched mastery they have exercised over his own being as over the environing human existence.

The difficulty is great; for their hold is so strong, so apparently invincible that it justifies the disdainful dictum which compares human nature to a dog's tail,—for, straighten it never so much by force of ethics, religion, reason or any other redemptive effort, it returns in the end always to the crooked curl of Nature. And so great is the vim, the clutch of that more agitated Life-Will, so immense the peril of its passions and errors, so subtly insistent or persistently invasive, so obstinate up to the very gates of Heaven the fury of its attack or the tedious obstruction of its obstacles that even the saint and the Yogin cannot be sure of their liberated purity or their trained self-mastery against its intrigue or its violence.²⁹

That last somewhat cutting sentence about the saint and Yogin in their 'liberated purity' is significant: their state of liberation is maintained by a rigorous holding up of the consciousness in higher reaches of being. The traditional yogin is only better in degree but not in type. The condition is maintained by a firm pressing down upon, a silencing of the lower nature. This darker nature does not disappear, it quietly persists. And, in moments of great stress it can suddenly emerge. This is the conundrum of human manifestation and it is a condition unsatisfactory for Sri Aurobindo. He seeks the permanency a change of type. That is why he can rightly assert that his yoga is a spiritual adventure and not a retreading of old paths.

*I looked upon the world and missed the Self,
And when I found the Self, I lost the world,
My other selves I lost and the body of God,
The link of the finite with the Infinite,
The bridge between the appearance and the Truth.³⁰*



|| Good Works || and Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga

● *I may say that it is far from my purpose to propagate any religion new or old for humanity in the future. A way to be opened that is still blocked, not a religion to be founded, is my conception of the matter.³¹*

An argument that may be put forward against the Aurobindonian yoga is that there does not appear to be many signs of its processes offering a helping hand to humanity. This is not primarily a yoga of good works. It does not give rise to the greatly admired aims of humanitarianism and philanthropy. It has also been argued that it seems to deprive common humanity of so many developed beings who could serve for its betterment. What is the answer to this issue? A letter of Sri Aurobindo might clarify:

● *It is equally ignorant and one thousand miles away from my teaching to find it in your relations with human beings or in the nobility of the human character or an idea that we are here to establish mental and moral and social Truth and justice on human and egoistic lines. I have never promised to do anything of the kind. Human nature is made up of imperfections, even its righteousness and virtue are pretensions, imperfections and prancings of self-approbatory egoism ... What is aimed at by us is a spiritual truth as the basis of life, the first words of which are surrender and union with the Divine and the transcendence of ego. So long as that basis is not established, a sadhak is only an ignorant and imperfect human being struggling with the evils of the lower nature.³²*

The key concern and primary obstacle for progress in Sri Aurobindo's Yoga is the ego with its pretensions and its self-righteousness, its 'prancings of self-approbatory egoism'! It is this human ego which must be wholly transcended. The being has to achieve a status of such transparency that it may stand in the light of the supreme consciousness without casting the least shadow.



Freedom and Renunciation

Only were safe who kept God in their hearts;
Courage their armour, faith their sword,³³

Thus it is that to a superficial observer, there is a notable appearance of ordinariness in those who have turned to Sri Aurobindo's yoga. One does not encounter visible saints and yogis. Is it because there is a lack of spiritual living? Human beings are habituated to looking at outward signs for inward statuses of consciousness: the simplicity of the white or saffron robe; the meditative posture; the service of human misery – all conventional and much lauded signals of a developed spiritual consciousness. Why, we may ask do people in Sri Aurobindo's world present such an appearance of ordinariness?

First it must be understood that the way of this yoga is extremely demanding – as any person who has sincerely tried it may affirm. It is a perilous journey to descend into the abysmal recesses of the lower nature – the only safety is to keep the psychic fire burning and to hold to a tremendous purity of unflagging aspiration, *Utsaha*. Secondly, everyone who inhabits a body carries the burden of an unrefined outer nature. This can change only if one consciously works upon it. No wonder the Isha Upanishad calls for a life of hundred summers doing verily works in the world! In the yoga of transformation, there is no comforting 'setting out to save god's world'; there is only the laborious unrequiting action of bringing change into each infinitesimal crookedness of the external nature. Two letters of Sri Aurobindo explain the difficulty. It is interesting to note that the second letter which speaks of the sadhana having gone down into the inconscient dates from 1944:

● *The ordinary Yoga is usually concentrated on a single aim and therefore less exposed to such recoils; ours is so*

