

NEWSLETTER OF NAIROBI CENTRE OF SRI AUROBINDO SOCIETY

Website: <http://sites.google.com/site/savitrinairobi/home>

September 2009

Dates to remember

1st Sept, Tuesday: Prosperity Day; Meditation at 6.30 p.m. at Sri Aurobindo Bhavan

Every Saturday 5.15pm-6.30pm: Meditation, study of “Savitri” and reading from “RAYS OF LIGHT” in the Words of THE MOTHER.

Every Sunday 11 am- 12.30 pm: reading from “The Synthesis of Yoga”.

Shrine

Sri Aurobindo’s shrine at Sri Aurobindo Bhavan is open from 8a.m. to 7p.m. All are welcome. It is a place for silent meditation.

NEWS

1. Friday 31st July 2009 – 11.00 a.m.

Members of the Nairobi Centre presented three thousand and six hundred booklets (3600) in twelve titles, to The Nairobi Hospital at Sri Aurobindo Bhavan. Ms Carlyne Gathuru, the Marketing and Customer Service Manager; the Chief Accountant of the hospital and one of their colleagues received the booklets at the Bhavan.

2. Saturday 15th August 2009, Darshan Day

Sri Aurobindo's 137th Birth Anniversary and India's Independence Day

The Mother's blue Flag was hoisted at the Sri Aurobindo Bhavan in the morning. In the evening there was meditation with the audio CD - **Sri Aurobindo and The Mother on India and Her Future - A musical composition of Songs and Hymns in Sanskrit with recitation in English from the writings of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo.** Sixty people attended the Darshan.

SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM

Founded in 1926, the Sri Aurobindo Ashram has grown from a small group of two dozen disciples into a large diversified community with more than 1400 members. There are, in addition, about 400 students in the Ashram school, hundreds of visitors staying in guest houses, thousands of local devotees, and many tourists.

Situated in a bustling city of nearly one million people, the Ashram is not a quiet place of retreat secluded from the world, but a vibrant centre of life. The dynamic urban setting of the community reflects the life-affirming aim of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga. Work is an important part of the Yoga, and Ashram members who are fit do some useful work every day in one of the departments.

In the sadhana or spiritual discipline of this Yoga, there is no set mental teaching or fixed method of practice. For this reason, the Ashram has no systematic instructions in Yoga and no compulsory rituals, meditations or gatherings. Each sadhak is left free to determine the line of his spiritual path in accordance with his nature. But the general principles of the Yoga are the same for all: there must be an aspiration for the divine life, a rejection of the movements of the lower nature, a self-opening to the Divine Force, and a surrender of one's being to the Divine.

The Ashram is located in the eastern part of Pondicherry. Its members live and work in a large number of buildings spread throughout the area. The focus of community life is the Ashram main building, often called simply "the Ashram", which consists of an interconnected block of houses, including those in which Sri Aurobindo and the Mother dwelt for most of their lives. At the centre of its tree-shaded courtyard lies the samadhi, a rectangular white-marble shrine holding their mortal remains.

The Ashram provides its members with all they need for a decent and healthy life. Various departments have been organised to look after the basic requirements of food, clothing and shelter, as well as medical care. The Ashram has farm and gardens, a printing press and a number of small scale industries. There are also libraries for study and facilities for a wide range of cultural pursuits.

The Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education is an integral part of the Ashram. Inaugurated in 1952, it currently has around 400 students, with classes ranging from kindergarten to college level. It seeks to provide a complete education for its students by encouraging the growth of all parts of their being. All the students (and many Ashram members as well) take part in the daily physical activities organised by the Physical Education Department. A group of instructors known as captains give training in athletics, gymnastics, aquatics, games, combative sports and asanas.

The Ashram is administered by the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust.

(The above article is taken from the book "The Aims and Ideals of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram", published by Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publication Department)

Unlike other institutions of its kind, the Sri Aurobindo Ashram does not follow the tradition of a Guru succeeding as the spiritual head of the ashram. Even after their lifetime, the Mother and Sri Aurobindo are still the Ashram's only gurus and its *raison-d'etre*. In fact, as the Mother herself once stated, Sri Aurobindo is still amongst us. Their works, which comprise several printed volumes, act as guide and inspiration to the sadhaks.

(Taken from the Ashram's website)

The Aims and Ideals of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram

THE FOUNDATION

There was no Ashram at first, only a few people came to live near Sri Aurobindo and practise Yoga. It was only some time after the Mother came from Japan that it took the form of the Ashram, more from the wish of the Sadhaks who desired to entrust their whole inner and outer life to the Mother than from any intention or plan of hers of Sri Aurobindo.

Sri Aurobindo(SABCL 26:479)

Mother was doing Yoga before she knew or met Sri Aurobindo; but their lines of Sadhana independently followed the same course. When they met, they helped each other in perfecting the Sadhana. What is known as Sri Aurobindo's Yoga is the joint creation of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, they are now completely identified - the Sadhana in the Ashram and all arrangement is done directly by the Mother, Sri Aurobindo supports her from behind. All who come here for practising Yoga have to surrender themselves to the Mother who helps them always and builds up their spiritual life.

