

# A New Creation on Earth: Death and Transformation in the Yoga of Mother Mirra Alfassa

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**Abstract:** This paper acts as a précis of the author's dissertation in East-West Psychology at the California Institute of Integral Studies in San Francisco. The dissertation, entitled *Death and Transformation in the Yoga of Mirra Alfassa (1878-1973), Mother of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram: A Jungian Hermeneutic*, is a cross-cultural exploration and analysis of symbols of death and transformation found in Mother's conversations and writings, undertaken as a Jungian amplification. Focused mainly on her discussions of the psychic being and death, it is argued that the Mother remained rooted in her original Western Occult training, and can best be understood if this training, under the guidance of Western Kabbalist and Hermeticist Max Théon, is seen, not as of merely passing interest, but as integral to her development.

**Keywords:** C.G. Jung, death, integral yoga, Mother Mirra Alfassa, psychic being, Sri Aurobindo, transformation.

Mirra Alfassa was one of those rare individuals who was in life a living symbol, at once human, and identical to the indescribable higher reality. Her yoga was to tear down the barrier that separates heaven and earth by defeating the Lord of Death, through breaking the habituated belief that exists in every cell of the body that all life must end in death and dissolution. Ultimately, her goal was to transform and spiritualize matter.

In my dissertation I applied a Jungian lens to amplify the Mother's statements. Amplification, as it is usually understood in Jungian circles, is a method used to expand an analyst's grasp of images and symbols that appear in the dreams of analysands. Of it Jung (1913/1985) wrote: "Once embarked on the task of examining . . . dream-material, you must not shrink from any comparison" (p. 145). "The analyst," he wrote, "collects the historical parallels to every part of the dream, even the remotest, and tries to reconstruct the psychological history of the dream and its underlying meanings" (p. 147). Thus, myth, history, anthropology, psychology, literature, and spiritual traditions from all periods and cultures are mined to enrich the understanding of the symbols from the dream.

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It might at first appear reductionistic to use such a method when looking at the Mother's visionary statements from the *Agenda*. To the disciple who experiences the Mother as the feminine principle of the Immanent Divine—the one whom Sri Aurobindo (Ghose, 2002) described as “the divine conscious Force that dominates all existence, one and yet so many sided that to follow her movement is impossible even for the quickest mind and for the freest and most vast intelligence” (p. 17)—it might even seem futile.

To this objection I would offer two arguments. First, the Mother often referred to her first teacher, Kabbalist and Hermeticist Max Théon, with whom she worked while she still lived in France. Understanding Théon's cosmology opens up extraordinary vistas wherein we can see the Mother's work as part of a network of esoteric teachings reaching back through Western history to the pre-Socratics, Mesopotamians, Dynastic Egyptians, Indo-Aryans, descending in broken and unbroken lines all the way to late 19th century occult circles (Goodrick-Clarke, 2008). Doing this will also help clarify certain confusions concerning Integral Yoga's terminology, especially the use of the term ‘psychic being’, which is considered to be unique to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's work (Pandit, 2006, para 1), while it is in truth an idea the Mother learned from Théon, who developed it from Lurianic Kabbalah.

Second, the often enigmatic visions the Mother had a striking resemblance to dreams, especially those of people approaching death (von Franz, 1986). Anyone who knows the Mother's work at all, knows that she was often focused on her struggles with the *asura* (anti-divine being) known as the Lord of Death. Since her struggles were with this being, and since her visions do bear such a remarkable resemblance to dreams of impending death, I argue that amplifying her statements as one would amplify dreams makes perfect sense. This is not to put the Mother on the psychologist's couch, but to develop a broader understanding of the images, which have not only historical provenience, but psychological as well. That said, I do not use Jung's ideas here in a therapeutic sense (I will not bring up any actual dream material in this paper), but in an attempt to understand their broader application as indicators of the multifaceted reality in which we are embedded, which Jung claimed was only approachable through the psyche—and even then only symbolically. In other words, I enlist him to help delineate the archetypal and symbolic dimensions of her statements.

