



ALAN KAZLEV

NDM: How and when did you first come across the writings of Sri Aurobindo?

M. Alan Kazlev: It was when I was fourteen or fifteen. My uncle, Rubin Levin, was interested in all sorts of alternative things, such as naturopathy - this was long before the New Age holistic healing movement – Rudolf Steiner, and so on. Anyway, he had written a letter to my mother, which she read out to me. In it he said that he felt it was very important he tell me about Sri Aurobindo. He also mentioned a “French lady” - this being Mirra, the Mother - who had taken over the leadership of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. This was in 1972 or maybe early '73 (the Mother left her physical body later in '73), I don't remember the exact date. He seemed to think I should travel there and stay at the ashram. In any case, I was still a total materialist at that time, and remained so for the next five years or so.

I suppose Sri Aurobindo was now and then mentioned in our household, because when I later went to La Trobe University, I discovered in their library an impressive hard cover set of the Collected Works of Sri Aurobindo, and I was quite excited about that.

When I first spontaneously awakened to spiritual realities, I studied comparative religion, Buddhism, Vedanta, Hermetic occultism, transpersonal psychology, New Age topics, and so on. But I didn't read anything by Sri Aurobindo for over a year. I suppose I subconsciously knew that once I acquainted myself with his thought, I would never be able to look at any other spiritual philosophy in the same light again, because his ideas would affect me so powerfully. And as it turned out that is what happened.

NDM: Can you tell me about your spontaneous awakening, what exactly happened?

M. Alan Kazlev: Well it is sort of funny, because up until then I was on the one hand a total scientific materialist and skeptic, but on the other I was frightened of things like tarot cards, the Christian Devil, and so on. I remember a girl I had been writing to at the time had warned me not to get involved with occultism, because she said she had previously done so, and once she was having a shower and this entity picked her up and threw her across the room. Reading stuff like that scared me. So there were these two totally contradictory sides to my nature, the superstitious and the materialistic.

Anyway, By 1978 I was gradually began becoming interested in spirituality, and had met a group of young non-fundamentalist Christians who would talk to people in the street. Anyway at the time of my experience I had been renting a room in the bay-side suburb of St Kilda, Melbourne. One day, this was in late 1978, as I remember I was 20, not quite 21, I was walking down the street, and suddenly I had an experience, which I like to compare to the Biblical metaphor of the scales falling from my eyes, because in an instant I was able to think clearly about all these things like

occultism, spirituality, and so on. It's a shame I wasn't keeping a journal, because things change with memory, all I have now is a memory of a memory of a memory, which is obviously unreliable. But the effect in the following days, weeks and months is that I suddenly became very interested in spiritual Philosophy, especially Eastern philosophy - that's when I started buying books and reading up on all this stuff - lost all my superstitious fears, and for the first time understood God as within. From that moment on I could no longer ever again be a materialist. And this state has been stable ever since, except that my insight has gradually deepened.

It wasn't any sort of cosmic awakening like people often write about in New Age books. It is just that one moment I didn't know, I was materialistic, and I was superstitious, and the next moment I did know. From that moment on, if I read books on these subjects, I would recognize truths in them, they would resonate with me in a familiar sort of way, along the lines of ah-hah, of course, so obvious! It's like Plato's concept that all learning is simply remembering what we originally knew in the spiritual world (anamnesis).

NDM: When you began reading Sri Aurobindo, what was it about his ideas that had this powerful effect on you?

M. Alan Kazlev: Well, in the period after I had that awakening, and before I started reading Sri Aurobindo, I read and immediately understood and appreciated Eastern spiritual philosophies like Advaita Vedanta, Mahayana Buddhism, and so on. Insights like Atman is Brahman and Original Mind made perfect sense. But one thing I felt uncomfortable about, and couldn't understand, is why they all taught the aim of existence is the rejection of the world of phenomena, of reincarnation, and individuality. Because I approached these subjects from a Western theosophical and esoteric point of view. For me, reincarnation isn't something horrible, it's a means to grow and develop through countless lifetimes. Also from the perspective of my lower self I was quite narcissistic at the time, and attached to the world, and

didn't like the idea of ceasing to exist. So Sri Aurobindo's rejection of conventional Liberation in favor of a Yoga of descent, of further evolution beyond even conventional Realisation, of drawing the Divine down into this world, rather than leaving this world forever for a static nirvana, greatly appealed to me.

