

Matrimandir

Matrimandir Journal

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ॐ आनन्दमायि चैतन्यमायि सत्यमायि परमै
OM anandamayī chaitanyamayī
satyamayī parama
Sri Anubandya

OM - She, the Delight
She, the Conscientness
She, the Truth
She, the Supreme

*"A prayer, a master act, a king idea
Can link man's strength to a transcendent Force."
Savitri*

There is a very interesting conversation of the Mother, recorded in the Agenda of 1969 soon after her experience of the descent of the Superman consciousness — what she defines as the consciousness of the intermediary being between man and the supramental being. Mother speaks of Power being the most significant characteristic of this consciousness and describes it as *"luminous, smiling, and so benevolent because of its POWER: I mean that generally, benevolence in the human being is something slightly weak, in the sense that it doesn't like battle, it doesn't like struggle - but this wasn't like that at all! A benevolence that imposes itself (Mother brings her two fists down on the armrests of her chair)."*² In preceding conversations Mother had spoken of this consciousness, describing how it had already been at work for weeks and the manner of its action. She calls it the Mentor because it guides and teaches her body how to be. In the particular conversation to which we refer, this consciousness has absolutely insisted upon something and will not leave her in peace until Mother has written down the text it dictates:



Supramental Sun

***“We shall strive to make Auroville
the cradle of the superman”***

Mother is curious and asks why the word “we”. And the Consciousness answers, ***“Because we’re going to try to get the people who will be in Auroville to collaborate.”***³

Being in Auroville is an extraordinary grace, for whether we know or choose to recognize it or not we are part of what Sri Aurobindo calls in Savitri a ***“king idea, a master act”***: both of these can link man’s strength to a ***“transcendent Force.”*** While an awareness through identity of this inner truth is hardly within the reach of the ordinary consciousness, the third equally powerful element, ***Prayer***, always is. It is finally the energy of conscious prayer and self-offering that we humans can harness for the process of transmutation. (In the integral Yoga, prayer emphatically does not mean sitting in a meditation that takes us to distant summits of consciousness; it means rather a rigorous work done in and by the body: ***“Let us work as we pray, for indeed work is the body’s best prayer to the Divine.”*** ***“To work for the Divine is to pray with the body.”***⁴ It means the action of a conscious and constant offering of each thought, each act and each life-movement to the highest truth of one’s being.)

Matrimandir has been created as the living symbol of this transcendent Force as well as Auroville’s aspiration for that Force, and is meant to aid the search for our true consciousness, a place to light the psychic fire by a ***“complete act of divine love and worship”***.

It seems that we in Auroville have not as a collectivity explored the powers that true self-offering, the work done consciously with love and devotion, can give to the aspiring soul. This may perhaps be due to the necessity of rejecting so much of the romanticizing that often attaches itself to forms of worship; to do away with cloying sentimentalism so natural to human nature that it soon turns any seeking for a higher truth into what Sri Aurobindo describes in his inimitable fashion as ***“a vital pietistic ardour, a defenceless religious or ethical sentimentalism, a sensuous or even sensual erotic mysticism of the roseate coloured mind or passionately turbid life-impulse”***, so that in the end it succeeds in nothing more than ***“to gild the mud of the old earth and colour with its rose and sapphire the old turbid unreal skies of sentimentalising vital imagination***

and mental idealised chimera.”⁵ It might also be the reason why Mother delayed working on the centre — the central idea-force — the Matrimandir, until the 1970’s. Even though she had had the vision of it much earlier it was not the first activity undertaken because she did not want Auroville to fall back into the old religious idea and build a church or cathedral rather than a living, vibrant prayer in matter. ***“And let it not become a religion for heaven’s sake!”***⁶ In fact, Auroville has kept a spirit of healthy scepticism and it remains one of its particular characteristics.

But have we not grown too ‘secular’, keeping too much the hardness and tension of the way and disallowed, for fear of false coin, the sweetness and the joy of the psychic heart to enter into play? If it is so it is unfortunate, as there is something in human nature that must always keep the flame of ardour well trimmed if it is to avoid losing its way in a dreary ordinariness.