One of the richest images from the Mother's (Alfassa, 1981) conversations, is that of Death as a veil, threshold, or doorway between worlds (p. 237). This is also the central revelation of Sri Aurobindo's (Ghose, 1993) poetic retelling of Savitri—a short tale of love's conquest of death from the Indian epic Mahābhārata, which Sri Aurobindo expanded into an epic of terrestrial and cosmic evolution. In Sri Aurobindo's poem, it is when Savitri, who has descended into the underworld to retrieve the soul of her deceased husband, reveals to Death that she is in actuality the Divine Mother, and that Death himself is merely a mask—a transitory prop of the Divine—that Savitri finally breaks through Death's persona (a Jungian term that literally means “mask”). When Death's grip is destroyed, the world above and the world below are united in the body of the reborn Satyavan. The Mother (Alfassa, 1981) stated emphatically that the sections of Savitri concerned with the confrontation of the Lord of Death were written about her “experience EXACTLY” (pp. 37–38).

One could unpack this revelation strictly from within Integral Yoga, expanding one's understanding through Sri Aurobindo's (Ghose, 1998) writings on the Vēda and other subjects. There, one would find riches abundant enough for a lifetime of research. I would suggest, however, that to neglect the rich Western heritage the Mother brought with her to Pondicherry would be to risk misunderstanding many of the images and ideas about which she spoke, which were aesthetically quite different from the Indian sources written about by Sri Aurobindo. Integral Yoga is the product of two individuals. To discount or otherwise negate the Mother's decidedly Western roots is to misunderstand the teachings.

Sri Aurobindo adopted many of the terms the Mother brought with her from Théon (Heehs, 2011, Julich, 2013). One obstacle to understanding the extent to which not only the terms, but the ideas of Théon are present in the Mother and Sri Aurobindo's work, is that until recently Théon's own writings were relatively unavailable to researchers, and very little critical work had been done on him as a result. This lacuna has gotten some attention from the scholarly community in the last twenty years (Deveney, 1997; Greenfield, 1997; Godwin, Deveney, & Chanel, 1995; Johnson, 1994), and Théon's (Theon, 1991; 1992; 2012) own idiosyncratic writings have been made available through Argaman Press in Jerusalem. When we look into his work, and research the lineages from which he drew his synthesis, we can begin to see that Integral Yoga sits at the confluence of numerous streams from both the East and West. A fascinating artifact of the nascent globalization occurring at the end of the 19th century, it is perhaps the very first historical example of a meeting of two such remarkable personalities from different cultural milieux, and perhaps the only major exemplar of its kind in the field of spirituality.

## **Transformation in Integral Yoga**

My research is concerned with symbols of death and transformation in the Mother's yoga, through comparing the mythology of the Sun-Door (Coomaraswamy, 1997; 2004) and other Gnostic and alchemical symbols with images from her visions and conversations. Although both she and Sri Aurobindo believed that the change they predicted would happen in the natural course of time, they hoped to catalyze the coming evolutionary jump through actively engaging it in their yoga. The reason for this was twofold. First, they saw nature's lack of urgency as terribly wasteful—having created countless entities capable of experiencing the pain and suffering of mortality. Second, Sri Aurobindo argued that there was no guarantee that humanity would be able to keep from rubbing itself out through internecine hatreds, ignorance and greed. In this way their yoga was salvific.

Sri Aurobindo is said to have drawn down the spiritual plane of consciousness they called the supermind (understood to be a subtle plane that sits between Transcendent Being and embodied existence), into the vital sheath surrounding his material body. He could not complete the supramentalization of his physical body, however, and it was the Mother's task to draw the supermind into matter, where their union would catalyze a transformation of the Mother's body and so, through the law of similarity, the universe.

When discussing activities that occur at the subtlest levels of manifestation, the Mother (Alfassa, 1979, p. 69) resorted to symbolic language and stories. One image she used was that of a golden door, which she claimed to have broken in a vision, allowing the supramental energies

to flow freely down into the earth (on 29 February 1956). Symbols are the basic morphemes of myths, which, according to Jung, describe in projected images psycho-spiritual truths inaccessible to the rational mind. The Mother, from her training with Théon, as well as her years with Sri Aurobindo, felt that the most profound truths could never adequately be expressed in words.

