

The Nectar within the nectar

Poems and writings by Vikas Vickers



Poetry, thought and a life inspired by Sri Aurobindo and The Mother

The Nectar within the nectar

Poems and writings by Vikas Vickers

Front cover: Sri Aurobindo and the Universe. Photomontage by Vikas

INTRODUCTION

POEMS

1. Sudden Summer Rainstorm
2. Heart
3. Home
4. The Samadhi
5. For the rest, You lead
6. Not Dying
7. Twigs
8. Wayward Days
9. Incarnations
10. By the Sea

A painting: "Staying on the rails no matter what"

11. Auroville Poem
12. Churchyard Reflections
13. Why do I send you Poems?
14. A cup of tea in time
15. Worthiness
16. Jesus in the Minster
17. Clearing the Drains
18. When a child smiles
19. Crucifixion
20. A vision of lives
21. The Traveller's tale
22. Have you found the answer?
23. Widening
24. The dust of a moment
25. Redintegrate
26. The death of a chameleon
27. Youth and Age
28. God in the garden
29. The Courtroom of Life
30. Solitude
31. The Creation
32. Choices in Ypres

- 33. Reflections on a soldier's death
- 34. The inner ear (in The Whispering of the Gods)
- 35. The Lid
- 36. Voices in the Silence
- 37. Perpetual Creation
- 38. Truth, Beauty, Love, Delight
- 39. Memories of life

A drawing: Madras 1975

WRITINGS

1968 and Onwards

11th December 1971. Excerpt from my diary

Advice inwardly received

Meeting The Mother

Be Ye as Little Children

Time

On Returning to Auroville after 15 years

About Money

Is it God's fault?

Rear Cover: The flute player in the Matrimandir foundation. Photo by Dominique Darr

INTRODUCTION

This Collection of poems and writings was started in the 1970's when I was given the name 'Vikas' (meaning Progress) by Sri Aurobindo's spiritual collaborator, The Mother. I was born Alan Vickers on 20th. November 1944, in York, England. In Auroville and amongst Aurovilians, I also differentiate myself as Vikas Vickers.

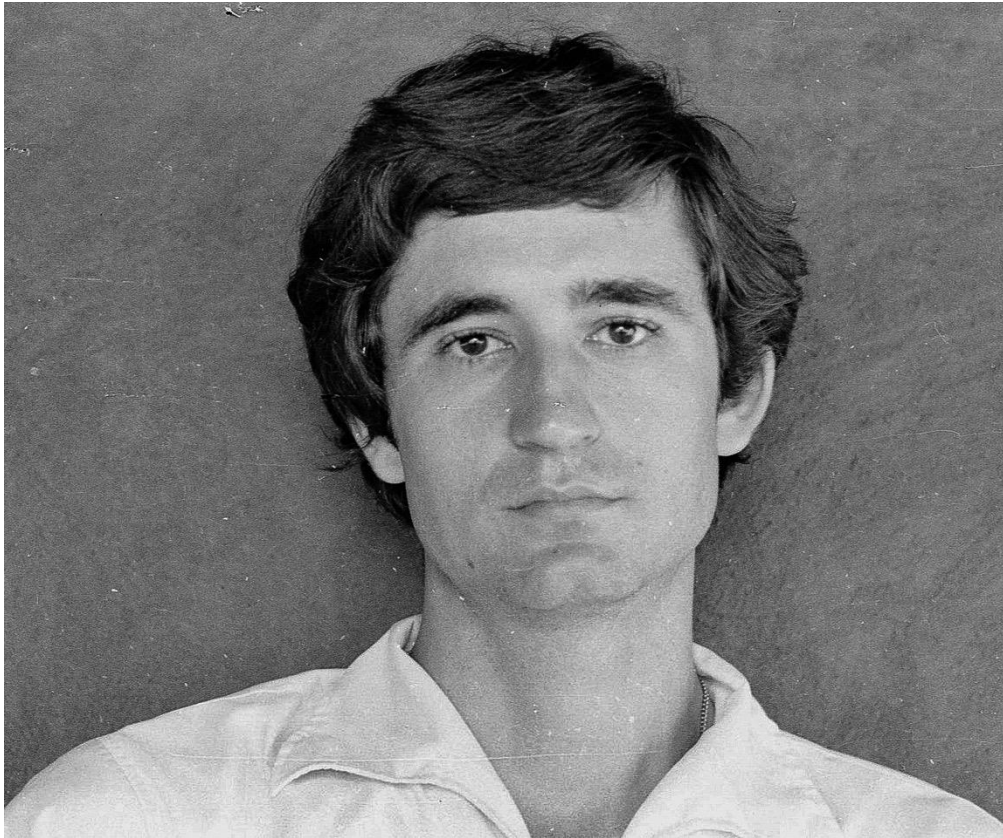
Up to the age of nine I lived in Germany where my father had governorship of Prisoner-of-War camps for ex-Nazis. I was then sent to a military boarding school in Dover, England until, at nineteen, starting my seven year academic and practical education for a career in architecture.

Having completed my education and practical training, I went travelling in 1971, having left the West feeling the need to seek something to give more meaning and purpose to my life. The initial intention was to get to Australia. I didn't know what I was looking for, but I did know that where and what I was, at that time, could not satisfy the deeper part of me that wanted something more relevant to the world than an ordinary, perhaps successful little life. When I was on top of a truck en-route to Kathmandu, I met a 17 year-old Swedish man who embodied the maturity, calm and wisdom that made me feel "I want some of that." He had just come up from the former French territory of Pondicherry in the south of India. He started telling me about Sri Aurobindo, about meeting The Mother and about the beginnings of Auroville. I was fascinated. I immediately went there and this is where I started these writings. I also worked in the construction of The Matrimandir, the design and construction of the Amphitheatre and the design of the first EcoHouse in India.

My search has been for a vision and understanding, to use de Chardin's phrase, of "the within of things". To change one's way of seeing the world it is necessary to change one's consciousness out of 'this earth-bound littleness'. In my case, a work still very much in progress after more than 50 years, but by following Sri Aurobindo's 'Integral Yoga' I definitely feel that I am somewhere in the foothills. And rather than make a wretched battle out of the process, I have aspired to walk what The Mother called 'the sunlit path', which requires a surrender to the inner guide, who, one anyway discovers, has been leading us even when we thought we were doing the yoga of life.

So, walk with me a little. 06/10/2023

Note: This book is being funded and printed privately and all proceeds from the sale or donations received from recipients of the book will be given to *Acres for Auroville, the Land Fund for Auroville*, to help purchase the needed land towards completing the construction of Auroville.



Vikas, 1972.

Poems from Early Days

1970 - 1980

Poems written whilst living in Auroville

1. Sudden Summer Rainstorm

When clouds break
Comes rain, visible Grace.
My heart, so long parched,
Made dry, burned to hardness,
Sighs the living ecstasy of its drenching
Shoots new buds, blessed, beatific.
Tendrils of sudden light
Cleave my heaviness.
Thunder retorts, vocal Kali
Ozoning my mind.

1970s

2. Heart

Sad heart, there is no sanctuary on Earth,
No earthly arms to comfort you
If once you choose to tread the path
And seek the crown of being.
What lover can with constancy be there
When all must rise and fall upon the tearful stage
And man must live the drama of his joy and pain?
And all the sweetness, all the hope, the trust
From one kind heart will vanish like a dream
That fades and throws you into life's unpitying fire.
Your prayer, sad heart, was uttered in a space of light.
So now, sad heart, the work begins, along the roads of Night,
Inside the caves of loneliness, where sorrow lurks
To press sweet pain upon your chest.
No turning back, sad heart, nor running, nor respite;
Into the fire leap, with tears and all
Rush onwards to the light.

*And now, calm heart, be still and see;
I was the road, the Night; I came to you as sorrow.
Mine were the arms that vanished;
I was the stage, the flame.
Who failed you? Crushed you? Me!
Rejoice, my heart, my fire sets you free.*

1970s

3. Home

O longed-for home, O distant, dazzling height,
So far-off, dreamed-of, deeply sought;
A crowning citadel atop the glaciated valleys of the Night.
The twisted tracks that lead to aspiration's peaks
Beset the traveller with slip and fall
And labour long, unending, as of Time,
Or drop their dire and shadow-dense disguise
Revealing straight and sunlit ways to tread.
But where is home when all is plod and plod?
When can the climber rest, his labour done?

Where is the summit-home, the promised throne?
Where is the bliss-brimmed rock that heaven made of clay,
The light-hewn city, sanctuary at end of weary day?
Where is the breeze whose shining air I breathed in sleep?
The coursing sun-winds shooting through my tissue's deep?
Each summit was a golden prison for my soul.
There is no final pause; to climb – the only goal.

1970s

4. The Samadhi

Stone-solid, eternity seems to slumber
Bearing on its stage the mutable seasons
Arrayed in ever-changing moods of form
Filling the spirit-packed air with transient fragrances
And bursts of dew-fresh colour, soon to fade.
Souls, like flowers, come and go,
Begging the silent Presence to part the sacred curtain.
Deep communion, pleadings, burdens of tears and bliss,
Solemn dialogues; The White Force offers solace, strength,
Shatters the illusion of its dumbness,
Urges, gently, sleeping matter to become.

Prayers rise like incense borne by breezes.
Pink roses flood the mind and heart
With moments,
Still rememberings, frozen moments.
Time dies.
Deep whiteness plunges into red dancing dust;
Orange visions, golden flickerings, pale blue oceans
Float like music from a flute.