Today we have the certitude of Auroville’s irreversible establishment in matter and work towards the progressive manifestation of the living symbol of its soul, Matrimandir, at its centre. It is now time to ask the question: how to encourage collectively a discriminating introspection that will generate a more conscious focus and self-offering around Auroville’s central aim? How can we awaken the power of a united collective aspiration, ***“A music beat of winged uniting souls”***

Both Sri Aurobindo and Mother speak of the power of perfect prayer and self-offering; indeed the two can hardly be separated because when the psychic fire is awakened a spontaneous prayer wells up. ***“For devotion by its embodiment in acts not only makes its own way broad and full and dynamic, but brings at once into the harder way of works in the world the divinely passionate element of joy and love which is often absent in its beginning when it is only the austere spiritual will that follows in a struggling uplifting tension the steep ascent, and the heart is still asleep or bound to silence.”***

If the spirit of divine love can enter, the hardness of the way diminishes, the tension is lightened, there is a sweetness and joy even in the core of difficulty and struggle. The indispensable surrender of all our will and works and activities to the Supreme is indeed only perfect and perfectly effective when it is a surrender of love. All life turned into this cult, all actions done in the love of the Divine and in the love of the world and its creatures seen and felt as the Divine manifested in many disguises become by that very fact part of an integral Yoga.”⁸

*"A psychic fire within must be lit into which all is thrown with the Divine Name upon it. In that fire all the emotions are compelled to cast off their grosser elements and those that are undivine perversions are burned away and the others discard their insufficiencies, till a spirit of largest love and stainless divine delight arises out of the flame and smoke and frankincense."*⁹

The third issue of the Matrimandir Journal, dedicated once again to the Universal Mother, wishes to contribute towards the beginning of a reflection on the subject of an Auroville that wants to be the cradle of the Superman. Is there something that we can actively do to hasten the future and become a living example of *"a place of accelerated evolution?"*¹⁰



The Symbolism of Twelve

When one looks at the way the Peace area is laid out one very significant fact emerges – the recurrence of the number 12: The Mother's symbol has 12 attributes, the Matrimandir Inner Room has 12 facets with 12 free standing columns that serve no obvious structural purpose but are there because Mother 'saw' them there. (She was so insistent on these columns that when the architect pointed out their lack of purpose Mother said they could serve as back rests for those concentrating). Then there are the 12 meditation rooms rising out of the earth in 'petals' surrounding the sphere, and finally there are the twelve gardens. When Mother was asked to explain the significance of the number twelve she had this to say:

"Mother, in your symbol the twelve petals signify the twelve inner planes, don't they?"

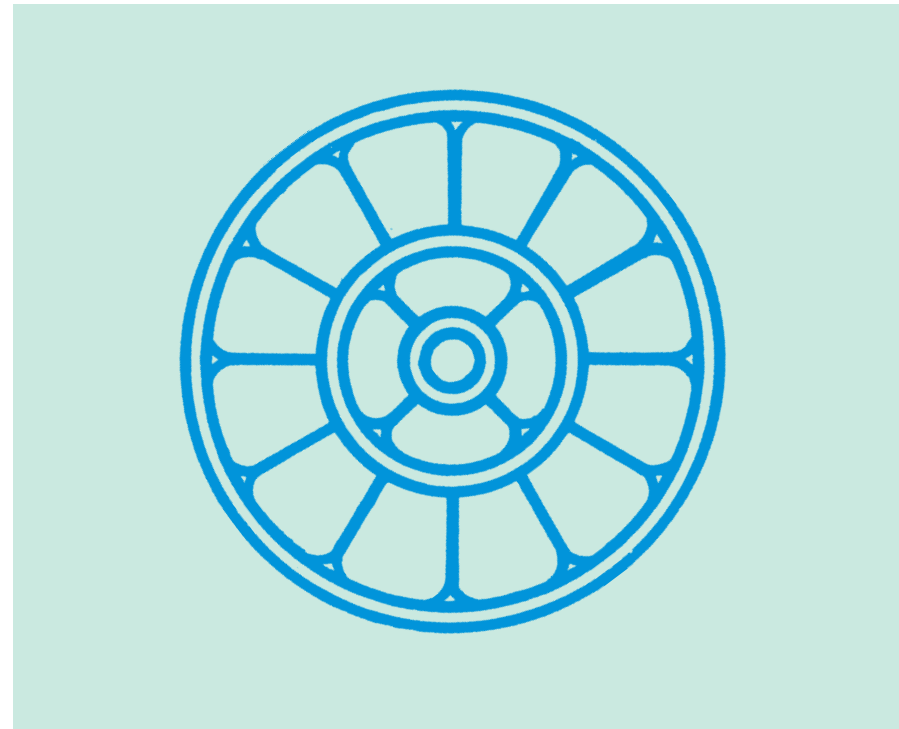
"It signifies anything one wants, you see. Twelve: that's the number of Aditi, of Mahashakti. So it applies to everything; all her action has twelve aspects. There are also her twelve virtues, her twelve powers, her twelve aspects, and then her twelve planes of manifestation and many other things that are twelve; and the symbol, the number twelve is in itself a symbol. It is the symbol of manifestation, double perfection, in essence and in manifestation, in the creation."