The tension between reason and mystical realization has a long history. It was a central tenet of the Romantic movement in the nineteenth century (Ellenberger, 1970), which stood against the rising tide of scientific materialism, and out of which came both nineteenth century occultism and psychology. The central tenets of materialism—that existence is mechanical and unconscious, that nature's laws are purposeless and fixed for all time, that mind is an epiphenomenon of biology, and that spirit is a delusion (Sheldrake, 2012)—continue to dominate today in the fields of biology, technology and medicine. The Mother (Alfassa, 1981) believed enough in the scientific method—if pursued honestly—to say: “If Science went to its furthest possible limits . . . it would join up with true knowledge” (p. 156); however, she (Alfassa, 1993) also argued against all forms of dogma, saying: “Truth is not a dogma one can learn once and for all and impose as a rule” (p. 81). Scientific investigation needs to be open to the possibilities of realities other than material.

Truth, to the Mother, was realized at the nexus of the Individual and the Universal within each one of us. This notion can be traced back to the hermetic dictum, as above, so below, which speaks to the way in which the inner and the outer, the upper and the lower, mirror one another or even are one another in some essential way, although our conscious mind experiences them as distinct and even unrelated. In many ancient systems, it is not in the mind, but in the mystery of the heart, symbolized as the central Sun in the human organism, that the doorway to Truth is found.

## The Psychic Being

In Integral Yoga, the transformative impulse is threefold. Called by Sri Aurobindo the Triple Transformation, it included the processes of psychicization, spiritualization, and supramentalization. Whether undertaken by the Mother, or by the *sādhaka*, this yoga constitutes an active participation by the yogi with an evolutionary shift or speciation into what Sri Aurobindo called the Supramental or Gnostic Being. The Triple Transformation is also present as an organizing structure in Sri Aurobindo's epic, *Savitri*. In it we find the Triple Transformation described in mythic language through the yoga of Asvapati, and the struggles of his daughter, Savitri, to overcome the Lord of Death and regain her husband.

The foundation of this process is the initial contact with the psychic being. The psychic being is considered to be the earthly half of the eternal, evolving part of the human soul, manifest as light in the heart of each person. As mentioned above, although the term is generally credited to Sri Aurobindo, it was coined by Théon, and brought by the Mother to Pondicherry. When Sri Aurobindo first heard it, the Mother (as cited in Heehs, 2011, pp. 237-238) said, he looked for a Sanskrit equivalent, settling on *chaitya purusha* plane of consciousness: “the portion,—Amsha—of the Divine which guides a man” (Purani, 1970/1990–2023, p. 259). The psychic being is, to Sri Aurobindo, the lower half of a greater “central being,” the upper part of which is the

Jivatman. In Savitri, this lower portion is described as a part of the Divine Mother placed in the soul of each individual, which is the agency of our experiences, and guides us in our evolution. It would make sense, then, symbolically, that the Jivatman represents the pole of the transcendent Father, held by Sri Aurobindo in his relationship with the Mother, who held the earthly pole.

Théon (as cited in Godwin, Chanel, & Deveney, 1995) also described the psychic being as dual, with an active and a passive component (p. 13). In Integral Yoga, it is the active component, lodged behind the human heart, and helping to guide our evolution in each life, which is normally discussed as the psychic being. It is “the God within” (p. 19). It is also gendered. In Théon’s writings (Theon, 1992), the active component is masculine, while the passive is feminine. In Integral Yoga, the genders are reversed. In this way the conception of the psychic being differs, pointing, perhaps, to a difference between Théon’s more patriarchal, Jewish training, and Sri Aurobindo’s Śaktism. The Sun deity prayed to by Aswapati in Savitri, is feminine, and Savitri her incarnation.