In the following years, I became more attuned to the injustices and suffering of the world, I developed an interest in replacing the present social system and attitude of exploitation and destruction of the environment, with one more compassionate and sustainable. For some years I was involved in the hippy-alternative movement and activist causes. But it was and still is very clear to me that to try to change the world politically without changing the self is just as one-sided as to change the self and attain personal salvation while leaving the rest of the world unchanged. So even more so this is where Sri Aurobindo's teachings make perfect common sense to me; the need for a transformation that includes both the individual, society, and the Earth (he calls it the terrestrial evolution) as a whole. Also, over the past few years I have developed a very strong sensitivity to the suffering of animals, so for me the need for an integral transformation of both self and world is even more urgent. So basically Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have shown me the way to, and the yoga of, the perfection in the world, and the salvation and healing of all beings.

Also there is the clearness of his concepts. I find the ideas he presents, his description of the various planes and parts of being, and the stages of transformation, are just so obvious and all-encompassing, that ever since reading him, it has become the baseline and orientating framework by which I approach all other esoteric and spiritual teachings. The Mother is just as inspiring too, but in a different way, she teaches in a more immediate fashion, whereas Sri Aurobindo is more intellectual or higher mental in presentation. So the two complement each other.

NDM: I have noticed that there seems to be a sort of trend around his ideas, particularity in the US, with some philosophers and American gurus talking about an evolution of consciousness.

Do you feel that the human race is presently going through some kind of a evolutionary consciousness shift of some sort?

M. Alan Kazlev: For me it is not so much the human race as such, as the planet as a whole with the human race as one of its elements. So it isn't about human beings becoming more conscious or more spiritual - although hopefully they will! - it's that the laws of nature itself may be different. This makes sense if you think of the laws of nature not as unchanging absolutes but as cosmic habits or morphogentic fields. For example, in the future there may not be entropy as we know it now, but nature itself may work in a different way, in a way that does not cause suffering, and in which everything is harmonious and perfect in its action. The Mother in her talks with a disciple, Satprem, speaks of the difficulties and struggles in establishing and grounding this new Consciousness, the Supramental Consciousness that she and Sri Aurobindo described, in her own physical body and in the world as a whole.

But yes I do definitely do see people starting to become more aware of things, opening to new possibilities, such as the New Age movement, awareness of things like Climate Change and so on. But this is really just a tiny part of a much larger transformation.

NDM: When you say "in the future", what kind of time span are you talking about?

M. Alan Kazlev: I don't think of it in terms of time spans. I certainly don't believe the 2012 hype; i.e. it isn't going to happen in 2 years! ;-) I suppose in the coming decades there would have to be some sort of

gradual changes in the lead up, more people having amazing experiences, or just becoming more spiritually aware, more good will, progress to a sustainable future. Certainly if the biosphere is to remain a viable home for life, there would have to be some sort of radical counter-balance to the current majority attitude, so on a smaller scale (smaller relative to the overall supramental process) something would have to happen quickly, but as for the radical transformation, that is obviously further in the future. I remember reading something that Sri Aurobindo or the Mother mentioned something about three hundred years or so for the first supramental beings (not yet the global transformation), but I wouldn't put a definite date on it.

NDM: How is this new consciousness manifested in the physical body?

M. Alan Kazlev: Well there is a lot on this in the Mother's Agenda - thirteen volumes of talks compiled by Satprem, a disciple. She talks about the body becoming more supple, more conscious (so even the individual cells are conscious and surrendered to the Divine), more universal, and that the metabolism, physiology, and whole way of functioning would be different, there would no longer be the need for food or sex, the body would be immortal (not in the sense of living forever but in not being subject to injury, old age, or disease. But really no-one knows, it is all speculation on the Mother's experiences, or on Sri Aurobindo's words. Although once a few years ago I was musing on all this, reading up on it and getting really intensely into the Mother's words, and I had an extraordinary experience, it was just a momentarily flash, the realization of what would be expected of me and what my physical body would experience were I to follow this path. I can't really put into words, it was very much an instantaneous preview. It was so awesome, but in an instant ego and neurotic fear and resistance rose up, and the experience was gone. But I know from that it is real.