"What are the twelve aspects, Sweet Mother?"

"Ah, my child, I have described this somewhere, but I don't remember now. For it is always a choice, you see; according to what one wants to say, one can choose these twelve aspects or twelve others, or give them different names. The same aspect can be named in different ways. This does not have the fixity of a mental theory.(silence)

"According to the angle from which one sees the creation, one day I may describe twelve aspects to you; and then another day because I have shifted my centre of observation, I may describe twelve others, and they will be equally true."¹²



**A perfect path of the Truth has come into being
for our journey to the other shore beyond the darkness**

I.46.11 Rig Veda¹¹

Reading these answers given to a child, one is struck by the plastic truth of Mother's perspective as opposed to the concrete rigidities of the human intellect. We are also reminded that in creating the Matrimandir in matter it has been necessary to name each meditation room and garden — which Mother did — but the aspiring seeker needs to remember that in a universe which evolves, the rhythm of truth is perpetual inner growth and the Matrimandir symbol must not be approached dogmatically. This is a significant point because in reflecting upon the Mother-symbol one is immediately confronted by dualities: there are so many levels and layers of the workings of this Consciousness-Force. How does one reconcile the different faces or fronts of the One Self? Do terms such as Maya, Prakriti, Shakti and Ishwari refer to realities that are different or are they just a play of terminologies? Who is she, we may ask - and if we refer to her as 'she' does this make her feminine in the manner that nature has created masculine and feminine principles? The seeker of Integral Truth is confused by the many-layered reality he meets when he attempts to understand. Sri Aurobindo offers this comment in The Life Divine:

"A certain difficulty arises for our mind in reconciling these different faces or fronts of the One Self and Spirit, because we are obliged to use abstract conceptions and defining words and ideas for something that is not abstract, something that is spiritually living and intensely real. Our abstractions get fixed into differentiating concepts with sharp lines between them: but the Reality is not of that nature; its aspects are many but shade off into each other.....The mystery of things is the true truth of things; the intellectual presentation is only truth in representation, in abstract symbols, as if in a cubist art of thought-speech, in geometric figure. It is necessary in a philosophic enquiry to confine oneself mostly to this intellectual presentation, but it is as well to remember that this is only the abstraction of the Truth and to seize it completely or express it completely there is needed a concrete experience and a more living and full-bodied language."¹³



The Traditional Indian View

In one of his letters Sri Aurobindo remarked that his yoga was not a retreading of old paths but a spiritual adventure. A legitimate question arises — what are the particularities of Sri Aurobindo's views? Is there a difference between his yoga and the traditional approach to yoga? What is the view of Vedanta, of Tantra or of the Gita; and, is the Mother-symbol, Divine Conscious Force, equally present in each of these systems? We shall look at what Sri Aurobindo himself says on each of these issues.