Jung (1954/1969) compared the divine portion of the soul to the Paracelsian scintilla, or spark of God present in the heart of every human being (p. 190). Paracelsus most probably learned this from Kabbalistic sources. In another context, Jung (Jung, 1937/1968b) cited an alchemical, Christian image of this, writing that, “this fire is the ‘spiritual seed’ which our Virgin has gathered in herself (p. 383). This is analogous to Sri Aurobindo’s understanding of it as of the Mother. In Christianity, the spiritual seed gathered up in the Virgin is the Christ, which is the principle of Divine Love that: “bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things” (1 Corinthians, 13:7, RSV). It is the Christ who is the divine portion of the human soul, which resides in the human heart. The Christ is also symbolized by the sun, the reflection of the Divine Light in the Cosmos.

In the Integral sādhanā, the psychic being is said to be “brought forward,” which means it is differentiated from the mortal aspects of the soul (our individual thoughts, emotions, will, etc.). Once one is in contact with this higher principle of Love within one’s heart, it is segregated from the lower being so that it can undergo the process of spiritualization, which is the union of the two lights—the lower (psychic being, feminine) and the higher (Jivatman, masculine). This union is what Jung, after the alchemists, called a coniunctio, or hierosgamos (divine wedding). After this process is completed, the transformed soul-spirit reunites with the individual (a further coniunctio), who is then said to be “enlightened.” Both Jung and Sri Aurobindo mentioned the Buddha as paradigmatic of this stage of development.

The final stage of the process is supramentalization, where the higher force transforms and universalizes the body. Théon (1991) wrote: “The occult end and aim of formation is the manifestation of Intelligence in being of light, in life” (p. 86). The union of the enlightened individual with the principle of Divine Love, symbolized as the Mother, leads to what the Mother and Sri Aurobindo called the Gnostic Being. Théon (Alfassa, 1981) spoke of this as a “New Creation on Earth and the glorified body” (p. 375), which amounted to a quantum jump beyond the human.

In Sri Aurobindo’s conception, there are two rhythms to the transformation: ascent and descent. Sri Aurobindo, as the masculine principle, was said to have accomplished the ascent,

which was twofold, corresponding to the stages of psychicization and spiritualization. In Sri Aurobindo's personal experience (as cited in Alfassa, 1982), these also correspond to his awakenings to the transcendent state of nirvana (p. 269) and the personal divinity (p. 355). These are also seen in Savitri, where Aswapati undertakes a twofold yoga of ascent to the spiritual realms, and Savitri, daughter of the Sun, born to Aswapati for his austerities, undertakes the descent, when she follows her husband Satyavan into the underworld to retrieve his soul from the Lord of Death. It was for the Mother, as it was for Savitri, to undertake the descent into matter. To transform the physical, the Consciousness-Force of the Mother needed to be drawn down into the body of death. This was the beginning of the final stage of transformation. To accomplish this required the Mother to confront the Lord of Death, who stood at the threshold between the worlds.

## Death

The Mother made many statements about death in her talks and writings. I am interested primarily in two here: first, in accord with Théon's cosmology, in death as the third of four Angelic creator Beings (Light, Love, Life, Truth) who became demonic (Darkness, Hatred, Death, Falsehood) through belief in their independence from God, and ultimately their omnipotence; second, in death as a Threshold, Doorway, Mask, or veil.

The Lord of Death, in the original version of the tale of Savitri from the Mahabharata, is Yama. Yama has a long history in Indian myth. He is understood to have been the first mortal to die, the Guardian of Directions, the Dharmaraja, or King of the Law, and a child of the Sun. In some texts, Yama is even said to be one of the 108 names of the Sun—fascinating, given Savitri's identity as the Sun's daughter and even incarnation.

This deity shows an affinity with deities from a number of cultures across the Indo-European world. Whether they share the same name root (yemo, as we find with Janus, Ymir, Remus, and Gemini), or only like qualities, there are a range of qualities that link these beings. They are often the first born being, the first human, the first mortal to die. They often exhibit a dual nature, or are a twin, where they are associated with the night as their counterpart is associated with the day. They are often obstructors, gatekeepers, or guardians of the threshold between worlds. They are often depicted carrying a noose for binding or restraining their quarry. They are often associated with bulls or serpents, giving them astrological significance. They are often associated with space-time, the physical universe, the Milky Way. In numerous creation stories their dismembered body is formed into the world; in others they are a demiurge or usurper of the Creative power of the true High God, fashioning a false world as a travesty of the Ideal world created by the One.