Blackbird caws and brings some other here and now,
Conscious walking into streets of old familiar faces.
Hold me still, Oh sweet soft whiteness...

1970s

5. For The Rest, You Lead

In the endless cycle of our ant-days
Driven, moved by unseen hands
Fulfilling mirage yearnings that we think are ours,
Something stirs within a well of tears unspoken,
Needs the sunlit passage, needs the summit,
Needs the lucid purity unsullied
Which can bear the coronation
Of the light of Truth.

Not to strive, to struggle,
Confused, deceived by cravings reason-justified.
To be untouched by all that hinders;
Unsuppressed, unmummified, alive and flowing,
Joyous, natural, unpretending,
Unblocked, released and giving,
Laughing, playing, living
In the safety of surrender
Is our only need.
For the rest, You lead.

1970s

1979 onwards. I moved back to UK and started a teacher training course in Canterbury, with the intention of combining teaching and painting, working briefly as a draughtsman, estimator and on building sites. It was in Canterbury that I met my wife Sarah. Having finally qualified fully, to support myself, I started working as an architect. I later worked for 3 years in the Bahamas, before returning to England and starting my one-man architectural practice, Millstream Architecture, working in East Herts and Essex.

6. Not Dying

Grey men in grey suits
Postured and polite, discussing the efficiency
Of chemicals that deal death to moss.

Masks. I have one too, sitting at my desk

In the smoke-filled office, pretending to estimate
The quantities of asbestos and plasterboard
For your cheap ugly factories
That gobble up the green land
Where children laughed and played,
Trying to find words that can tell
Something about tears I dare not show,
Knowing that there has to be another way
Yet helpless to know how or what,
Whilst you worry about your profit and productivity
And I about not dying.

1979 Canterbury, England

7. Twigs

His limbs become like twigs
Where once bent youth's elastic sinews
And the baby's loose miracle,
Pure being, wordlessly aware
Before the birth of thought
And age's frowns and tightness.
But in the trances of older years
Eyes told of the mind's revision
Rebirth of silence
And I suppose
A certain second childhood.
Seen again and known
What these once words of my alone
Ardent discipleship
That life and death are simply
Knowing times of one long day
Living and unable to die
Or some point clear
Within the hard and crusty
Skinwrapt box of timebound form
Tree twig in the brittle late of day.

1981?

8. Wayward Days

Will the day come
When I shall cast off
The debauched tired lines of yesterday's decadence,
Death eyes gluttoned with indulgence?
Cast off the crumpled bag of skin,
Weary aching flesh
Of wayward days
And live, sun-bare and transparent
In the glow of age's youth
Where once my heart knew mountaintops?

18.01.1983

9. Incarnations

All the while I remain me, inviolate.
I am not what they imagine me to be
Behind this busy, benign face
So calm in scorpion dormancy,
Yet I, further in eagle buoyancy
In sometime majesty of flight
Lost in echoes of vastness,
The unseen daydreamer.
And latterly adminwallah
In the reverberations of eternity,
A pupil in the corridors of commerce
Now amidst the paper and the ink of my trade.
Such are my incarnations.

16.02.1983

10. By The Sea

As light fades
And profound thoughts
Are watered into words.
I tread again in my mind
Through sands of eventide
By the beach
And the everlasting sea.
I walk past footprints
Made by me
Scarce fifteen minutes since,
As if passing through a portrait gallery
Of old self-portraits.
Marks of me in matter.
Traces of a man no longer there,
No longer like that,
Changed as the picture of the beach,
The sea, the sky,
Light measuring and illuminating relentlessly
The same in constant motion.
Gloom draws on
As the greying fire scudders into night and darkness.
I strain and race to let these last eddies
Of a sudden sight of eternity and change
Find voice.
The sand is washed clean
Leaving a completely new beach
We walk over it
As if the first man to step foot here.
But our wanderings
Come back to where we started
Leaving only an arrangement of grains
Waiting to be dissolved by the sea.

06.03.1986. Love Beach, New Providence, Bahamas



Staying on the rails, no matter what

This painting was made at Love Beach, in Nassau, Bahamas in (I think) 1988. I was working as an architect for the Government of the Bahamas, designing an extension to the State Bank of the Bahamas.

The painting is of Robin, our first born son, when he was probably a year and a half old. We used to read him "Staying on the rails, no matter what", a story about Tootle the naughty train, who didn't like to do what he was told and used to go 'off the rails'. In the painting, Robin is seen in a world of images from the stories we were reading to him. My hand is beckoning Robin to go through the window to the real world depicted as the luminous turquoise sea which surrounds the Bahamas.

MORE RECENT POEMS

Written after my return to England

11. Auroville Poem

Still air.
A butterfly moves, dances by.
Someone is washing
And someone is beating tin.
Leaves, motionless, are turned towards the light
And birds sing.
If there is an I
It is the still, silent whole
That contains all this
And someone who writes these words.

01.03.2007 on a visit to Auroville

12. Churchyard Reflections

I sit in the old churchyard
Looking on Great St Marys
Reflecting on Time's relentless tread.
All the good and the bad
The humble and proud
Of the parish now lie silent here.
Though their names and their deeds
Lie carved in stone
Yet they have all long since passed, forgotten.
The merest blink of an eyelid in endless time.
Where will they go?
The godly, righteous and sober?
To heaven above?
The arrogant and proud to unexpected hellfire?
Those who rejected and despised
In the folly of their certainties
To some great awakening?
The wind howls through the churchyard trees,
But none of them will hear it.

Perhaps, their substance, decayed,
Mutated by worm and bird and berry

Wears some other form.
Perhaps the restless unburied, undead,
Swoop with the rooks from the belfry tower.

Perhaps, that small flame of God, now rested,
They inhabit some other life
In the great journey of becoming.

The church stands solid.
It has seen all of these brief beings of time
Baptised, confirmed, married, buried.
We come to it to pray, to invoke,
To weep, to sanctify our brief joys,
To plead for solace to our suffering,
To be the place where God might listen.
Does God listen? Perhaps His answer is not what we wanted,
What we prayed for, but something vaster
Whose miraculous drift evades us.
But the church will also have its end.
The stones one day will crumble
(As if its so-solid substance were just
Another brief formation
Of flowing matter in eternal change)
But we will not see it.
The belief which birthed the building
It too will pass, as others came and went,
The true and only truth
(Without which you were not eligible to be saved)
Born, holding sway, declining, passing.
These are the formations men have made
Of some original undefinable, unlimitable truth.
They too will dissolve.
Yet that which we sought to embody
That to which we turned
When realising we really had no control
Over our own petty lives,
Lives on, creates, sustains, breaks
According to another vision not shared
Except perhaps by seers.
God only smiles at man's arrogant folly.

Our brief experience of existence is like being afloat
In a very small boat on a vast and endless river of Time.
I can tell you what I see from here
But nothing beyond.
It all passes.
There is only the now, the brief moving point

From which we could see beyond.
But something prevents us seeing anything much,
Leave alone eternity.

04.10. 2017

13. Why Do I Send You Poems?

Why do I send you poems?
Is it some small attempt at immortality?

Sometimes the heart is opened by a crimson flush of feeling
A cry intense beyond all human pain or joy
For something beyond this little box of I.
The poem becomes then the drawing of breath by a drowning man.

Or suddenly the world as it is seems something else.
The hard unfeeling street, the pitiless suburbs of indifference
Become dancing energy, whirling atoms of light,
The motions of an endless forming and dissolving of grains of substance
Seeking a bliss of self-awareness as they play
Coagulations of bits
Of one being
The bliss of self-experience in many forms in time.

Streets where the oblivious tread out their drowning days.

09.11.2017

14. A Cup Of Tea In Time

Mrs. V requests a cup of tea
At this moment in eternity.
Mr. V is in the sea
The vast unending sea
Unbounded, free,
In fact he is that sea.
Just being. Gone is little me.
Says Mrs. V "Where is my tea?
Again you're drifting, I can plainly see.
Get up and make my cup of tea."

29.11.2017

15. Worthiness

We are all not worthy.
Half animal, yet within touching distance of great light,
Great light which we can neither hold nor reside in
We become prey to sudden upsurges from shadow-depths
Caves of life-primacy and the residual infra-human.
We move in zones of duality.
Yearning for the triumph of truth, of unity, of beauty and joy
This is the place around which we seek to unify all our being.
And yet we succumb to all that must go out of the great becoming
Whilst yet knowing that our human state is the field
In which we must live and transform and spend our days
Until all that we do is done consciously –
To know the place for the first time.

No wonder then that our master lay
His arms folded, unfathomable peace and light in his face,
Physically departed, with no clue save to have said
'You would not understand'.

07.12.2017

16. Jesus In The Minster

I sat on a pew in the Minster
The beautiful Minster, brimful with man's offerings to the Lord.
The soaring vaults, the intricate carvings.

And the circus.

Sarah had gone off to look for a tour group.
All around me the tourists processed
Searching for splendid settings for selfies,
Their moronic gestures, little victory signs, two fingers and a grin.
Clearly, they had indeed conquered.
Conquered God's place,
Sealed with manufactured smiles, captured for all eternity,
To share with family and friends back home,
Who surely could not wait.

To signal that this was still God's place, on the hour
A priest, attired in the finery of his worthy position
Mounted to the pulpit and uttered some brief good words.

I sensed Jesus had sat down next to me.
"All I sought for was simple." He said.
"Love one another.
Be ye as little children.
But all this?"

Later, when the tour had finished,
The guide asked, "Are there any questions".
There were none and everyone dispersed

I asked, "What would Jesus make of all this?"
"He would be appalled" said the man
Smiling, with unwept tears.