"Veda and Vedanta are one side of the Truth; Tantra with its emphasis on Shakti is another; in this yoga all sides of the Truth are taken up, not in the systematic forms given them formerly but in their essence, and carried to the fullest and highest significance."¹⁴

Here is an important point and one that remains a problem for many who turn to Sri Aurobindo. There appears to be so little systematic outer discipline, rigorous spiritual exercise, laid out for each seeker to follow. What is the method of this yoga as different from the 'method' proposed by other systems? The simple and therefore astounding answer that both Mother and Sri Aurobindo repeatedly give is: bring forward your psychic being - let it become the leader and master of life and thought and action. The very simplicity of this proposition can leave some people dissatisfied!

A radical change of consciousness is not only the aim but also the whole method of the integral yoga. According to Sri Aurobindo there are two basic rules that the seeker can attempt to follow to diminish the difficulty. These are to reject all that comes from the ego, vital desire and from the mere mind in ***"its presumptuous reasoning incompetence"***¹⁵; and secondly, to listen to and follow the voice of the inmost soul, to light the mystic fire in the heart that awakens the presence of the Mother within.

"There is no method in this Yoga except to concentrate, preferably in the heart, and call the presence and power of the Mother to take up the being and by the workings of her force transform the consciousness"¹⁶

The Vedic Idea

This is not what other yogic disciplines ask, but that is simply because they are not concerned with the earth and its triple planes of ignorance, or with divinizing life. Even in the Veda which Sri Aurobindo considers robustly life-affirming, the idea of a descent of the supramental world on earth does not appear possible:

*"The Vedic Rishis never attained to the supermind for the earth or perhaps did not even make the attempt. They tried to rise individually to the supramental plane, but they did not bring it down and make it a permanent part of the earth-consciousness. Even there are verses of the Upanishad in which it is hinted that it is impossible to pass through the gates of the Sun (the symbol of the Supermind) and yet retain an earthly body."*¹⁷



Sri Aurobindo's Gayatri

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

"Let us meditate on the most auspicious (best) form of Savitri, on the Light of the Supreme which shall illumine us with the Truth."



Surya Savitr: The Sun

In stark comparison, in a reply to a disciple, we have this powerful assertion of Sri Aurobindo:

"I am concerned with the earth, not with worlds beyond for their own sake; it is a terrestrial realization 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 consciousness in Matter."¹⁸



The Gita; The Tantra

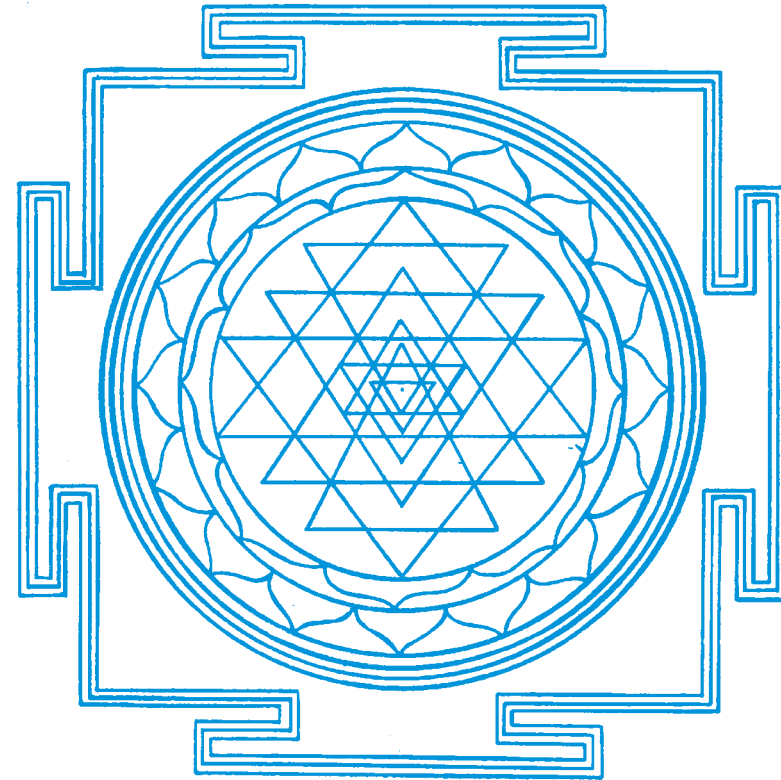
We begin to perceive the difference between all other seekings for the Divine and the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo. We also see the fundamental importance of the Mother, the mediatrix between embodied beings and the One, because it is her force alone that can actually do the yoga in the sadhak whose only, if onerous, task is to open his mind and heart and life and body to its action. This is a radical departure from all previous systems including that of the Gita. It is only in Tantric philosophy that the Mother, Shakti, is taken as the Supreme. Sri Aurobindo combines in their essence these two approaches.