Sri Aurobindo(SABCL 26:459)

THE AIM

This Ashram has been created with another object than that ordinarily common to such institutions, not for the renunciation of the world but as a centre and a field of practice for the evolution of another kind and form of life which would in the final end be moved by a higher spiritual consciousness and embody a greater life of the spirit. There is no general rule as to the stage at which one may leave the ordinary life and enter here; in each case it depends on the personal need and impulsion and the possibility or the advisability for one to take the step.

24 July 1947, *Sri Aurobindo*(SABCL 23:847)

For us here there is only one thing that counts. We aspire for the Divine, live for the Divine, act for the Divine.

July 1956, *The Mother*(CWM 13:112)

Here we do not have any religion. We replace religion by the spiritual life, which is truer, deeper and higher at the same time, that is to say, closer to the Divine. For the Divine is everything, but we are not conscious of it. This is the immense progress that man must make.

19 March 1973, *The Mother*(CWM 13:114)

Ours is neither a political nor a social but a spiritual goal. What we want is a transformation of the individual consciousness, not a change of regime or government. For reaching that goal we

put no confidence in any human means, however powerful; our trust is in the Divine Grace alone.

The Mother(CWM 13:112)

My aim is to create a centre of spiritual life which shall serve as a means of bringing down the higher consciousness and making it a power not merely for 'salvation' but for a divine life upon earth.

February 1930, *Sri Aurobindo*(SABCL 27:416)

The usual sadhanas have for aim the union with the Supreme Consciousness (Sat-chit-ananda). And those who reach there are satisfied with their own liberation and leave the world to its unhappy plight. On the contrary Sri Aurobindo's sadhana starts where the others end. Once the union with the Supreme is realised one must bring down that realisation to the exterior world and change the conditions of life upon the earth until a total transformation is accomplished. In accordance with this aim, the sadhaks of the integral yoga do not retire from the world to lead a life of contemplation and meditation. Each one must devote at least one-third of his time to a useful work. All activities are represented in the Ashram and each one chooses the work most congenial to his nature, but must do it in a spirit of service and unselfishness, keeping always in view the aim of integral transformation.

To make this purpose possible the Ashram is organised so that all its inmates find their reasonable needs satisfied and have not to worry about their subsistence.

The rules are very few so that each one can enjoy the freedom needed for his development but a few things are strictly forbidden: they are - (1) politics, (2) smoking, (3) alcoholic drink and (4) sex enjoyment.

Great care is taken for the maintenance of good health and the welfare and normal growth of the body of all, small and big, young and old.

24 September 1953 *The Mother*(CWM 13:111-12)

None of the present achievements of humanity, however great they are, can be for us an ideal to follow. The wide world is there as a field of experiment for human ideals.

Our purpose is quite different and if our chances of success are small just now, we are sure that we are working to prepare the future.

I know that from the external point of view we are below many of the present achievements in this world, but our aim is not a perfection in accordance with the human standards. We are endeavouring for something else which belongs to the future.

The Ashram has been founded and is meant to be the cradle of the new world.

The inspiration is from above, the guiding force is from above, the creative power is from above, at work for the descent of the new realisation....

13 June 1964, *The Mother*(CWM 13:113)

We are not here to make our life easy and comfortable; we are here to find the Divine, to become the Divine, to manifest the Divine.

What happens to us is the Divine's business, it is not our concern.

The Divine knows better than we do what is good for the progress of the world and of ourselves.

19 August 1967, *The Mother*(CWM 13:133)

WHAT IS THE INTEGRAL YOGA?

There are many Yogas, many spiritual disciplines, paths towards liberation and perfection, Godward ways of the spirit. Each has its separate aim, its peculiar approach to the One Reality, its separate method, its helpful philosophy and its practice. The integral Yoga take sup all of them in their essence and tries to arrive at a unification (in essence, not in detail) of all these aims, methods, approaches; it stands for an all-embracing philosophy and practice.

Sri Aurobindo(Essays: 373)

THE OBJECT OF THE YOGA

The yoga we practice is not for ourselves alone, but for the Divine; its aim is to work out the will of the Divine in the world, to effect a spiritual transformation and to bring down a divine nature and a divine life into the mental, vital and physical nature and life of humanity. Its object is not personal Mukti, although Mukti is necessary condition of the yoga, but the liberation and transformation of the human being. It is not personal Ananda, but the bringing down of the divine Ananda....upon the earth.

Sri Aurobindo(SABCL 16:411)

THE CALL TO THE YOGA

This yoga implies not only the realisation of God, but an entire consecration and change of the inner and outer life till it is fit to manifest a divine consciousness and become part of a divine work. This means an inner discipline far more exacting and difficult than mere ethical and physical austerities. One must not enter on this path, far vaster and more arduous than most ways of yoga, unless one is sure of the psychic call and of one's readiness to go through to the end.

Sri Aurobindo(SABCL 23:545)

The sadhana of this yoga does not proceed through any set mental teaching or prescribed forms of meditation, Mantras or others, but by aspiration, by a self-concentration inwards or upwards, by self-opening to an Influence, to the Divine Power above us and its workings, to the Divine Presence in the heart and by the rejection of all that is foreign to these things. It is only by faith, aspiration and surrender that this self-opening can come.

Sri Aurobindo(SABCL 23:505)

(All the articles are taken from the book "The Aims and Ideals of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram". To be continued in October Newsletter)