08.08.2018

17. Clearing The Drains

When our friend died, there was a long gap between the funeral
And when we saw his wife again in public.
We offered the conventional words of commiseration.
Yes, life would be hugely different now for her.
She said that there was a lot to get used to.
He would no longer be around to do the little jobs,
Like clearing the drains.
For forty years they had shared a bed and now she would have to find someone else
To clear the drains.

Life flies by and we try to leave our mark upon the world.
Oh, may I, when this brief light leaves the earth,
Be remembered for having
Unblocked the drains.

01.09.2018

18. When A Child Smiles

When a child smiles and laughs
And I am triggered to smile and laugh inside,
I am projected into a world of bliss beyond all
That human pleasure can give.
The child smiles and laughs inside of me
And I am freed of my worldly chains.

If there is a cure for human resistance
It is surely when the spontaneous innocence and joy of a child
Resonates and propels me into a oneness
That is the greatest healing known to me.
Here is the bliss that breaks all bonds,
When thus received, there is a hymn of gratitude
A prayer that asks for nothing but to share the joy of being.
Truly, one ascends to the kingdom of heaven in such brief moments

07.09.2018

19. Crucifixion

Who crucified Jesus?
Was it some other?
Was it not humanity as a whole?
Humanity?
Am I not as stained with his blood as anyone?

The Lord takes human birth in order that a greater Truth
A truer, a greater love
May manifest on earth and change the conditions of our existence
Bring us to the Light which is our ultimate destiny.
How fiercely the darkness in us resists
Swallows that light.
How violently the little I insists.
Again and again through history
In the choices of every moment
We reject the very thing we claim to aspire to
I am Judas

I am Peter in denial
We are the mob who crucify the Lord.

And yet He forgives us for we know not what we do.

16.07.2019

20. A vision of lives

I emerged cleansed from the Aegean Sea,
Fresh and bright in the radiant daylight of ancient gods.
A mystic potion was offered to me by unknown hands
Hands perhaps of another's, vaster hands
And I drank, lightly.
This would be the day that I would die,
Not to flesh but to an old and little self.

Hardly dry from the turquoise waters,
I lay upon the golden shore of Ios
And watched an old man herding his flock of goats
Across the dormant sand.
Why I should find this sight the funniest I had ever seen
Was a mystery that I had many later years to ponder
But in that moment, I sat and watched the awoken sands
Laugh in vibrant dance around and with and in me.
I was the laughing beach.
At length I wandered up the parched and gentle hill
Which guarded that sacred beach.
I sat on a high point and watched the dancing sky
Fragmented into an atomic play of light molecules
Under the crystal clear vibrating sun, bathing in its loving warmth.
Oh, this must be what heaven is like.

Then gradually little concerns arose.
A recrudescence of the worries of the relentless tiny mind.
Would I not burn under the merciless sun?
Where was my lotion?
How could I be sure that I would not fly off?
And did I need to hold on to the rock for safety?
Then as I descended from the hilltop
My life unfolded itself like a movie before my inner eye.
This must be what a dying man sees before he passes.
These are your games. These the acts you present in order

To be accepted, liked, loved. This your falsehood, your ego
To which you now must die.
Clear as daylight the solution presented itself to me.
You must go Beatle-led, to India,
Where you might find the potionless path
To recapture the heaven and self-vision that stripped you
Of your little false self.

It was perhaps a year later that I sat on a truck
Destination Himalaya. By this time, all that had been needed
Had come to guide me, each book, each person, event
Precisely timed to show me the next step in the unfolding.
This then, was the adventure of consciousness
And now all I needed was to meet the embodied guide.
I met one, young yet wise and calm, who told me where to find the guide
And once I had finished the guidebook
Off I set, meeting en-route false 'masters'
Who would lure the unwary into wrong directions.

I went straight to The Mother's room.
She sat on a chair, old, frail,
Beaming sweetness like the sun beams warmth and light.
Having built in my mind a vision that would involve mystic lights,
Her frail skin seemed translucent, but this was a very human mother.
I gave her a fragrant rose and a red candle from Nepal
With an unspoken request that she would ignite its flame in me.
"Une bougie" she said, smiling. Then silence.

Nothing else was said. Perhaps twenty seconds in a nuclear bomb silence
She lightly put her hands
On my head and blessed me, all in a silence and calm
Eternity in a profound here and now.
I got up and wandered back down from the mountaintop.
Again, my life unfolded before me as it had done
That extraordinary day by the sea in Los.
The veneer of charm and polish that hid the animal,
The games, the falsehood, the movie of my life
Like a vision before dying.
And with it, the certainty of the needed guidance and knowledge.
The death of the ego has turned out to be a long slow unfinished process
Often a few steps forward and perhaps too many backward,
Each unravelling from ever greater depths
The knots of desire and habit and obstinacy
All my travelling kitbag of falsehood
But all a succession of blessings in unfolding lives.

9.8.2019

21. The Travellers Tale

Trapped in a merry dance between flesh and infinity
Ambushed by the shadows
And all the habitual cravings of mortal man,
I am robbed of flights of vision
And all the wondrous joys of unity,
Dissolved by nature's relentless seizures of desire
And descended into a world
Of the otherness of things.
But I am not that, merely its witness,
Just as I am also a passerby of summits of vision.
Thus do I travel through worlds of hungers and of heights.

12.01.18

22. Have you found the answer?

I sit again in Great St. Mary's Churchyard
Quietly observing the swaying wild grasses
Brushing the silent tombstones
Bending with age, defying gravity
But Blessed with peace.

What separates us from the dead?

A lady walks past and asks
Have you found the answer?
Well, yes! I say,
Wondering if this is a monumental arrogance
When the Master's words come to me:
'All substance of being in space
Is a flowing sea
Undivided in itself
But only divided in the observing consciousness.'

8.7.2020

23. Widening

(Remembering Heather)

She has gone.
You feel the pain like wounds in your heart.
You must learn to let go and yet
You will still feel her there and never lose
Her presence in the very core of your being.
But how to move beyond grief and pain?
Be aware that all beings, all things living
Have their beginnings and their ends
All subject to Time's brief theatre.
The curtain opens, the curtain closes.
Her costume shed, the actor moves on to play another part.
Be aware also
There is currently a circumference to the love you feel.
You can embrace certain, chosen ones near and dear
Feel what they bring to help you in your need.
But you need to go wider still.
Break through that blinkered and belittling circumference
For only a greater wideness can take you beyond your wounding pain.
To those with attachments, Time is cruel.

Be still
Hear the birds sing of their joy to be.
See, oh, the bees and the blossom.
Hear the laughter and shouts of joy of the children
From the nearby playground.
Feel the love of the mother for her child
Life passes through them and Life goes on.
Just see and feel.
Feel the warmth of the sun on your skin
The joy of the earth at rain
All the small acts of love of the earth
And all its beings and life.
See the love that is everywhere
And its bliss just to be.
And give thanks.
Just give thanks.

25.11.2020

24. The dust of a moment

Looking with the eyes of my petty little life
I saw the best of my works
The finest fruits of my labours
Were not perhaps the greatest creations of an earthling
But the modest effort of one struggling
To leave some small reason for friends
To remember him with at least the recognition that
He tried.
The boundless infinite existence
Looked on and smiled an indulgent and ironic smile.

18.09.2020

25. Redintegrate

Restore to wholeness or unity

I woke to a dawn of sadness.
Hell was the whole ignorant heaping humankind
That scattered the litter of its uncaring life
Across the green and beautiful earth
Oblivious to its drawing of death to our home, this planet.
I ended the day at the feet of the master of light
Bathed in visions of redeeming beauty
And the music of life's promised marriage with God.
Oh Lord, what a world has been created
Is it by you or by us?

05.01.2021

26. The death of a chameleon

Oh, to end things like you, chameleon.
Clinging to the mosquito gauze next to my window
As if your feet were glued to the holy fabric.
I don't know if it is old age, world-weariness
Or just a severe expression of exhaustion
With life under a relentless Indian sun.

Your tired and wrinkly skin starts to burst forth
With all the colours of your ingenious palette
That served to provide camouflage
From predators and predated in your pursuit of persistence
In a brief but brilliant life.
As if some master artist had rainbowed
Red, orange, yellow, green and blue
In random unrestrained ecstasy into your tired cells
To create more, yet more colour blends
Purples, mauves, verdigris and elephant's breath
With wild abandon.
You are not going out without proclaiming
I have lived, I have lived.

4.3.2021

27. Youth and Age

Life has its revenge.
I recall the springtime cruelties
Of youth's arrogant certainties.
How I mocked the aged and infirm.
How old began at forty.
How the war-schooled, wrinkled, bent and decrepit
Would dismiss their sorry state
With a stoic "mustn't grumble".
How their wisdoms were irrelevant
To the young of a totally different world.
I was a different man then. A man?

Now I am old myself.
How no one cares
For all the wisdoms I have been graced with
From a life actually blessed!
And I have only aching joints
Sagging skin and the odour of age
Where once the beauty of youth
Opened doors to all life's earthly pleasures.
But now there has come something else
Of greater value.

18.03.2021

28. God in the Garden

I awake to the garden
Not just waking, but being as if for the first time
Truly alive,
Marvellously awake to the marvel.
The bees frolicking in lavender love-fields
Dancing from nectar to deep plumbed nectar,
Yet this is their work, this is the office.
But what sort of work is this honey-drunk dance of joy?