"The Gita follows the Vedantic tradition which leans entirely on the Ishwara aspect of the Divine and speaks little of the Divine Mother because its object is to draw back from world-nature and arrive at a supreme realization beyond it; the Tantric tradition leans on the Shakti or Ishwari aspect and makes all depend on the Divine Mother because its object is to possess and dominate the world nature and arrive at the supreme realization through it. This Yoga insists on both the aspects; the surrender to the Divine Mother is essential for without it there is no fulfilment of the object of the yoga."¹⁹

For many centuries now in India, seeking for the Divine has been associated with renunciation, a Nirvanic ideal. Such a pursuit requires that the life energies become merely quiescent in preparation for liberation, *moksha*, from the cycle of birth and death. Not so in the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo, which really begins where the others leave off. *Vairagya* as an inner state of consciousness in the

midst of life activities is an immensely useful condition for the developing soul of the sadhak, but in the Integral Yoga it is a necessary stage and not an end in itself.

In the case of India, this life-denying idea has resulted in an unfortunate by-product: the rejection of the work of the Creatrix which has been perceived as being almost anti-divine. And this, according to Mother, has been the ruin of India because in discarding the elements of the physical world the Divine has been deprived of this domain for manifestation. To achieve the renaissance that Sri Aurobindo foresaw for India, this country will have to embrace wholeheartedly the work of the Universal Mother so she can manifest with all her puissant Knowledge, Power, Beauty and Perfection on the material plane. Auroville and particularly its soul-symbol, the Matrimandir, have a role to play in this work.



SRI CHAKRA

Other Traditions

The idea of the Mother has been present to a lesser or greater extent in most traditions of the world. The earth goddess, is the first form in which we find her. By the time we come to the Greek pantheon with its anthropomorphic gods and goddesses the masculine principle already predominates. In the Christian tradition we find her as the mother of God, the Virgin Mary. Tibetan Buddhism refers to her as Tara and the Japanese call her Kwannon, Goddess of mercy. These are external formulations for the same Force, the same Power but different faiths give it different images, value and status.

“Spiritual experience means the contact with the Divine in oneself... And it is an experience identical everywhere in all countries, among all peoples and even in all ages. If you meet the Divine, you meet it always and everywhere in the same way. Difference comes in because between the experience and its formulation there is almost an abyss. Directly you have a spiritual experience, which takes place always in the inner consciousness, it is translated into your external consciousness and defined there in one way or another according to your education, your faith, your mental pre-disposition. There is only one truth, one reality, but the forms through which it may be expressed are many...”

To what you see you give the form of that which you expect to see. If the same being appeared simultaneously in a group where there were Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, Shintoists, it would be named by absolutely different names. Each would say, in reference to the appearance of the being, that he was like this or like that, all differing and yet it would be one and the same manifestation.”²⁰



The Transformation Flower

To explain the three ways of being of the Mahashakti — Transcendent, Universal and Individual — with which one can enter into contact, Mother, in a very