It is the demiurge who traps the light of the Creator in the fallen creation. This Gnostic idea is fairly pervasive in the ancient world, although its significance varies from culture to culture, religion to religion. The demiurge veils the Truth from the Creation; and so, throughout the history of this idea, there have been those who sought to break through—for everyone or themselves alone—to the Original Light. In Théon's teachings, this being is one of four, created by the Absolute and tasked with building the Ideal World. Their activity, however, engenders in them a sense of agency. This leads them to feel independent of the Creator. In their hubris, they

create a second, false and fallen world, as a pale reflection of the original world planned by the Creator. This precipitates the necessity for the Mother (through whom the Creation was to have been effected) to enter into this world to combat and convert each of these beings in turn. According to Théon, the first two had already been converted. It was the Divine Mother's task in this life to confront and convert the third: the Lord of Death. Mirra Alfassa understood herself to be the incarnation of this Divine Mother.

I have mentioned that to the Mother Death was a mask or veil of the Divine. This mask has numerous characteristics and mythological resonances, one of which involves the association of the sun of this world with death. We find this idea in the work of Swedenborg, and later in Blavatsky. In Theosophy, as in Théon, this is tied to the sundoor myth and the yoga of the sundoor (Coomaraswamy, 1997), through which the yogi seeks conscious transcendence of this world, and so immortality. According to Coomaraswamy, the sun is often pictured as having a number of rays (most often seven, although Théon wrote of twelve). The path taken by the yogis is a hidden ray of light that descends into the body through the crown of the skull. If one can crystallize their consciousness around this light, they can follow it up through the sun, which is seen either as a door or as having a door within it, into the plane that transcends our own. Once able to pass through this door consciously, the yogi can reenter our reality into any body they choose: mineral, vegetal, animal, or human (White, 2009).

This yogic path of ascent and return, Coomaraswamy (1997) likened to the axis mundi—the symbolic pillar that holds up the universe. This pillar is seen outwardly in the sun beam, or inwardly in the rising Kundalini. As the serpent energy, it is also associated with the constellations Draco, Hydra, and Serpens, and at times associated with the Milky Way. Coomaraswamy (1997) wrote about this axis when discussing the smoke rising from the central hearth-fire of the ancient Hindu Temple, where the hearth is the navel, and the hole in the roof the fontanelle of the skull. The line of smoke from the navel (oomphallos) passes through the heart, and the brahmarandra (cave of Brahma), between the pineal and pituitary glands. The process is known as the crystallization of consciousness, an idea popular in Theosophical circles around the time the Mother began her studies with Théon (Anonymous, 2002).

As Swedenborg (1969) argued, all that happens beneath the sun of this world is in thrall to the Lord of Death. This Sun of Death, however, is dual. Its other face shines on eternity. Only by seeing his face as a veil, or a mask of the Absolute, can one hope to draw back his disguise, and experience the world of the Creator. Once this is accomplished, death has no more power over the one who has broken through. It is through engaging Death that we learn, as Neumann (1990) wrote: “What at first appears to the ego as the devil, becomes a psychopomp” (p. 143). The visible sun is death, the demiurge, or the devil, child and reflection of the Divine Sun, visible face of God and “shroud of ignorance” (Ghose, 1993, p. 658)—symbol of the doorway between worlds. It is a paradox that this being is also the door which leads to the Ultimate.

## **Death as Doorway**

The goal of the yoga as stated by Théon (cited in Alfassa, 1981) was “a New Creation on Earth and glorified body” (p. 375)—what the Mother and Sri Aurobindo called the Supramental or Gnostic Being. This goal will be the natural result of terrestrial evolution in time; however,

because of the danger of the human ego, there is no guarantee we will not destroy ourselves first. Sri Aurobindo, as Théon before him, felt that it was the duty of those who could engage at this level to act as a catalyst for the evolutionary shift.