The flowers, choruses of colour-song
Bursting self-illuminated. I see them as if for the first time.
I see them as a dying Steven Potter saw the blossomest blossom
Not only lit by daylight's ambient light
Today cloudy dulled grey as is so often the British way
But petals vibrant with inner light
Singing with light, light leaping out to assault with ecstasy.
"At last you see us" they sing.

Oh, we are so accustomed to noticing these things
Whilst deep in thought or lost in conversation
As we pass by on walks, half attentive as normal,
Despite our friend's casual "Oh, look at that!"
Before we pass and the beauty is banished by the petty blah blah blah.
Noticing is not fully seeing.
Thus nature's glory is pearls before swine.
But today the flowers and bees revealed to me
Their divinity
The nectar within the nectar.

23.08.21

29. The Courtroom of Life

In the pursuit of truth
You are thrust at some point
Into the courtroom of life.
There you must face the formidable trial
Of your own story.
You are not only the accused.
You are also counsel for both prosecution

And defence.
You are witness, judge and jury.

The case begins at the very start
Of your spiritual journey
The moment when you first
Realise that you must seek the knowledge of self
That is the outcome of the revelation to yourself of your unself
Seen by the first glimmer of an embryonic true self.

Your journey starts with a vision of yourself
The witnessing of a life lived in ignorance and falsehood
The shame and disgust
That follows scenes of your life movie
Of pretence, posturing, pleasing
The relentless pursuit of I, me, mine
And the unbearable vision that much of the world
Lives like this, blinded and masked
Fake, deceiving and self-deceived
And that even our noblest actions have touches of self-deception
And self-interest.

Of course there is good
There are the good
But which of our works is not tainted by a trace of self interest or self-regard?
Or which of our actions prompted by some seeking for relief of our conscience?

Is this the Final Judgement
That comes at the start of the death of the false self
At the start of the search for a life lived in truth?
And when is the case closed and a verdict given?

01.07.2022

30. Solitude

Solitude is not necessarily separation from the world.
It may seem it
But who can know what goes on in one who may be plunged into the Infinite?
He may choose to disconnect from his immediate situation
People and place and petty lives.
But his immersion may be in the Oneness, the limitless wideness
Of pure being.
The ultimate challenge to him is to keep his conscious presence

In or beyond the universe
Whilst still being immersed in life and action
Holding the vast and limitless in the particular and momentary.

15.03.2023

31. The Creation

Was the Creation an event?
Did it occur at the beginning
And was its onset
A ball of matter spinning in space?
Waiting for life to emerge
Bodies moulded out of clay
As the ancient story goes?

Rather it now seems to me
Creation is constant and relentless.
It does not occur without destruction.
But destruction is a petty understanding.
There is a process.
Fire, Water and Light,
Electron, atom, gas, slime,
Bacteria clinging to rock,
Copper, iron, minerals
Emerging into life.
Moss, Grass, tree,
Animal, man.

We see an ascent here.
Each mutation is life trying a variation
That plays with the growth
Of light and knowledge and power.
Consciousness.
Perhaps love!
Leading to what?
Who would think that Man
So mired in Ignorance
So foolish, so self-destructive
And yet so full of the possibility
Of the sublime
Could emerge God-like
From such clay as this?

Yet, if He creates all this from Himself
Is it not God Himself
Who will one day emerge?

24.03.2023

32. Choices in Ypres

In green and lovely England this morning,
Tommy would have woken to the sound of birds
Singing of the joy to be, from trees.
Tommy had two choices
Here this morning in Ypres.
Get up and go over the top
Once the order was given,
Face the hail of bullets from Fritz's machine gun,
Breathe the gurgling green gas,
Fight your way across the swamp of No-Man's Land
Shooting who knows where or whom
And navigate through the welcoming barbed wire
To find and plunge the bayonet into the enemy.

Deal death or die.

Or ignore the order to attack,
Stay in the comfort of your rotten
Rat-infested muddy trench
And if any of your comrades,
Lord knows there were thousands of them,
Have survived and returned
Tomorrow at dawn, Tommy, you will be tied to a post
Looking into the eyes of your mates
And be shot.

25.04.2023

33. Reflections on a Soldier's Death

*The epitaph on tombstones to unknown soldiers:
"Known to God"*

It is the end.

Tommy or Fritz or Pierre lie shot
Or gassed or bayoneted, who knows how.
Bathed and smothered in the cold wet mud
Entangled, trapped in barbed wire
Bleeding, coughing, overcome with pain
Staring into the pitiless sky
Their great duty to their nation done.
All honour and glory.

Each in his own tongue,
Speaking from the inner child
Calls for his mother.
Mother be with me
It is the end.

It is The Mother who comes
In answer to this call.
When speech awoke
He called her mum or mummy or mutti or mamma.
She who had endured his birthing
Given him love unstinting
Whatever her state of exhaustion.
She who had embraced him
In his earliest helplessness
Fed and cleaned and succoured him.
Surely between us there is no love
More true and selfless
Than the love a mother gives.
In this his final moment
She answers to his call.
It is the end.

But is it the end?
It is the end of this particular life
And like Jesus taken down from the cross
His immense pain now past
He shall go to rest
In the bosom of The Divine Mother
The face and form of God in action
Force of God for creation
Who birthed him as his life mother

And through that life, now past,
As his mother always.
As the undying love in his heart and he in Hers
Always there even if unperceived.
Unknown soldier,
Known to God.

Reflection.
I sat watching a raptor rolling and riding the thermals
Under a cloud-scudded sky,
(The same pitiless sky)
Reflecting on these events
That shape our lives and deaths.
How can the Lord allow such catastrophes
Whilst yet He consents to The Mother
Answering to our call,
Comforting us in our hour of passing?
We cannot know the Mind of God
If indeed He has a mind.
Oh, I can understand how one can be driven into disbelief
If we believe that God allows this war,
That it is God's will.
It seems that the rules of The Game of Life
Have allowed *us* free will
To make the choices that shape our lives
Or those with power but without wisdom
Who make these decisions
With only a framework of Ignorance and ego
To drive them.
After a war that would end all wars
After a holocaust war
We are into our third world war, by proxy,
When will we learn, when change?

Known to God.

28.04.2023

34. The inner ear

Open that inner ear
That listens in the heart
And hears the whispering of God

29.5.2023

35. The Lid

(After reading 'The Supramental Sense' and recalling
Some life-changing moments
Of illumination on a hilltop on the island of Ios, Greece)

There is a lid between our being and true and full experience.
Perhaps its purpose is to protect us.
The totality of fullness
Lived constantly without interruption
Would totally overwhelm us
Unless we had been prepared by inner cleansing.
Initially we become aware, by sudden and unsought-for
Momentary invasions of light
Illuminations of comprehension
That there is a world of direct knowledge
Where everything is understood
Because we are that everything.
There is no difference, no otherness.
Bursting through that lid, we are momentarily
Lifted above to mountain-tops of vision
No, higher, skies above of wondrous luminosity,
Of all-seeing insight
Or we feel as if the visions there have descended into us
And we look around us to see the same world
But somehow heavenly, vibrant
With a stable electric totality of light.
All things new.
For a moment all is clear, understood.
We are given certainties that
If we could only live in those sublime spaces
We would not only see the physical forms of things
But the soul substance of which they are made.
That all substance of being there, even seemingly inert material
Is living, conscious stuff, is the Divine itself
Taking body
And all sensation and life is wondrous living bliss.

5.6.2023

36. Voices in the Silence

I love the silence of the churchyard.
Its stillness bathes me in peace.
The tombstones send out the farewell messages of the grieving,
The tears of those left behind are etched into the stone
With a pain that resonates through the centuries
Like a slowly fading echo.
It becomes indecipherable in time,
Eaten by moss and the pollution of the years.
Somehow I sense I am shut in by the silence I feel
And the dead are wanting us to hear
But we are deaf, impenetrable.
Even our stillnesses
Swallow and muffle the call from the other side
With the reverberating mutterings of our own petty stories.
The dead are not dead and their profound awakening
Is wasted on our deafness.
Or maybe they now speak a different tongue?
Do they tell of lives that are not candles extinguished
But resting between brief flickerings of flame
In which their continuing journey
May be, slowly, slowly, into the Light?

31.07.2023

37. Perpetual Creation

With acknowledgement to
Shakespeare, scientific knowledge and to Sri Aurobindo

The universe must already have been
Or lived and died before.
God knows how.
Perhaps a perpetual existence.
A permanent if fluid existence?
How, when all that exists is created and dies
Obeying an evident cosmic law?
Perhaps even cosmic laws are created and die?

A cloud of gas and dust collapsed
Into a flattened disc,
Accreted to itself cosmic debris
Let loose a portion of itself
To be a companion in space

The smiling waxing waning moon.
It's smile a borrowed light
From the blazing heart
That breathes life into our cycles of existence.

Now we are still accreting cosmic dust
And with it who knows what life
What bacteria, what miracle of being?
From where?
And given what a piece of work is man,
To what end?
'As if honey could taste itself
And all its drops together
And all its drops could taste each other
And the whole honeycomb as itself' says my master.

9.8.2023

38. Truth, Beauty, Love, Delight

*In all poor foolish things that only live a day
Eternal beauty wandering on her way.*
WB Yeats

Truth, Beauty, Love, Delight,
These great powers that wander among us
Residing briefly in great souls
That touch and illuminate our lives.
At least in the lives of ordinary souls
Who have forced open a chink where light steals in.
The emissaries of light are missioned to earth
To bring a something of the divine
But few are they who truly can be changed
By what they have received.
The unconscious consciousness
Of egos submerged in pettyness
Is hard to penetrate.
And we all have this crust.
We choose to cling to desire
The impenetrable armour of our ignorance.
Even we prefer to drink the mixed cocktail
Of happiness and sorrow,
Find a sweetness in the intensity of pain.
These make us feel alive
If a life of sorrow and transient happiness is life.