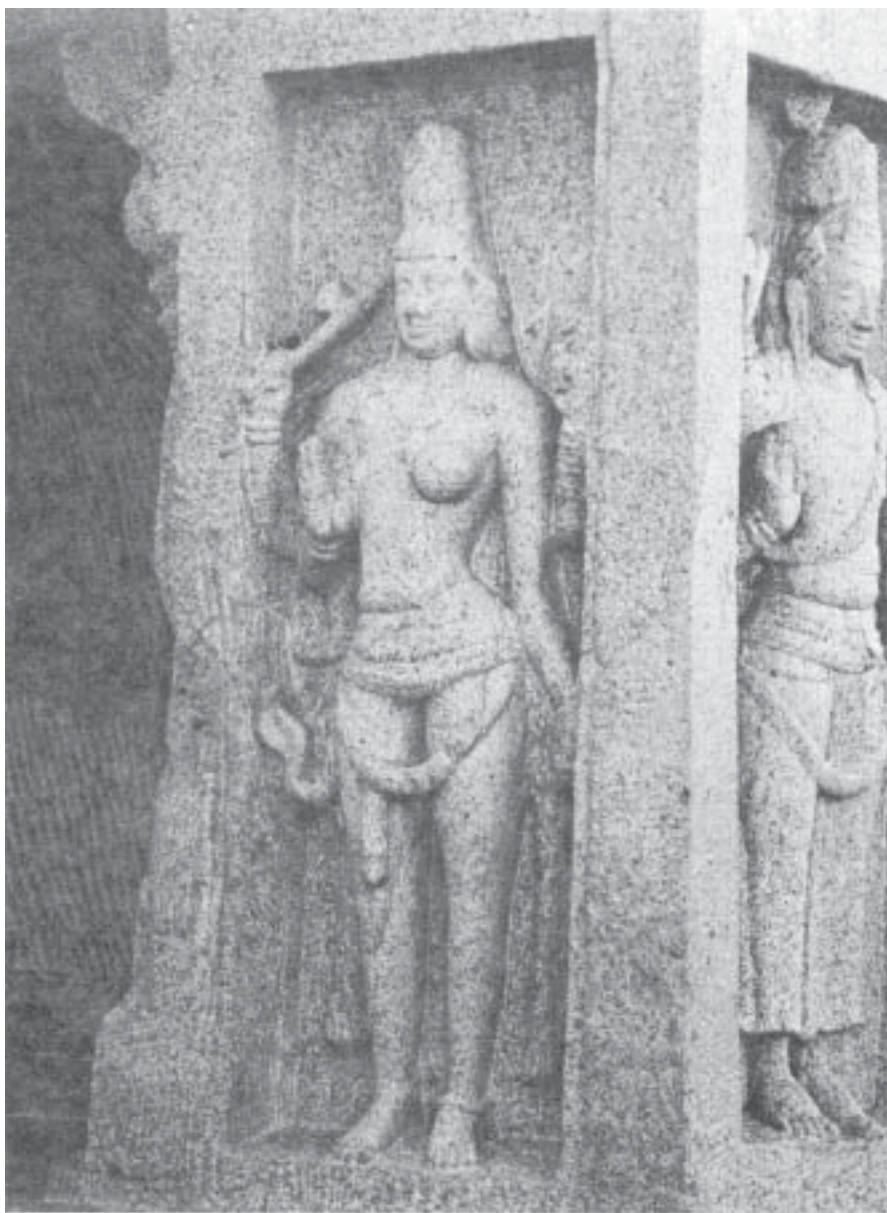
interesting illustration, uses the flower which she named Transformation, a flower that she says is almost perfectly formed:

“Do you know the flower I have called ‘Transformation’? You know it has four petals; well, these four petals are arranged like a cross: one at the top which represents the transcendent, two on each side: the universal, and one at the bottom: the individual.”



Transformation

Indian Cork-Oak Millingtonia hortensis



Ardanarishwara

*"The petal at the top is divided into two."
"Exactly, the transcendent is one and two (or dual) at the same time. This flower is almost perfect in its form."²¹*

In a letter she speaks again about the divided petal at the top of the transformation flower:

"Beyond the creation lies the perfect Oneness, but potentially it contains duality since the Mahashakti will manifest for the needs of creation."²²



The Biune Dualities

One of the more confusing experiences for the seeker of integral truth is the appearance of differing realities in the phenomenal world. Sri Aurobindo speaks of what seem to be conflicting dualities, depending on the perspective from which one views the world. The question of how to reconcile the apparent opposition between Divine Truth and manifest creation is a question that lies at the root of the riddle of the universe. In his writings, Sri Aurobindo describes what the seeker observes when he views the phenomenal universe. On the side of the Self one may become aware of everlasting Spirit-Substance — Brahman, the Eternal. On the other side everything seems transient, limited, fragmentary, plural, ignorant, exposed to disharmony and suffering — a dark illusion of Maya.