*complex and many-sided and embraces such large aims that we cannot expect any smooth progress until we near the completion of an effort, – especially as all the hostile forces in the spiritual world are in a constant state of opposition and besiege our gains; for the complete victory of a single one of us would mean a general downfall among them. In fact by our own effort we could not hope to succeed ... The final goal is far but the progress made in the face of so constant and massive an opposition is the guarantee of its being gained in the end. But the time is in other hands than ours.*³⁴

● *There is another cause of the general inability to change which at present afflicts the sadhak. It is because the sadhana, as a general fact, has now and for a long time past come down to the Inconscient; the pressure, the call is to change in that part of the nature which depends directly on the Inconscient, the fixed habits, the automatic movements, the mechanical repetitions of the nature, the involuntary reactions to life, all that seems to belong to the fixed character of a man. This has to be done if there is to be any chance of a total spiritual change. The Force (generally and not individually) is working to make that possible, its pressure is for that,—for, on the other levels, the change has already been made possible (not, mind you, assured to everybody). But to open the Inconscient to light is a herculean task; change on the other levels is much easier. As yet this work has only begun and it is not surprising that there seems to be no change in things or people. It will come in time, but not in a hurry. As for experiences, they are all right but the trouble is that they do not seem to change the nature, they only enrich the consciousness—even the realisation, on the mind level, of the Brahman seems to leave the nature almost where it was, except for a few. That is why we insist on the psychic transformation as the first necessity—for that does change the nature—and its chief instrument is bhakti, surrender, etc.*³⁵



This last remark about experiences which only enrich but do not change the consciousness is another key reason that brings about the insistence, as a first necessity, of the psychic conversion. It is this change that restores in the individual nature the white light of divine Grace without its habitual breaking up into the prismatic hues of the outer nature.

*A mutual debt binds man to the Supreme:
His nature we must put on as he put ours;
We are sons of God and must be even as he:
His human portion we must grow divine
Our life is a paradox with God for the key.³⁶*



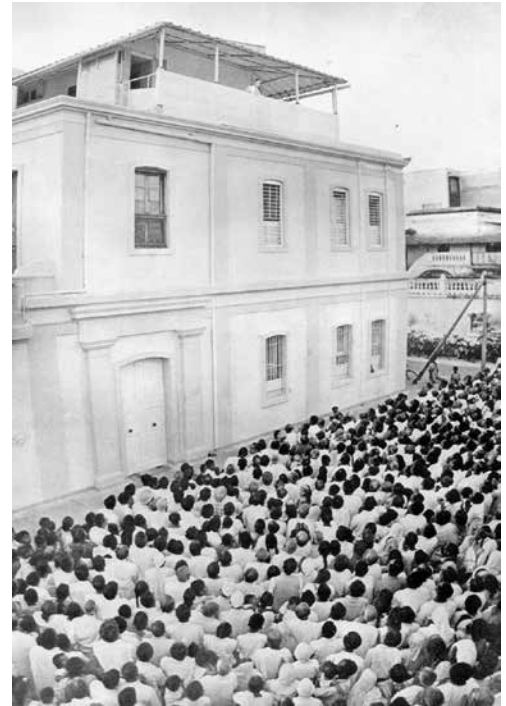
|| A model town ||

A Conscious Collectivity

Sri Aurobindo's yoga demands a conscious aspiring collectivity. But a collective yoga can be likened to climbing a precipitous mountain. The path to the heights is not clear, it is sinuous and zigzagging even torturous, there are false starts, blind alleys, untenable positions, one may need to backtrack and start again. Innumerable course corrections may need to be brought in. There is no royal road to collective self-finding. If we study human progress through recent centuries, we find that there have been socio-political experiments aimed at Liberty, others that sought Equality. There have been none that even attempted to embody Fraternity. This last great mantra of the French revolutionists – Fraternity, Brotherhood – is quite beyond the capacity of social and political devices; it has to be born as a living soul-state.

To consciously recognise this truth of collective life in its present constitution is the first step to begin the journey of Sri Aurobindo's yoga. It is also the reason why a conscious collectivity of aspiring individuals is of fundamental importance. Generalised change cannot be brought about by any single individual on earth however great, however eternal in consciousness and origin. No single being has been able to transmute the human world to something more true. The individual may give the impulsion, indicate the path by embodying self-realisation. Yet there seem to be certain group laws that demand a collective body for the fulfilment of earth's destiny.

The two collectivities, the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and Auroville, are exceptional hives of activities. Here it is working together that is the prayer of the body collective and its means of doing an enabling sadhana. Sitting quietly, passively, in meditation is not the most effective means for a yoga whose core demand is dynamism.





Rather in every circumstance, it is the quietude of consciousness, that must be maintained as a vibrant inner condition of the being that radiates outward into the collectivity.