NDM: Why do you think this fear arose. Has this anything to do with what Sri Aurobindo referred to as the intermediate zone?

M. Alan Kazlev: Nothing like that. It's just a neurotic fear. I suppose it's the ego wanted to preserve itself. Like once some time ago I had been meditating on my heart chakra, and I was outside when suddenly my heart chakra opened and I felt total love for all beings and all things around me, an incredible radiance of love. And it was so confronting that there was a very similar recoil or resistance and the experience likewise ended. But even that brief experience of overwhelming love showed me what a Realized Being, like Jesus or Ramana, must feel constantly.

The Intermediate Zone is different. The Intermediate Zone would include experiences like universal love, transcendental insight, etc, but with the people having those experiences getting puffed up and thinking they have attained the goal. Whereas the authentic Realizer, who has already traversed the intermediate zone, and gone through all those transformations, would simply have the experience or be in that state, accept it, go with it, act accordingly ("skillful means"), and not think they are anybody special because of it. And because of their total selflessness they attain and embody even greater realizations than those had by the intermediate zone guru.

NDM: Do you see this intermediate zone as having stages?

M. Alan Kazlev: I suppose it does. At one time I tried to write about this on my website, but it felt stilted. I would still distinguish between an "early" Intermediate zone, full of experiences and temptations, and a "later" stage in which one has gone beyond ego and is much closer to complete Realization (and is no doubt considered fully Enlightened by many).

This is probably a rich field of research for anyone who wants to make a comparative study of the experiences of various mystics and realizers..

NDM: What are the signs, indications that one is still trapped in this intermediate zone?

M. Alan Kazlev: I suppose basically it is the paradox or juxtaposition. On the one hand there would be the most profound experiences of Realization, the most amazing insights, and powers and siddhis, on the other there is also some sense, no matter how small, of the relative self. When these two go together, that is the Intermediate Zone.

At least from my study of gurus and spiritual teachers, the most obvious way you can tell the so-called guru is trapped there is that there is a sense of ego they display, shown by frequent use of the first person pronoun. Da Free John / Adi Da for example did this a lot. In contrast, authentic Realizers, and "late" Intermediate zoners, tend to avoid reference to themselves, and when they have to refer to themselves it is in third person (Sri Aurobindo did this), or they use synonyms (Nityananda of Ganeshpuri would say "this place" instead of "me") or even self-deprecatory labels (Yogi Ramsuratkumar called himself a "sinner" or a "filthy begger")

I am sure there are also many "early" Intermediate zone individuals who are humble, who don't make a big deal about themselves. So only considering public figures does not give a very representative sample.

The biggest danger of the Intermediate Zone of course is inflation, which is evident by claims of unique personal revelation or Godhood. So anyone who confers amazing experiences (such as shaktipat and so on) on disciples, and whose words and teachings in all other respects very

profound and insightful, yet who also, because of the juxtaposition of ego and realization - sincerely and genuinely claim to be God or the Supreme Revelation or whatever, is an example of this.

The authentic Realizer also gives out profound teachings, transmission of enlightenment and so on, but there is no sense of self there, no demands or putting themselves first.

Of course, disciples and devotees of even authentic Realizers will often say that their guru or master is the highest avatar, sadguru, etc. But the difference is that the guru or adept themselves does not make this claim.

NDM: Yes, as far as using the first person pronoun, it seems that many in the non duality circles have caught on to this and employ this as a form of non-duality speak. Talking in the third person and so on. Using "this one" or "it" or their own name, instead of I and so forth. Do you feel this can also be an indication of an ego trying to hard too appear an ego isn't there?

M. Alan Kazlev: Surprisingly, this doesn't seem to be the case, at least not in the gurus I've looked at, although you may know of some who are like that.

I'm only interested in genuine gurus, authentic realizers, and that is one thing I notice with them. But I agree there is no reason why really fake ones could use this as a device to fool people and appear more spiritual than they are.