The second duality of which Sri Aurobindo speaks is that of a witness, observing, experiencing Consciousness which does not seem to act. On the other side appears an executive Force or an energy of Process which seems to constitute, drive and guide all conceivable activities — Soul-Nature; Purusha-Prakriti.

As one's consciousness deepens, there is a third duality that one may experience — that of Ishwara-Shakti. On the one side one is aware of an infinite and self-existent Godhead in being, a Soul of all souls, an impersonal inexpressible Existence who is at the same time an illimitable Person. On the other side one experiences the same Godhead as effectuating consciousness and power, a self-aware Force that contains and carries all: divine Conscious-Force and World Mother.

Unlike in other yogas, Sri Aurobindo says that the seeker of the Integral Yoga must attempt to harmonize all of these in his consciousness simply because for him the world-creation cannot be viewed as an *“illusion or a fortuitous mechanism, a play that need not have happened, a flux without consequence; it is an intimate dynamism of the conscious and living Eternal...”*

“This extreme opposition of view from the two poles of one Existence creates no fundamental difficulty for the seeker of the integral Yoga; for his whole experience has shown him the necessity of these double terms and their currents of Energy negative and positive in relation to each other, for the manifestation of what is within the one Existence. For himself Personality and Impersonality have been the two wings of his spiritual ascension and he has the prevision that he will reach a height where their helpful interaction will pass into a fusion of their powers and disclose the integral Reality and release into action the original force of the Divine.”²³

“For the seeker of the integral Yoga no single experience, no one Divine Aspect, — however overwhelming to the human mind, sufficient for its capacity, easily accepted as the sole or the ultimate reality, — can figure as the exclusive truth of the Eternal. For him the experience of the Divine Oneness carried to its extreme is more deeply embraced and amply fathomed by following out to the full the experience of the Divine Multiplicity. All that is true behind polytheism as well as behind monotheism falls within the scope of his seeking; but he passes beyond their superficial sense to human mind to grasp their mystic truth in the Divine. He sees what is aimed at by the jarring sects and philosophies and accepts each facet of the Reality in its own place, but rejects their narrowness and errors and proceeds farther till he discovers the One Truth that binds them together.”²⁴



State is born upon state;
covering after covering
becomes conscious of knowledge;
in the lap of the Mother
the soul sees.

Rig Veda



The Integral Yoga

Sri Aurobindo demands from us an integrality of approach which does not allow the mind to cut and select and build a closed system. Hence the dualities of Brahman or Maya; Purusha or Prakriti, Soul and World-Energy; silent Self and the creative Power of the Spirit are not really dual and; separate, they are biune. *“As we cannot separate Fire and the power of Fire, it has been said, so we cannot separate the Divine Reality and its Consciousness-Force”²⁵* The sadhak of the Integral Yoga has to be conscious of not seeing the Mother as something separate - she is the Divine as dynamic Conscious-Force and thus it is that for the work of transformation, it is her action rather than that of the Impersonal Divine that must be invoked.

“It is possible to go towards the knowledge by beginning with the experience of dissolution in the One, but on condition that you do not stop there, taking it as the highest Truth, but proceed to realise the same One as the Supreme Mother, the Consciousness-Force of the Eternal.