Meanwhile too oft the messages of the seers
Reside bound in books
Held captive in libraries
Or echoed from pulpits
Whilst some poor hopefuls attend half asleep.
Love touches us
Tarnished too oft by lust or littleness
And moves on, unable, unwilling to stay.
And yet a world awaits even those
Briefly touched poor foolish souls
In whom something has been ignited.
They will grow to know what is worthless
And what is of true value in this world of false gods.
As we begin to see and feel
A world of truth, beauty, love
And delight awaits
And Life is content to bide its time to deliver
This utter transformation
So long as we believe it possible that human nature
Can and must change
And try.

1.10.2023

39. Memories of Life

What memories of this life would persist
When this soul has cast off
The aching bones and sagging skin of these declining days
Reborn to some new adventure of consciousness and joy?
In a long moment of silence I reflect.
I see a playground, a child, it is Joy
Joy by name and Joy by nature.
She runs up to me, all openness
And fresh as a field of daffodils in spring,
Sun and air and light
And play, oh what a game is life before
The mind dumps its heavy constructions on things!
She read to me in Year 2,
Read when she could find a space between excited tales
Of her discoveries, her life, her adventures.
So often told me what a joy it was to read to me.
Now she summons her nearby classmates
To come to me.
I am overwhelmed with gratitude

That lasts beyond the moment,
Colours the days with daffodils in my heart.

9.10.2023



Madras 1975

Writings

1968 And Onwards

The goal of a revolution is to reject (by force if necessary) an existing malfunctioning order of things and replace it with a new paradigm. Has there ever been a revolution that has succeeded? Why, when viewed from a more distant perspective, do they almost never seem to succeed? Even if we change the *modus operandi*, what is to stop things reverting to their pre-existing state? What is to stop one overthrown despot being replaced further down the line by another?

I was in my early twenties in 1968. I was still fully concentrated on passing my examinations to become an architect. Meanwhile, things were stirring in the world. There was a palpable Force at work at a more global level than just in France or among the young of the USA, which was compelling change and rejection of the dust of the old order and vision. In Paris that May, students had occupied the University and taken to the streets, not merely in protest against the existing educational system, but in revolt against the whole existing state of things. The more the authorities tried to suppress the protests, the more virulent and widespread the protests became. The workers across France joined the students. In the end, did French politics and governance change? Was there a fundamental social change?

When The Mother was asked to comment upon what was happening in France, she said, *"It's clearly the future which is awakening and trying to drive away the past....It's the higher power COMPELLING people to do what they must do....It's clearly (not in the detail of it, but in the direction of the movement), clearly a will to have done with the past and to open the door to the future. It's like a sort of revulsion with stagnation."*

But she saw it only as the very first step, and warned, *"There must be no violence; as soon as one indulges in violence, it's the return to the past and opens the door to all conflicts..."*

And, of course, there was violence in France. This is why we are justified in asking ourselves whether France had really changed. Certainly French youth seemed at the time to believe that they had inherited the spirit of the original French Revolution of May 1789, whose social and political changes were made concrete by Napoleon. And yet despite the violence, despite the tendency at a societal level to progressively relapse into a consumer-centric mentality, there was a new vision and the sense of something different at work.

In the USA, the 1969 music festival at Woodstock in the USA became the focal point of a countercultural movement of change, described as 'the Summer of Love'. For what? Something else. But what?

*"I'm going to try and get my soul free
We are stardust
We are golden
And we've got to get ourselves*

Back to the garden"

Joni Mitchell's song "Woodstock" attempts to capture the aspiration of the moment. I believe that 'Back to the garden' had a wider sense than a return to living and working on the land.

*"Well maybe it's the time of year
Or maybe it's the time of man
I don't know who I am
But life is for learning"*

Joni later commented that Woodstock was "a spark of beauty" where half a million kids "saw that they were part of a greater organism". A paradigm shift.

Why did the change promised by Woodstock not then sustainably materialise itself in the society at large? Is it because, in part, in those hippy dreams, in being encouraged to 'tune in, turn on, drop out', by indulging in 'sex, drugs and rock n' roll' we mistook the liberation aspired for as a licence to indulge in all of our desires rather than for the true liberation from our egos that is a freedom from all desires and slaveries and without which *true* love and peace cannot establish itself among us? Nevertheless, it was a seed for something else.

I felt the hopes and shared the dreams of love and peace with an unaccustomed intensity. By the time I had completed my studies and started working, the sense of dissatisfaction with the existing value-system and the structures it had created had begun to preoccupy me.

Half way through my post-graduation work experience, I stood one day outside my huge London architectural office (over 1000 architects, engineers and surveyors!) and realised that in all the office blocks surrounding me, the Shell Centre, etc. there were armies of workers, including myself, passing around bits of paper about realities, real life situations they never actually experienced at first hand. In my case, we were designing housing for London's poor without being exposed to or having any understanding of what it meant to live in the buildings we were designing (unless we unofficially made efforts to visit the area and engage with the people affected). Such was the mindset of the time that the homes we were designing were referred to as 'housing units', (a description divorced from the reality of human life but still widely in use even today!) I resolved there and then to quickly save enough money so that I could travel and seek for something to become involved with that was more real, more true. It had to be something beyond this unreal world for which I had been educated and groomed. I had also by then commenced an inner search, unknowingly seeking Reality with a capital R. It had come to me that I might find the 'something else' that I yearned for in India.

On 28th February 1968, on a barren plain in South India, the Auroville project was inaugurated. Auroville's objectives somehow embodied the core and essence of the revolutionary spirit and hopes for a global change not just to a new vision, a new world order of things, a new kind of society, but to a new consciousness and, who knows, perhaps even physically, to a

new kind of being, which might make such a fundamental change possible. For to change the order without essentially changing the consciousness has always been the reason for the downfall and failure of all revolutions. And to change the consciousness requires that the individuals constituting any collective, change within themselves, then work together with others at a community level, spread the message and be the example, eventually (hopefully), leading to a societal change. Not easy, unless the individuals feel so suffocated by the prevailing system, that they can see, not just with their eyes and in their minds the necessity of change, but feel its need in their hearts with a need as great as the need to breathe. And that they are prepared to undertake the necessary discipline which will firmly root the change in the whole of their being. As I discovered in my own inner journey, such a colossal change, although its need is the consequence of a sudden insight, cannot be achieved instantly, and certainly not quickly at a collective level. It is too often a case of three steps forward followed by two or three steps back.

Auroville's pioneer phase saw its first potential citizens as having come endowed with the spirit of Paris 1968 and the Woodstock generation. Without these rebels and pioneers, Auroville would arguably not have been settled. Certainly, the Indian spiritual aspirants, even the younger ones, seemed to me to feel more comfortable with a life of clean white dhotis and the comfort of the ashram with its rituals, order and stability. Some of the western pioneers saw out the pioneering stage of Auroville's development, planted the 2 million trees that changed the face and microclimate of the proposed 'city' area and its surrounding region, and then started leaving as Auroville moved through its struggle for self-governance and independence from the rule of the old order into a more settled but eventually more bureaucratised and bourgeois society. Perhaps it became a society resembling in many respects the old order it had hoped to replace. The early pioneers were also having to make a choice between a life with its libertarian sense of freedom, with either a Club Med or a hippy laissez-faire atmosphere and the more demanding atmosphere of yogic discipline. Did some of them, in the process, also lose the fire of their original hopes and dreams?

Revolutions, then, are seeds planted in a society whose general mass is unlikely to have the will to change if it means losing its comforts and patterns of habit. Transformation among the mass of a society can only happen gradually and has to be preceded by an inner change of vision. It is only when enough people deeply feel the necessity for change that anything begins to change, and that often requires that a state of profound discomfort with the existing order of things becomes widespread, even unbearable. But the seed has been planted. Its growth is inevitably resisted by all that feels the existing order is under threat. In Auroville, after 50 years, when characteristically such utopian and idealistic movements would have imploded, it is still growing.

30.07.2011

11th December 1971. Excerpt from my diary: The Matrimandir is no more than a great wide circular hole in the ground. It is emerging as a crater, a colossal theatre-in-the-round. But it has a most strange and very powerful character, an individuality, a *genus loci*. A spirit descends over the place. To me it's more than "the Force" that others speak of, eulogising its intensity and power. To me, it is the total atmosphere, the energy and the matter, the ether and the earth, and the instruments of transformation, the workers. All seem saturated with this spirit, as if here were the most dense concentration on earth. I know of other places which have their own intense, heavy characteristic atmosphere; locally I could instance the Samadhi of Sri Aurobindo, Sri Aurobindo's room, the Mother's room. I have felt the same intensity, but of a totally different vintage, sitting atop a mountain in the Himalayas. It is as if they held a wine, a divine liquor, rich, fruity, heavy, strong; but each with a different flavour, bouquet and vintage. And you have to be a spiritual wine-taster to mark the difference and the subtlety of character.

But one characteristic they all seem to share is a sense of timelessness, despite the exterior forms and your knowledge that such-and-such a place has only been like this for x number of years, be it ten or a million. One feels the atmosphere, the spirit has always existed here, even if only on the subtle plane and not materially manifest.