Théon wrote of seven cosmic epochs, of which ours is the sixth. Five times the universe has ended in destruction and renovation. Here, at the end of the last era of fallen humanity before the change, we are in the greatest danger. The demiurgic forces seek to remain independent of the Creator, and so fight with all the powers they have, to sow dissent and violence. We might very easily succumb to these shadow forces and destroy ourselves. Jung (as cited in von Franz, 1975/1998) remained pessimistic that we could, as a race, withdraw our projected enmities and so heal our relationship to the world. The Mother was more optimistic, and asserted that she had attained at least two of the goals she sought: The supramental descent, and its manifestation in the earth. To her, it was just a matter of time until the evolutionary shift that is occurring at this moment is complete, and death is no more.

This coming world, was written about extensively by Théon (1992). He saw the cosmic pattern through which everything unfolded as sevenfold. His idea that there are Seven Cosmic Epochs is rooted in Kabbalistic gematria. Kabbalah teaches that Creation took place in six days, just as the first word of the Torah, Bereshith, has six letters, and the first sentence of Genesis six words. In each case, the seventh (day, letter, word) is silent, or at rest. When the seventh stage is reached in the Seventh Cosmic Epoch, there will be no more need for the Creator to tear down the Creation in flood or fire. Humanity will have evolved into its divine destiny. Sri Aurobindo (cited in Alfassa, 1981) spoke of the coming Gnostic Age, saying that our universe would see “equilibrium” (or harmony) at the completion of the cosmic evolution, and that there would be no more pralayas, or dissolution. (pp. 267-268).

Jung (1959/1968a) also spoke of this shift, though he did so using astrological symbolism and the precession of the equinoxes from the age of Pisces to that of Aquarius. Pisces, symbolized by the two fish, which Jung points out, were associated with the tanninim (Leviathan and Behemoth) by the Talmudist Rashi, and which he interprets alchemically as the twin sons of God, Christ and the Devil, is the age marked by dualism, and the tension of the opposites (p. 80 [para. 133]). Aquarius, the water-bearer, is according to Jung the ideal of the individual owning their soul fully. Here, the transcendent and immanent become unified in the human being, which is the central symbol and focal point of the divine plan.

In the ancient Temple of Solomon it is said there hung a tapestry that veiled the Holy of Holies from the main court. Upon this veil stars supposedly were embroidered, symbolizing the veil of the heavens, behind which hid the secret and unknowable Divinity. In the Gospel of Mark, at the death of Jesus, the veil was rent. Symbolically, I would argue, the tearing of the veil meant the unification of the transcendent and immanent. From an orthodox Jewish perspective, such an event would probably precede the coming of the Messiah. Since Jews refused to recognize Jesus as the Messiah, then the tearing of the veil would probably seem to them more the result of blasphemy, as the order of the universe is broken when the separation between God and humanity is breached by human hubris. From the Christian perspective, however, rather than a blasphemy, this would seem rather the fulfillment of prophecy.

One way to understand this mythologem is through the myth of Inanna's Descent. Inanna was the Queen of Heaven, who determined to visit her sister, Ereshkigal, who was the Queen of the Underworld. In her descent, Inanna had to pass seven gates, where at each gate she was required to remove one of her seven "veils." With the removal of the final veil, all that remained was a side of meat, which Ereshkigal hung on a meathook behind her throne and left there to rot. Ereshkigal, as the dark feminine, represents Inanna's "instinctual beginnings . . . the Face of the Great Goddess, and of herself before she was born to consciousness" (Perera, 1981, p. 45).

Jung argued that the psyche has two poles: archetype and instinct. The archetypal pole is at the frontier between the higher aspects of soul and the ineffable spirit; the lower pole, or instinct, is at the frontier where the soul loses itself in the unconscious material forces of nature. Here is a tension between spirit and matter, and between the masculine and feminine. The veil, in both the Christian story and the Inanna myth, segregates the two realms. Its tearing seems to point to the necessity for the sought-for transformation to be effected through what Jung (1954/1969) called the "psychoid" realm: the biochemical roots of instinct, inaccessible to the psyche (p. 176). It is the psychoid that is the bridge between psyche and matter.