If, on the other hand, you approach through the Supreme Mother, she will give you the liberation in the silent One also as well as the realisation of the dynamic One, and from that it is easier to arrive at the Truth in which both are one and inseparable.”²⁶

“But the perfection sought in the integral Yoga is not only to be one with her in her highest spiritual power and one with her in her universal action, but to realise and possess the fullness of this Shakti in our individual being and nature. For the supreme Spirit is one as Purusha or as Prakriti, conscious being or power of conscious being, and as the Jiva in essence of self and spirit is one with the supreme Purusha, so on the side of Nature, in power of self and spirit is one with Shakti, para prakritir jivabhuta. To realize this double oneness is the condition of the integral self-perfection. The Jiva is then the meeting-place of the play of oneness of the supreme Soul and Nature.”²⁷



*I pray Fire, the Seer - Will,
the Son of Energy flaming
out of heaven in the
rite of the path.*

III.27.12. Rig Veda

*I am the Fire, I am from my birth the knower of all things
born; light is my eye, in my mouth immortality;
I am the triple Ray, I am the measure of the mid-world,
I am the increasing illumination, I am the offering.*

III.26.7. Rig Veda



Matrimandir - Fire at dawn

The Masculine and Feminine Principle

In conclusion we reproduce below a marvellous conversation of Mother which puts the merely human mentality with its tendency to view the Divine Reality in largely anthropomorphic terms quite squarely in its place. In a most humorous manner it warns against the attempt to fit the ineffable to the measures of the little human mind.

Try to picture the scenario: It is dusk and Mother is sitting on her chair with a lamp nearby creating an island of light around her. A child asks her a question and Mother's astonishing response is to turn to Nolinida (one of Sri Aurobindo's earliest disciples — Secretary to the Ashram) and ask him to answer because "I understand nothing at all of this !" Nolinida, of course, hesitates to speak — how can he when Mother herself says she does not understand. Well, read on:

"What is the work of Purusha and Prakriti?"

"Ah! Once again I have to give the impression that I don't know. Nolini, explain this. (laughter) As for me, I understand nothing at all of this, it does not correspond to any inner experience for me. I have never had this experience; consequently, I cannot speak about it."

"If Mother says that Mother does not know, then I must say I am ignorant!" (laughter)

"The Indian concept I know theoretically, and it is enough to read books to know it — that is not what I call knowing. I can speak to you only about things I have experienced. Well, this does not correspond to anything in me. I have not had that experience. I have had very clearly the experience of a witness looking at things, completely detached from everything, who knows all and does not move, who allows everything to be done...I have also had the experience of a will which decides. Naturally, everybody has the experience



of a moving force — the force in Nature, in its obscurity, and all that — everybody has that experience. But as for making a clear-cut division in this way and calling one Purusha, masculine, and the other Prakriti feminine, no, I refuse to do that — I have always objected to it and shall always object. And that is why I prefer not to speak about it. "...This is something that comes (pardon me) from a masculine mentality that's a bit warped...."

"Mother, you said precisely that you had the experience of this witness who does not move, then that is the Purusha !"

Ah! I don't know. (laughter) Purusha, if you like. But I did not find it particularly masculine ! You understand, what... what I object to is the male element and female element. Well, I find that it is not true, and I shall always say: IT IS NOT TRUE. There IS an element like this and another like that (Mother turns her hand from one side to the other). There is an activity like this and an activity like that. But why the devil do you want one to be masculine and the other feminine? It is not like that. This masculine-feminine business is a trick of Nature, it has arranged things here like that...When one descends from above, well, right up there one has no idea of masculine and feminine and all that nonsense; as you come down and arrive here, it begins to become something real. So you tell yourself, "Well, well! that's how Nature has arranged things." Good! But what I say is that these very conceptions which make one element masculine and the other feminine — this is a conception which has come from below, that is, it has come out of man's brain which cannot think otherwise than of MAN and WOMAN — because he is still an animal."²⁸



Let us work as we pray,
for indeed work is the body's
best prayer to the Divine.

The second issue of the Journal explored what the Universal Mother is according to Sri Aurobindo. The present continues the search in new directions. The two issues complete each other and should be seen together.

We remind our readers that a compilation, however focused, can only gather a few luminous ideas: it cannot replace the beauty of the original texts and we hope that this journal will encourage people to study Sri Aurobindo for themselves.

The next issue shall focus on the most material aspect of the Universal Energy as it is to express itself in the Matrimandir Gardens. We shall seek to answer the question of why Mother said that the Gardens are as important as the Matrimandir itself. Later we will return again to the subject of the Universal Mother and explore in detail her Powers and Personalities.

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