Anyhow, this large excavated hole, the Matrimandir in its present form, looks a bit like a scene from a Twentieth Century Fox wide screen epic, with 400 workers, men and women and children, carrying huge baskets of rich red earth on their heads. It could be a scene from ancient Babylon, or the construction of the pyramids. Timeless, eternal.

But there, in the middle, as if to give the game away, like the Shakespearean actor who forgot to remove his wristwatch, is the thin, nervous, bespectacled, plastic-raincoat-clad figure of Alain, the chef-d'oeuvre, strutting around with his clipboard at the bottom of the pit amidst the pools of water, a band of loin-clothed workers attending his every word. It's rich, it's beautiful, and it's funny.

Quoted in Ruud Lohman's Matrimandir Diary

Advice inwardly received

(dictated to me on a plane back to UK from India).

Do not talk about the divine, live it in a perfect sincerity at every moment and in all you do. Constantly remember and offer every action, every problem. Mother will do the rest. Leave the result to Her and do not seek any particular outcome.

If you become a true light of the Divine, your prayers that your family will not be divided may be answered, if that suits the Divine's will and purpose, for you and for your family. If it does not work out as you had hoped but you are fully sincere and unified around your central aspiration, then you will know that any pain you suffer will be the pain of the ego.

Be wide and open to the love in all beings.

There is no need to compromise, so act at every moment to stay close to the Divine and to shut yourself off from the forces and situations which can cut you off from your aspiration and consecration in each act and moment. Keep always the lamp lit and the instrument ready and fit for purpose and remember that there is no good or bad, rather right action and wrong action. Then you will truly be Vikas, Progress, the divine flower opening to the light.

In your work be always scrupulously honest and fair. Work for the good of all and of the planet and for the manifestation of beauty in matter and a perfection in the execution.

04.03.2007

Meeting The Mother

I'm looking back nearly fifty years, so my recollection is not so fresh. I was given the opportunity to meet The Mother in Her room at The Sri Aurobindo Ashram. I had brought with me as an offering, a single red rose and a red candle, aspiring by way of these symbols that she would light a flame inside me. As I entered Mother's room, I was aware only of the physical reality. I saw only a little old lady. When it came to my turn, I gave Mother my candle and flowers. "Une bougie" she said with delight. I knelt down in front of The Mother and looked into her eyes. About twenty seconds. In total silence. In my spiritual infancy, I had imagined beforehand that there would be a great light, something dramatic and 'spiritual'. No, just silence and calm and a sweetness. And eyes that knew me by identity. She then gently placed her hands on my head to bless me. I quietly got up and moved out of the room and descended the stair to the ground level. When I was down, suddenly I experienced the idea that I was not worthy. I then saw, as if a film with my inner eye, my life flash before me as a dying man might see. It was not pretty. All my insincerities, my games, all the falsehood mercilessly revealed. But then a calm descended with it and a certainty that in this life I would have the means, the knowledge and force, to change all that. A lifetime's work, still in progress.

Be Ye As Little Children

Myla, my 4 year-old grandchild, came into the room and picked up a book by the bedside. She opened it randomly and after a second, closed the book and dropped it back on the bedside table, saying "Mmm, interesting!" before wandering off, laughing.

I was reminded of Aurolouis.

Aurolouis was one of the firstborn children of Auroville. At that time in the seventies, children had unlimited freedom and could wander around and explore Auroville as they wanted. Wherever they went, someone would look after them and ensure they were alright. Aurolouis had Belgian parents and often spoke in Flamse (dutch). He wandered up to me, picked up a book, gently tapped himself on the head with it and said "Bookus". Then, putting the book down and smiling, he wandered off.

Isn't it ironic that we spend a great deal of time with our heads in books, trying to learn how to live in the moment!

13.03.2018

TIME

On The Perception of Time

"God created time so that everything wouldn't happen at once."
(graffiti, Men's room, University of Waterloo)

In this consideration of the nature and experience of time, I shall be looking at the intellectual understanding and definitions of Time, the human response to the experience of time and comparing these with the poets' and mystics' visions of time.

"The indefinite continued progress of existence and events in the past, present, and future regarded as a whole." Google dictionary definition

"The successive states of the universe regarded as a whole whose every part or moment is before or after every other & position of which is defined in answer to the question 'when?', this conceived as having begun and being destined to end." Pocket Oxford Dictionary

These are very dry definitions.

Does Sri Aurobindo succeed in improving these definitions? Certainly, in his intellectual definition in The Synthesis of Yoga: *"Time is a field of circumstances and forces, meeting and working out a resultant progression whose course it measures"*, there is a vision of the nature of time as 'a field' within which a sequential unrolling is seen as an evolution, a 'resultant progression'.

One can assume that humans, alone in the animal kingdom, are the only ones who experience time and ponder its nature, even though animals and certainly plants experience time if only in a non-conceptual way. They are ruled by the rhythms of nature even if the impact is subconscious.

There is apparently a Prehistoric definition: “*Cutting up*” which is a very simplified statement of the human experience of time which implies the intuition of a whole of which the moment is an isolated if moving portion. The ancient spiritual cultures such as ancient Egypt and the Vedic culture had definitions which saw the experience of time in its context of the eternal whole. According to the Vedic texts, time is cyclic, and repeats itself forever. The Puranas and Itihasas place human existence in the context of repeating time cycles called Yugas and Kalpas, each lasting hundreds of millions of years. According to the Vedas Time is an energy of the Supreme Lord. It has a spiritual and a material aspect. Time has different dimensions to that of our modern concept. Lord Brahma has a lifetime of 100 years by his calculation which translates to be 311,040,000,000,000 human years. Thus, one second for Lord Brahma is equal to 100,000 years for us (Shyamasundara Das).

Certainly, the ancient Greeks knew and truly understood the place of the moment within the whole:

“Time is the moving image of eternity.”

Plato’s succinct definition introduces a vision of the whole which captures the essence of Time and poetically articulates the momentary experience of it.

Compare this to the often heard, commonplace definition of our modern world, lived in ignorance of any fundamental, higher truth: “Time is money”. True within the limited scope of normal human vision, yet how hectic, banal and arid the petty lives lived under its compulsion!

Poetry frequently concerns itself with time. But generally it tends to limit itself to the purely momentary human experience, to the effect of time on our lives and loves, rather than to the much wider experience that mystics and seers live in. Mystics see the moment within the context of eternity:

Compare Shakespeare’s wonderful description of old age:

*“That time of year thou may’st in me behold
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
Bare ruined choirs where late the sweet birds sang...”*

[Sonnet LXXIII](#)

With Yeats’

*“In all poor foolish things that live a day,
Eternal beauty wandering on her way.”*

Shakespeare's writing is all about the human experience whereas Yeats the poet is also a mystic and is touched by the experience of the now within the eternal.

Consider Dylan Thomas' *Poem in October*:

*And I saw in the turning so clearly a child's
Forgotten mornings when he walked with his mother
Through the parables
Of sun light
And the legends of the green chapels*

*And the twice told fields of infancy
That his tears burned my cheeks and his heart moved in mine.
These were the woods the river and sea
Where a boy
In the listening
Summertime of the dead whispered the truth of his joy
To the trees and the stones and the fish in the tide.
And the mystery
Sang alive
Still in the water and singing birds.*

Or Thomas's *Fern Hill*

*And nothing I cared, at my sky blue trades, that time allows
In all his tuneful turning so few and such morning songs
Before the children green and golden
Follow him out of grace.*

It is curious to reflect that, as little children, we live in the moment as in an unappreciated state of grace. We see all things new, with freshness, with an intensity. As we begin to grow up we begin to lose that life lived outside of the sense of time. We also start hungering for the perceived delights enjoyed by those older than us, and we find time is going too slow, for we want those things NOW, those things for which we are not yet eligible. But when we are riper and they come to us, once the novelty has passed, we slowly begin to realise what we have lost. Then, our relationship to time gets reversed. We begin to find that time goes all too fast, indeed we begin to have the experience that it accelerates. But in certain exalted states which can be experienced in the brief elevation above the normal human level of consciousness:

*"Time is
Too Slow for those who Wait,
Too Swift for those who Fear,
Too Long for those who Grieve,*

*Too Short for those who Rejoice;
But for those who Love,
Time is not.*

Time Is - Henry Van Dyke (1852 – 1933)

(This is the original poem; some versions have "Eternity" in place of "not.")
Or without the slightest sense of anything other or more mystical than the joy of human love, which is as near as most can get to some small taste of Divine experience:

*Jenny kissed me when we met,
Jumping from the chair she sat in;
Time, you thief, who love to get
Sweets into your list, put that in!
Say I'm weary, say I'm sad,
Say that health and wealth have missed me,
Say I'm growing old, but add,
Jenny kissed me.*

Rondeau. James Leigh Hunt (1784 – 1859)

But these brief human exaltations are only moments, moments in which some other level of connection that takes us outside of ourselves is experienced. The problem is that the ego is still there and waits to seize the special moment to aggrandise itself.