The mystery of the psychoid is the mystery of the transformation of matter through death. Somehow, Jung argued, death is the necessary final stage one must pass before the final work of alchemical transformation can occur. He (Jung, 1946/1966) cited the alchemists, saying that "no new life can arise . . . without the death of the old" (p. 257).

It is the body, built by demiurgic forces to entrap the Light of the Creator, that is the veil. To tear the veil is to free the scintilla within us to rejoin with the Light of the Creator, which is pure consciousness. Thus, both within us and at the center of all of existence is the transcendental Light of the Creator. As Jung (1954/1958) wrote: "Just as a door opens to one who knocks on it, or a way opens out to the wayfarer who seeks it, so when you relate to your own (transcendental) centre, you initiate a process of conscious development which leads to oneness and wholeness" (pp. 280-281). I would argue that no matter where we see this center—whether in the heart, or the brahmarandhra, or the Christ, or the sun, as von Franz (1986) put it: "Death is a problem of a threshold of perception between the living and the dead" (p. 155). To tear away the veil is to change our conscious perception of the world and our place in it.

This "threshold of perception" about which von Franz (1986) spoke has to do with what the Mother (Alfassa, 1983) called "changing government" (p. 183) from ego to Absolute, or what Jung would call from ego to Self. Zhu (2010) wrote about this change in reference to the Zen Cow Herding Pictures. In the traditional sequence, the eighth circle in the series is blank; the general interpretation is that this circle represents enlightenment, which because it is ineffable, cannot be pictured. Zhu argued, however, that what the empty circle might actually represent is that only through death can this transformation take place, because no matter how fine the line between the limited human awareness and the higher consciousness of enlightened being, what is lower cannot survive the transition.

What is it that occurs at the moment of transition? No matter if enlightenment takes one nanosecond or fifteen billion years, the moment of passage does not occur in space-time. It is what Jordan-Smith (2008) referred to as a "sojourn out of time," or "nuptial call" (p.116). This

idea of the nuptial call is apparent in the story of Savitri, where Satyavan is abducted by Death, in the story of Persephone, abducted by Hades, and in the story of Inanna, who is depicted as arrayed in a wedding gown when she begins her descent (Perera, 1981, p. 53).

Only three months before her death the Mother (Alfassa, 1983) said to Satprem that it felt as if her “body has a wish to go to sleep and awake . . . only after it is transformed (p. 390). This reminded Satprem of the fairy tale Sleeping Beauty, who though asleep for a hundred years, experienced it as only a passing moment. The change of government requires sleep, or death for the transformation to be complete. As Jung (1957/1967a) put it:

Evidently the veil of Maya cannot be lifted by a merely rational resolve; it requires a most thoroughgoing and persevering preparation consisting in full payment of debts to life. For as long as unconditional attachment through cupiditas exists, the veil is not lifted and the heights of a consciousness free of contents and free of illusion are not attained; nor can any trick, nor any deceit bring this about. It is an ideal that can ultimately be realized only in death. Until then there are the real and the relatively real figures of the unconscious. (p. 38)

However, Théon, in words the Mother might well have written, argued:

It is only in indissoluble union with the divinity who is within him, that man will be able to attain to the progressive transformation on earth which is his full right . . . whoever teaches that retrogressive transformation or mortality is the predestined, legitimised end of man . . . is, therefore, the enemy of man. Of right, man is immortal. (Theon, 1991, pp. 109-110)

Still, the Mother (Alfassa, 1983) said: “If the supramental is to manifest on earth, something of it has to relate to the physical (p. 262). This would make sense, as the supramental is a transitional state en route to Saccidānanda. As Jung (1946/1966) put it: “Because the body, even when conceived as the corpus glorificationis, is grosser than anima and spiritus, a ‘remnant of the earth’ necessarily clings to it, albeit a very subtle one” (p. 278 ).