*Each being there is a member of the Self,
A portion of the million-thoughted All,
A claimant to the timeless Unity,
The many's sweetness, the joy of difference
Edged with the intimacy of the One.³⁷*



Yet each being must become a developed and conscious individual. In her many conversations with students and disciples, the Mother repeatedly explained the process of Individualising that must first take place before one can surrender this individuality to the Truth of one's being. *"Ego is the helper; ego is the bar"* – says Sri Aurobindo succinctly. One needs to understand, she says, that people do not have separate individualities, that life is a constant exchange of forces, of consciousnesses, of vibrations, of movements of all kinds. To be individualised in a collectivity, one must be absolutely conscious of oneself. And of which self? It has to be the Self which is above all intermixture. And as long as one is not conscious of the Truth of one's being, one is moved unconsciously by all kinds of things, Collective thought, collective suggestions are formidable influences which act constantly on individual thought. And what is extraordinary is that one does not notice it. One believes that one thinks 'like that'. But in truth it is the collectivity which thinks 'like that'. The mass is always inferior to the individual. One may take individuals with similar qualities, or those that belong to similar categories, when they are alone these individuals are likely to be a few degrees better than people of the same category in a crowd. In a group there is a mixture of obscurities, a mixture of unconsciousness, and inevitably one slips downwards. To escape this there is but one means: to become conscious of oneself, more and more conscious and more and more attentive.





|| The Soul of a Collective Yoga ||

Viewed from one point of view, it may be argued that Sri Aurobindo's Yoga is the most difficult of all things. It has to be lived. One has to leave aside the mind's ideal dreams and be possessed of all the nitty gritty difficulties as life rubs against other life. For life grates, it resists; things and people breakdown; they lose their initial promise. It is not for nothing that all other Yogas have discarded, sat upon, or vigorously excised these notoriously problematic domains. Sri Aurobindo acknowledges this in an early 1918 letter:

● *But we are the pioneers hewing our way through the jungle of the lower prakriti. It will not do for us to be cowards and shirkers and refuse the burden, to clamour for everything to be made quick and easy for us. Above all things I demand from you endurance, firmness, heroism, — the true spiritual heroism. I want strong men, I do not want emotional children.*³⁸

He insists repeatedly upon the necessity of a collective change brought about by a conscious and united collectivity, something he called a *deva sangha*. This prerequisite gives rise to another issue: *"A collective yoga is not like a solitary one, it is not free from collective influences; it has a collective soul which cannot afford to be in some parts either raw or rotten."*³⁹

A point worth repeating: a collective yoga is possessed of a collective soul. Sri Aurobindo remains, as always, clear eyed about the present human condition:

● *You must not expect a sudden collective miracle. I have not come here to accomplish miracles, but to show, lead the way, help, on the road to a great inner change of our human nature, — the outer change in the world is only possible if*

and when that inner transmutation is effected and extends itself.⁴⁰

How then is this model collectivity to be created; discard as we must all artificial social and political devices? Brotherhood is a truth of the soul, not of the outer nature. An optimistic perspective could suggest that this is the very intention of the Time Spirit in our troubled world, filled as it is with multiple crises.

|| *Or we may find when all the rest has failed
Hid in ourselves the key of perfect change.⁴¹*

Perhaps if we humans are wise in time, we may allow these crises to serve as the deus ex machina to awaken an inner call. A critical mass of truly sincere beings could come to birth. Beings who are no longer emotional children but, forged and purified by the flames of the ordeal, are imbued with spiritual heroism. They answer to Sri Aurobindo's call. The one condition demanded is to cast the dross of their outer natures into the mystic fire that brings forth the Truth of Tomorrow.

From the psychic point of view, it can be argued that this Yoga of Sri Aurobindo is the easiest of all things. One has only to do one complete thing: to open oneself utterly just as a flower opens its petals to the sun. The prismatic hues of the external consciousness are then reversed and the white light of the soul restored. For, this yoga is a yoga of Surrender, of complete and transparent self-offering to the highest Power. It is the Psychic Conversion that brings about the sunlit path. And indeed then, one may walk in its Light.

|| *Yes, there are happy ways near to God's sun;
But few are they who tread the sunlit path;
Only the pure in soul can walk in light.⁴²*



|| Time as a Medium and Condition ||

*Yet it is joy to live and to create
And joy to love and labour though all fails,
And joy to seek though all we find deceives
And all on which we lean betrays our trust;
Yet something in its depths was worth the pain,
A passionate memory haunts with ecstasy's fire.⁴³*

So where does that leave the human individual within this little span of bodily life? One thing is certain – it is the call of their soul that brings people to Sri Aurobindo's yoga. No immediate or obvious benefit accrues to the transactional and calculating outer nature. The unique joy which Sri Aurobindo's yoga offers comes from embracing the truth that one is merely a little cog in a vast wheel of collective change.