It is only by a process of moving to a consciousness beyond the ego that a true leap beyond division, beyond separation can be accomplished. For some, the death of the ego comes only with actual death:

*Then, all this earthly grossness quit,
Attired with stars, we shall for ever sit,
Triumphing over Death, and Chance, and thee, O Time.*
On Time- John Milton (1508 – 1674)

*Unfathomable Sea! whose waves are years,
Ocean of Time, whose waters of deep woe
Are brackish with the salt of human tears!
Thou shoreless flood, which in thy ebb and flow
Claspest the limits of mortality,
And sick of prey, yet howling on for more,
Vomitest thy wrecks on its inhospitable shore;
Treacherous in calm, and terrible in storm,
Who shall put forth on thee,
Unfathomable Sea?*

Time - Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792 – 1822)

The normal human fragmented experience of time implied by the pre-historic definition 'cutting up' is also typical of the fragmented normal human experience of matter. It is experienced from the limited viewpoint of the anthropocentric, ego-dominated human vision, it is the viewpoint of 'I, me, mine'. It implies that what is seen by normal human vision is the only truth. But this is a pre-Copernican vision that has already been corrected centuries ago by the enlightened knowledge that the sun does not move around the earth, as it appears to, but that the Earth moves around the sun. Matter is also not what it appears to be, but rather a fluid substance that takes momentary forms, beautifully described by Sri Aurobindo in "*All substance of being is a flowing sea, undivided in itself, but only divided by the observing consciousness.*" If that conception of matter is too vast for most human minds to comprehend, perhaps there can at least be some acceptance of the Gaia Concept, which sees the Earth as a single organism, which was the experience confirmed by the first astronauts looking in awe at our beautiful living planet from space. This holistic vision of matter and of time is the outcome of a change of consciousness which no longer sees parts but sees the whole which always contains the parts: '*He saw from timelessness the works of time*' – Sri Aurobindo.

TS Eliot stated that "I see the path of progress for modern man in his occupation with his own self, with his inner being." Although he converted to Anglicanism, he was deeply influenced by Hinduism. His great, philosophical poem 'The Four Quartets', for which he was awarded the Nobel prize for literature, is a meditation on the nature of time:

*Time present and time past
Are both perhaps present in time future,
And time future contained in time past.
If all time is eternally present
All time is unredeemable.
What might have been is an abstraction
Remaining a perpetual possibility
Only in a world of speculation.
What might have been and what has been
Point to one end, which is always present.*

Burnt Norton, The Four Quartets

The poem's recurrent theme is that time present, being here, now, is the only reality.

*Ridiculous the waste sad time
Stretching before and after.*

It is a reality that mystic poets of all cultures have endorsed and which now forms the cornerstone of yoga and 'mindfulness', both currently making inroads into our modern culture's desire to find some antidote to the stresses of modern life. Ironically, perhaps 'mindfulness' is only truly achieved with the silence of the mind and the true function of

yoga is uniting with the Divine, although stretching and learning how to relax have their benefit for modern stressful man.

Eliot concludes:

*We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time*

From Four Quartets (Little Gidding)
– TS Eliot (188 – 1965)

There are so many extraordinary descriptions and references to Time and Eternity in Sri Aurobindo's poem 'Savitri', but let us first look at Book 2 Canto XV 'The Kingdoms of the Greater Knowledge' where there are numerous references to Time and to the experience of it which always sees the particular as a point within the wider field of the Whole. The normal mind's relationship with time is one of exploration of memory of the past and of imagination and longing for and/or fear of the future from the moving point of now ('Time's triple dividing step'). By its nature, the mind can only grasp at truth from a limited view of the Whole, from 'below the lid'. "*Catching at little fragments of the Truth In a small corner of infinity*". Truth Consciousness SEES and comprehends a single field with one glance from 'above the lid', seeing both Matter and Time as an undivided Whole.

*The moments were pregnant with all time
There distance was his own huge spirit's extent;
Delivered from the fictions of the mind
Time's triple dividing step baffled no more;
Its inevitable and continuous stream,
The long flow of its manifesting course,
Was held in spirit's single wide regard.*

*On peaks where Silence listens with still heart
To the rhythmic metres of the rolling worlds,*

*A state in which all ceased and all began.
He rode the lightning seas of cosmic Mind*

And vision climbs beyond the reach of Time.

*He trod along extinction's narrow edge
Near the high verges of eternity,*

The consciousness of Eternity is also experienced not just as a static state but as

A diving-board of the Eternal's power,

Consciousness-Force is the Shakti, the force-in-action which enacts the Will of the Supreme in Time, and is perceived by us from below:

*though Necessity dons the garb of Chance,
Hidden in the blind shifts of Fate she keeps
The slow calm logic of Infinity's pace
And the inviolate sequence of its will.
All life is fixed in an ascending scale
And adamant is the evolving law;
In the beginning is prepared the close.*

How does this higher consciousness see the totality of human love, what we mere mortals experience as the sublimer moments of our little human lives, such as the exhilarated high described by James Leigh Hunt in *Rondeau*: 'Say I'm growing old, but add, Jenny kissed me.'?

*A fragile human love that could not last,
Ego's moth-wings to lift the seraph soul,
Appeared, a surface glamour of brief date
Extinguished by a scanty breath of Time;
Joy that forgot mortality for a while
Came, a rare visitor who left betimes,
And made all things seem beautiful for an hour,
Hopes that soon fade to drab realities
And passions that crumble to ashes while they blaze
Kindled the common earth with their brief flame.*

Savitri Book 2 Canto 5.

Sri Aurobindo, having experienced normal human life in the earlier part of his life, spent most of his later life dealing with the problems of his disciples and will surely have had as good an understanding of human nature and its highs, its lows and vagaries as anyone. The passage in Savitri about human love, quoted above, may be considered by those not endowed with spiritual experience as a cynical view. But once something of *divine* love has been tasted, one fully understands that human love, although it may in moments touch something beautiful and sublime, is too limited, too often tainted with ego and desire. As Shelley put it:

*Ocean of Time, whose waters of deep woe
Are brackish with the salt of human tears!*

We should note that Sri Aurobindo's experience of human love is seen from a base in Infinity rather than the rare human perception of it from the ecstatic passing moment. But pass beyond and we perceive 'A silence listening to the cry of Life'. This is the realm above

the mind which reverses the normal human point of perception. However, at some point the consciousness tends to take its leave from the supreme heights and returns to its normal human level:

*After a measureless moment of the soul
Again returning to these surface fields
Out of the timeless depths where he had sunk,
He heard once more the slow tread of the hours.*

Savitri Book 2 Canto 15

Yet, although we tend to dwell at this more mundane level, once the true nature of Time and Eternity has been experienced, it is not lost. The consciousness retains it somewhere and can at any moment be visited by brief luminous touches, flashes, which transform the consciously experienced moment of the seemingly commonplace into the eternal:

*I caught for some eternal eye
The sudden kingfisher flashing to a darkling pool*

The conclusion of this rather brief consideration of Time, is that where the mind struggles to define with a limited, cut-up vision and dry logic, the most sublime poetry sees and articulates with fullest and richest power the images of vision and penetrates to the truth of things. Poetry at its heights has access to a vision of the totality of things seen in all their beauty and power, and yet never at the expense of the particular.

19.09.2017

On returning to Auroville after a gap of about fifteen years - 1995

On returning to Auroville after a gap of about fifteen years, I went and sat under the Banyan tree and looked at the Matrimandir, now more or less finished, and wept with an intense joy and gratitude. My gratitude was for our brothers and sisters who had had the courage to stay the course and build the Matrimandir in face of all the obstacles which were there at that time: the resistance of the SAS, the resistance in ourselves, the shortage of food and comfort and materials and funds. The workers were truly heroic although the idea of that never entered their minds. They just did what had to be done. Really, it was a magnificent achievement and gives one faith that the true purpose of Auroville will and does manifest itself despite all contradictions. Auroville from any normal, rational point of view is a madness, an irrational attempt by dreamers who believe that human nature can somehow change. Mad! But it is happening and all the contradictions are simply part of the process, things that come up because that is flawed human nature that resists and yet desires, perhaps consents to be transformed. If it were not meant to be, Auroville would have folded long ago like the hundreds of communes of the hippy dreamers who didn't understand that it is

ourselves that have to change if we want to see a society that could be better and truer than what we have at present and have had for millennia.

30.09.2019

About Money

The conflict about money is what might be called a “conflict of ownership”, but the truth is that money belongs to no one. This idea of possessing money has warped everything. Money should not be a “possession”: like power it is a means of action which is given to you, but you must use it according to... what we can call the “will of the Giver”, that is, in an impersonal and enlightened way.

The Mother, 10.4.1968

I suppose we must agree on an acceptable definition of ‘The Divine’ if we are to consider these thoughts about the nature and purpose of money and its role in the world.

For me The Divine cannot be defined. Or if we have a definition that we can believe in, each one of us will have a different definition. Despite what our individual view of things is, we can all accept that on earth there has been an evolution, in which life has manifested itself in forms and beings following a progression to ever greater consciousness. From the ‘miraculous’ emergence of life itself out of inert matter, to the emergence of mind and humankind, we see that there is a force driving this evolution and it would be arrogant to assume that the evolution stops with man. We are a transitional species, although in our limited human consciousness it may be difficult to step back or above and see dispassionately what our species is in transition to. Given that we appear to possess greater faculties and consciousness than the other animal forms, given that we have the capacity to reflect that animals don’t seem to have, given that we can make conscious choices whereas animals can only make choices limited by the characteristics of their species, we make the assumption that we are a more conscious and developed species, although humans too have the limitations of their species and are also blindly driven by forces of which they are all too often ignorant. Given also that all human attempts at progress seem to be limited by the consciousness of the individuals involved in societal evolution, one is drawn to the conclusion that there is a need for a growth and a transformation of consciousness that allows change and progress without the crippling downfall so customary in all human endeavour. What drives this need to change, to transform and evolve so that we don’t keep making the same old mistakes? It is the same force that first formed the stars, that lay dormant in the stone, that compelled life to emerge from dumb matter and I am happy to call it God or The Divine and to accept that He, She or It is trying to drive humanity to find a consciousness that can liberate itself from the little separative ego that causes all our conflicts and collapses. It is the Will to be. To be, consciously.