Of course a sure-fire way to know is to consider the degree of their selflessness. If a supposed guru says "this one" instead of "me" but still

plays emotional games with devotees, or asks for sexual or financial favors, you can be sure they are fake!

NDM: So do you see that some one in this intermediate zone is being deliberately deceiving, or is simply delusional. Has some kind of a blind spot. In essence is unaware that there ego is still there, (shadow self) possessing them and still pulling the strings so to speak. Claiming the enlightenment ?

M. Alan Kazlev: My feeling, and this is what Sri Aurobindo says too obviously, is that they genuinely believe they have attained this state. And obviously they do (assuming this is authentic intermediate zone) have very powerful experiences and insights that cause them to believe this. But either they are not aware that there is this transitional state, or if they are, their ego defense mechanisms step in and they think "this doesn't apply to me because I really am Enlightened."

NDM: What do you think of gurus who use ridicule, intimidation, so called "crazy wisdom" fear, mind games in order to bust peoples egos?

M. Alan Kazlev: These are false gurus who are clearly deluding themselves as well as their unfortunate followers. Maybe they had a bit of experience, or a little realization, which gave them charisma and caused them to attract followers, so they found themselves in position of power, and their lower self runs rampant. In fact the whole idea about "breaking down the ego" is a story invented, or adopted, to justify their abusive behavior.

In contrast, with Realizers like Ramana Maharshi, Nityananda, Anandamayi Ma, Sri Aurobindo, The Mother, etc, there is never any hint of emotional games, humiliation, statements that it is necessary to kill the ego etc. All these things come from Westerners, most of whom would not even be at the level of the Intermediate zone.

Likewise if we consider authentic representatives of Crazy Wisdom teaching, like Yogi Ramsuratkumar of South India, there is again never any trace of abusive behavior. They are just as self-sacrificing and endlessly giving of themselves as more conventional Realizers.

There is an essay on Sarlo's Guru Website if I recall, by Timothy Conway, which distinguishes between authentic Crazy Wisdom adepts and the current crop of fakes.

www.globalserve.net/~sarlo/Yconway2.htm

NDM: If someone came to you and asked for your advice on what to look for in a guru, as well as what to avoid. What would you say to them?

M. Alan Kazlev: Well, you may have guessed from my replies to your previous questions :-)

The first thing I would tell them to do is check the internet, the blogosphere, websites, Rick Ross, Sarlo, etc for any trace of abusive behavior. It may be emotional abuse, mental, financial, sexual, whatever. Abusive gurus inevitably leave a trail of disaffected and traumatized ex-devotees behind, and thanks to the internet these people are given the opportunity to tell their experiences. Of course, the same gurus will also have many

supporters too, some of whom were also abused but rationalize it, and others who never were. But that doesn't matter. What matters is that there are at least some ex-devotees who were abused, and that proves that the guru in question is not authentically Realized. They may or may not be at the level of the intermediate zone, but they are certainly not someone you want to sign your life over to.

Even assuming there is no abuse, another thing to watch out for is too much of a show of miracles. Unfortunately people tend to be attracted to these things. I was the same when I was younger. I actually believed everything that was said about Sathya Sai Baba. If there is an over-emphasis on siddhis, on shaktipat, on conferring instant enlightenment and so on, then either we are dealing with a powerful astral plane or intermediate zone force, which may not be the best thing to get involved with (it depends), or else the so-called guru in question is a fake resorting to legerdemain and gimmicks. Generally also if there is sensationalism then there is likely to be abuse somewhere down the track as well.

Assuming the guru checks out okay on both these points, then I would ask them to look at the guru's life. Does the guru devote more time to themselves or to their disciples? Is their life one of constant self-sacrifice and giving? Of course there are also adepts and renunciates who live a very private and solitary life, but I mean here Gurus who are teaching and have a following

So if all that checks out, and there is still a feeling of strong attraction to the Guru, a resonance with their teachings and a sense of Light or Presence in their pictures, then they are probably fine.

But in all matters like this, it is important to listen to one's own inner voice, not imagination or rationalization, but the very quiet, still, inner voice.

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