To embark upon this very special adventure is to fall in love with the process. One must learn to be alone with the divine in the midst of all circumstances. And one may then discover spiritual ease and joy and laughter of the soul. Such experiences will come more and more especially in moments when the inner lamps are lit and life sits alone and speaks to its gulfs. There is indeed a passionate memory – a promise from the future which haunts with ecstasy's fire. There is a last aid to this work. The outer nature has to harness the help of time – to find a way to turn this mysterious medium and condition into a friend and helper!

● *Time is a field of circumstances and forces meeting and working out a resultant progression whose course it measures. To the ego it is a tyrant or a resistance, to the Divine an instrument. Therefore, while our effort is personal, Time appears as a resistance, for it presents to us all the obstruction of the forces that conflict with our own. When*

the divine working and the personal are combined in our consciousness, it appears as a medium and a condition. When the two become one, it appears as a servant and instrument.

The ideal attitude of the sadhaka towards Time is to have an endless patience as if he had all eternity for his fulfilment and yet to develop the energy that shall realise now and with an ever-increasing mastery and pressure of rapidity till it reaches the miraculous instantaneousness of the supreme divine Transformation.⁴⁴

Such is the promise of the future:

*Night shall awake to the anthem of the stars,
The days become a happy pilgrim march,
Our will a force of the Eternal's power,
And thought the rays of a spiritual sun.
A few shall see what none yet understands;
God shall grow up while the wise men talk and sleep;
For man shall not know the coming till its hour
And belief shall be not till the work is done.⁴⁵*

And when the human world awakens to its divine truth, our days shall become a happy pilgrim march! We shall taste of the honey embodied in That which set manifestation into motion. Our awakened and united hearts shall sing along with “*The enamoured laugh that rhymed the chanting worlds*”.

● *As if honey could taste itself and all its drops together and all its drops could taste each other and each the whole honeycomb as itself...⁴⁶*

May the way that Sri Aurobindo opened be spread forth in all its glory and fullness before an aspiring humanity.

|| A Final Word ||

● *Sri Aurobindo is the future advancing towards its realisation.* The Mother

Great beings live upon a deepest plane. Their life is beyond ordinary human understanding. Says Sri Aurobindo: *"If I am to be murdered in cold print, it had better be done without my disciples becoming abettors of the crime."*

Yet, the Action he achieved upon earth is a legitimate field of enquiry. And who but The Mother can best interpret what he represents and what constitutes his action? In this Journal it is her words, paraphrased, that create the connecting thread.



|| Endnotes ||

All the references given below are from the works of Sri Aurobindo
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| 3 | <i>Savitri</i> CWSA 33:32 | 31 | CWSA 35:710 |
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| 7 | CWSA 29:399-401 | 35 | CWSA 35:365 |
| 8 | <i>Savitri</i> CWSA 33:328 | 36 | <i>Savitri</i> CWSA 33:67 |
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‘**Bhavishyate**’ is a name given in 1972 by the Mother for a publication about India.

A work such as this is a collaborative effort. We wish to thank all who have contributed to bringing it into being:

- The Sri Aurobindo Archives for the page from *Record of Yoga*.
- The photographers and the artists who generously allow us to use their works:
 - Photographers: Lisa Arpi, Dominique Darr, Giorgio Molinari, Nilauro, Pixabay, Marco Saroldi, Rakhal
 - Artists : Aurore Mabilat, Jyoti Khare, Rosalba



A watercolor illustration of a red flower, possibly a gerbera, with a prominent yellow stamen. The petals are a vibrant red, and the stamen is a bright yellow. The background is a soft, textured wash of red and orange colors.

With infinite gratitude Bhavishyate 4 is dedicated to Sri Aurobindo.

What is Sri Aurobindo's Yoga?

He called his yoga *The Integral Yoga*.

It represents a synthesis of past approaches. Its newness comes from "its aim, standpoint and the totality of method".

What are the similarities and differences with previous approaches?

Bhavishyate explores the question through some of Sri Aurobindo's numerous explanations.

Reading Sri Aurobindo is to re-evaluate every assumption about the meaning, purpose and practice of spiritual life.

Much is said about Sri Aurobindo in this, the 150th year of his birth. Yet so much is misunderstood.

What and why this manifestation?
What is the meaning of earthly life?

In Sri Aurobindo one discovers marvellous answers to the profoundest issues of life and its purpose.

Indeed, it is Life that is the key to his yoga. Life that wants to grow and perfect itself to bring forth a Life Divine.

Here, *ihaiva*, upon earth, in bodies made beautiful with the Spirit's Fire.