The Divine, to use the Indian word Brahman, is All, or else nothing could be or become. All forces, including all those that seem to be contrary to our limited and rather juvenile vision

of things, ultimately act to further the evolution. We see, given our cultural constraints, perhaps only Love as the great Divine force, but in our limited vision we cannot appreciate that love acts not only in creation, but also in sustaining and in destroying all that it creates. And The Divine is more than all of these forms and forces, but let's leave it at that for now.

What has money to do in all this philosophy? If one has to find one driving force that seems to dominate and cause so much human action and the possession of, and hunger for which causes so much human conflict, it is money, or perhaps more accurately, the money force. Money, like all forces, is however an aspect, a form of the Divine force.

We humans, in order to realise our individuality, had to experience this through self-experience as separate beings. We had to experience that we had choice. This process created in us a sense of separate self-hood, or ego. The ego has the illusion that it is self-propelled, but doing an inner yoga we come to witness it is motivated and moved to action by forces over which we often have neither knowledge nor control unless we are conscious beings.

Money is in its essence a force of the Divine. It exists for the realisation of the Divine's Will for the earth and all its life forms. In our life in the Ignorance (of the Divine's nature and action) we seize money for ourselves and for the satisfaction of our desires. We try to possess it. We undertake all sorts of appalling actions in order to get it, to keep it and prevent others from taking it from us. We create a whole world of falsehood in order to achieve this. We are mean as hell when it comes to using it for the good of others who may be in genuine need. As someone said "Meanness is the cancer of the soul". But we cannot take it with us when we die. We know the possession of it doesn't actually make you any happier. Why do we do it?

That money comes from and belongs to the Divine is a truth so profound that were it to be generally accepted and adopted and sincerely acted upon, it would change the world. It would replace the current paradigm where money is in the control of the ego. What a victory that would be.

If we only used money to fulfil our own basic needs and to ensure that it was distributed according to the true needs of all, we would be a lot happier. But our greed compels us to accept an attitude that it *belongs* to us. We invent political philosophies that justify our meanness. We elect our political parties to create a society that justifies courses of actions dominated by satisfaction of our petty little egos that result in consequences that are self-destructive to all of us and to the planet. Why?

18.09.2019

Is it God's fault?

One meets people who have lost their faith or reject it because they cannot understand how a loving God could allow all of the atrocities of the world to happen. Why does God allow wars? Why does God allow all the evil of the world?

Is it really as simple as it might seem? God has created all and is the living and all-knowing spirit in all, evolving all life in ultimate accordance with His will. How then is it possible for humans to behave as they do? But His will is beyond our comprehension and seems veiled. All was created, is in constant creation by the Divine. But the process in Nature and in human affairs permits self-determination and creates to our normal understanding incomprehensible contradictions.

In the game of life, it seems that we Humans have free will. In our lives we have a choice: live in an attempt at harmony with God and with others, with the oneness of all life, or live only for ourselves, for the satisfaction of our desires. The latter is the state of the great Ignorance. The ruler is the little ego, the very nature of which is separation, pettyness. There, and not in changing systems and governments, lies the essential root of so many of our human problems and their consequent short-sighted solutions. Until we can have the awareness of that, until we make the effort to change, we call upon ourselves all of the suffering that we blame God for. The change, as always, has to start with myself!

The free will we believe we have appears differently to the conscious being, to one who sees beyond the appearance of things. There are unseen forces that shape our actions. In the Ignorance we live in, we make our decisions based upon desires, attachments, ambitions, a petty and limited ego-bound vision. The forces are universal, they act in and through us. They can be forces for good but they can also be forces for evil. Where we consider such forces to be troublesome and unwanted, these forces can be suppressed and pushed into the subliminal levels of our being by some form of mental control, only to rise up and overwhelm us at some later occasion. All the while, unaware of the play of forces, we think and believe we are the actors. Even when acting with the best intentions, we rarely act without elements of ego creeping in and blemishing the good, except in those conscious beings who have undergone a purification process of seeing, admitting to and ridding themselves of their defects. The demolition of the ego is a destruction of a false self.

Why does God allow natural disasters to kill thousands?
I don't know.

Perhaps the self-determination inherent in all nature is the same in and for material nature. Perhaps the process of creation inevitably involves destruction? Change is the very nature of evolution and change can be, or seem to be to our limited vision, brutal and destructive as well as brilliantly creative and beautiful. Without it, things would remain always the same, in effect dying.

And yet there are what we believe to be miracles. There is the sublime mystery of the action of Divine Grace which can act free of any limitation inherent in Nature. And there are moments in the history of mankind when the Divine intervenes directly and takes human

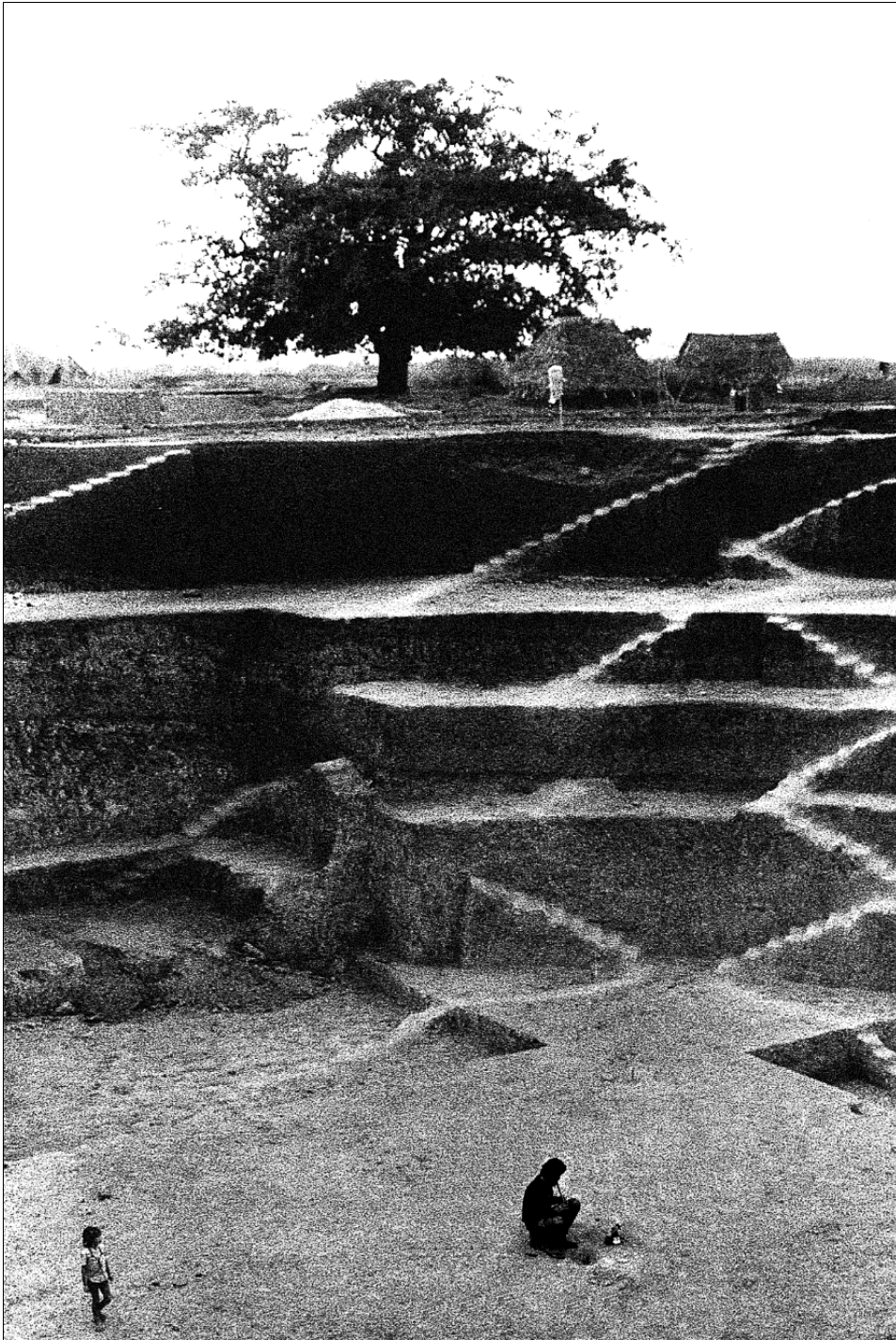
form, in order to act in the human realm and bring a new quality of soul-force necessary for the evolution of consciousness.

The evolutionary process acts not just with the will to be, but with the will to become, with an inner, a concealed self-intelligence, a secret Divine will and power that is incomprehensible to us in the Ignorance and to which we are blind. Worlds are created and destroyed. Species are created and destroyed.

We can start to see into the Inspace of life. We can consent and aspire to be changed. We know that evolution is a progression to increasingly endowed living things and beings. If we could only see it, the process of evolution is an ascent to ever greater opening to and manifestation of consciousness. Sri Aurobindo has said, "Man is a transitional species".

God only knows.

25.5.2023



The excavation for the foundations for The Matrimandir, Auroville, 1972.
Vikas is playing the flute whilst a child looks on.

This selection of poems and writings by Alan Vickers was begun in Auroville in 1972, when he was given the name Vikas by The Mother. It follows his life journey up to October 2023. This book is being funded and printed privately and all proceeds from the sale or donations received from recipients of the book will be given to *Acres for Auroville, the Land Fund for Auroville*, to help purchase the needed land towards completing the construction of Auroville.