What these statements illustrate, I believe, is an apparent difference between the Mother and Jung, which should not be played down. To Jung, the original state is an unconscious mixture of light and dark. Duality, the discrimination of the two, is a necessary step to the final unity, which incorporates both. According to Neumann (1990), “The road which brings salvation . . . is a road which leads downwards to a reunion with the unconscious, with the instinctual world of nature and with the ancestors” (p. 144).

To Sri Aurobindo, on the other hand, the fallen world of duality creates the shadow. The supramental being is still a mixture of light and dark in transformed matter, and so there will remain “a remnant of earth,” but the original unified state is pure Light, and it is to the Light that we will return.

## Conclusion

When the Mother withdrew the integral yoga community suffered a crisis of faith. Was she not supposed to complete the yoga and transform her earthly body? Satprem (in Alfassa, 1983,

p. 423f) was furious with the Ashram for not following what he felt were the Mother's strict orders concerning the disposition of her body, arguing that her transformation would have occurred if they had done so. Nolini (as cited in Alfassa, 1983), the Mother and Sri Aurobindo's disciple and physician, disagreed, writing this to the community upon the Mother's passing:

The Mother's body belonged to the old creation. It was not meant to be the new body. It was meant to be the pedestal of the new body. It served its purpose well . . . for a new mutation, [a] new procedure was needed. "Death" was the first stage of that process. (p. 147)

This would appear to be more in line with what Jung (1957/1967a, p. 38) said concerning the alchemical teachings on the subject, and even perhaps Sri Aurobindo (as cited in Alfassa, 1987), who wrote in Aphorism #88: "This world was built by death that he might live. Wilt thou abolish death? Then life too will perish. Thou canst not abolish death, but thou mayst transform it into a greater living (p. 139).

Jung (1954/1969) felt that we could not escape our biological foundation. To him, the biological and the spiritual could be held in tension in the heart, or soul, of each of us, but there was no question of ever overcoming or transforming our physical nature. The ego requires a vessel for its transformation—that is the body. The mother wanted to transform that relationship, and so the structure of the universe itself. Yet it could be claimed that her work was alchemical in the best sense of the word: it was about the glorification of matter in the alchemically transformed resurrection body. My feeling is that Jung would have accused the Mother of concretizing what is essentially a symbolic process, while the Mother would have accused Jung of reducing the grand mystery down to the clouded consciousness of the human psyche. The Mother's defeat of the Lord of Death meant to her the breaking of the golden door that obstructs our contact with the divine, the release of the supramental force, and the promise of the final union of heaven and earth in the transformed body.

Within Integral Yoga, the Mother is typically seen through the filter of Sri Aurobindo's words and ideas. I have argued that her use of the symbols of death and transformation was more influenced by her Western occult training, and can best be understood in that way. I would also argue that, although Jung and the Mother would have differed in some essentials, through Jung's process of amplification one can come to a richer appreciation of both the uniqueness of the Mother's vision, and her universality. As she (Alfassa, 1977/2003) herself said:

Spiritual experience . . . is an experience identical everywhere in all countries, among all peoples and even in all ages. If you meet the Divine, you meet it always and everywhere in the same way. Difference comes in because between the experience and its formulation there is almost an abyss. Directly you have spiritual experience, which takes place always in the inner consciousness, it is translated into your external consciousness and defended there one way or another according to your education, your faith, your mental predisposition. There is only one truth, one reality; but the forms through which it may be expressed are many. (p. 17)

I will end with a quote from Jung (1942/1967b), which I feel sums up my own attitude on this subject succinctly.

We all have an understandable desire for unambiguous clarity; but we are apt to forget that in psychic matters we are dealing with processes of experience, that is, transformations, which should never be given hard and fast names if their living movement is not to petrify into something static. The protean mythologem and the shimmering symbol express the processes of the psyche far more trenchantly and, in the end, far more clearly than the clearest concept; for the symbol not only conveys a visualization of the process but—and this is perhaps just as important—it also brings a re-experiencing of it, of that twilight which we can learn to understand only through inoffensive empathy, but which too much clarity only dispels (pp. 162-163).

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