

Collaboration

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Table of Contents

The R Word _____	3-4
<i>By Gordon Korstange</i>	
In the Footsteps of Sri Aurobindo _____	4-7
<i>By R.B. Tompkins</i>	
Isha Upanishad _____	8
<i>Translated by Sri Aurobindo</i>	
Recollections of Admiral Rutledge B. Tompkins _____	9-10
<i>By Anie Nunnally</i>	
An Unusual Meeting With Sri Aurobindo _____	10-12
<i>Excerpted From Mother India</i>	
Samadhi Epiphany _____	13-14
<i>By Ariel Browne</i>	
Matrimandir Reflections _____	15-16
<i>By Seyril Schochen</i>	
All-USA Meeting, 1990 _____	17-19
People _____	20-21
Center News _____	21-27
An Interview with Selvaraj and Aurora _____	27-28

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The R Word

By Gordon Korstange

"In the ordinary life, the individual, whether he knows it or not, has always a religion . . ."
—Sri Aurobindo

FORGIVE ME, fellow MirAurobindonians, for I have sinned. I have spoken the R word. In the last issue of *Collaboration*, in an article, "A Visit to Baca Grande," I wrote of it as a "Refuge for World Religions." In fact, the correct title is "Refuge for World Truths." It was a case of shoddy reporting as well as casual thinking—I had momentarily forgotten all the recent controversy over religion. Henceforth I will take the pledge: "Read my lips—no new R . . ."

Past the Trappings

Perhaps what confused me were the names of the Truths: Zen Center; Haidakhandi Universal Ashram and Temple; Camellite Monastery; Tibetan Buddhism . . . But the goal of the groups who use these names, I assume, is to go past the trappings of R . . . to the source, the Truths upon which each is based. Though I saw some of those trappings during our stay there—statues, lamps, photos—I didn't feel religiosity. Far from being exclusive, some of the members of the groups come together in meditation once a week. Silence, the great purifier.

Trinkets from the Silence

But out of the silence of great souls—Buddha under the Bo tree, Jesus in the desert, Sri

Aurobindo in Alipore jail—eventually comes something—words, acts, forms—that are seized upon by those of us hungry for knowledge of the Divine. But since immediate spiritual experience, "a visit from the Guest," comes when we may least expect it, we must console ourselves with what has been left behind after the brief residencies of the Divine on Earth.

The smell of Ashram-made incense, the intonation of a line from *Savitri*, the placing of flowers before photos, the shape of the Matrimandir—all of these can help us to contact the atmosphere and force of Sri Aurobindo, the Mother, and through them, the Divine; or they can satisfy our aspiration in and of themselves. Then, the corners of our mouths turn up slightly in imitation of Buddha's enigmatic smile. Our tread upon the earth, for a moment, is not so heavy.

Feeling Good

Do we feel good when we contemplate how lucky we are to be a passenger on the evolutionary rocket piloted by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother? We must have been with them in previous lives also, tagging along, not understanding too much, but somehow part of it.

Do we feel secure when we can wave the *Agenda* at someone and say, "Here's the real truth;" when we can believe absolutely that Sri Aurobindo was an avatar and Mother an incarnation of the Divine Mother; when we are in a room lined with centenary editions and

photos; when we can capitalize He, She, Them, and The Yoga?

Creed, Cult, Ceremony, Symbol

The "outward machinery of religion," says Sri Aurobindo, is "creed, cult, ceremony, and symbol." What are our most powerful symbols, and how do we use them? The Ashram Samadhi and the Matrimandir spring immediately to mind as sacred places become symbols, imbued with Mother and Sri Aurobindo's spiritual presence. In this issue of *Collaboration*, Seyril Schochen and Ariel Browne describe how contact

with these centers resulted in spiritual, not religious, experiences

Yet others have found the presence of hundis (collection

boxes) at the Samadhi, the rigid flower and incense rituals that go on there, and the colossal costs and size of the Matrimandir to indicate creeping Rism. Or is this in the eye of the beholder?

"Let the Matrimandir be the living symbol of Auroville's aspiration for the Divine," wrote Mother. How will these two highly charged, symbolic places stay "living" without gradually becoming objects of worship themselves, a seemingly inevitable process which has claimed so many sacred stones, trees, and tombs throughout history.

On the personal level, though, I'm not certain that the boundary between R and "something else" is so fixed and immovable. Repeating a mantra mechanically would seem to be the essence of

"Read my lips—
no new R . . ."

religiosity, but the steady, almost imperceptible aspiration that the mantra calls forth might one day bring about "a visit from the Guest."

Spiritual Religion

Being religious, "... turning or trying to turn away from the Earth towards the Divine . . .," as Sri Aurobindo has defined it, can be a stage through which one passes before entering "spiritual religion," the realm of St. Francis, Rumi, Mirabai, and Zen Buddhism's Dogen. It can also turn into "religionism," the realm of the Grand Inquisitor and the fundamentalist, where a singular vision of the "truth" becomes a weapon to sever compassion.

The R word is like George Bush's T (axes) word: it's a way of not dealing with a potent subject sure to cause conflict. If we are convinced that the R word doesn't apply to us, doesn't need to be thought about, meditated upon, and discussed, we can be snared into its most satisfying category—an exclusiveness that leads to arrogance.

It's relatively easy to mock and condemn institutions of religion that are thin covers for an ethnicity that divides and conquers peoples. It's less easy to take Sri Aurobindo's words at the beginning of this essay to heart and examine religion in one's own life.

And if we find it there? "Even in spite of religion," says the Mother, "there are people who have the spiritual experience and who find the Divine—because they have the inner urge . . ."

In the Footsteps of Sri Aurobindo

By R.B. Tompkins

IT IS QUITE DIFFICULT to make a presentation such as this that will be of some continuing value to those of you who are interested in the thought of Sri Aurobindo and in His path of the integral Yoga. I am sure that my efforts can only be successful in the face of considerable empathy on your part.

If we are really to embrace the integral path effectively, we must first place the sadhana, the practice of the Yoga, in its proper context with the other activities of our life. All life is Yoga, and, therefore, the proper field of an integral Yoga, itself, must be the

one all-important aspect of our life. All other activities are of importance only to the extent to which they further the sadhana and our attitude towards them must be governed accordingly.

If we can assume this attitude we are psychologically prepared to fully accept the sober dictum of Sri Aurobindo which is so appropriately placed in the Introduction to *The Synthesis of Yoga*:

"Certainly there is no easy sadhana. It requires a colossal faith, an absolute courage, and, above all, an unflinching patience. For it implies three stages of which only the last can

be wholly blissful or rapid: the attempt of the ego to enter into contact with the Divine; the wide, full and therefore laborious preparation of the whole lower nature by the higher Nature to receive and become the higher Nature; and, the essential transformation."¹

The Two Paths

Did Sri Aurobindo expect us to receive guidance from Him in

following the integral Path? The answer is unquestionably "Yes." In replying to the question of a former disciple, Dilip Kumar Roy, Sri Aurobindo said:

"... there

are, broadly, two paths. One is that of Buddha who held, as you know, that although you may get some help or guidance from others, Guru or not, you will have to tread the Path alone, that is, hewing your way out of the wood with your own effort; in other words the time-old path of Tapasya. The other way is to take the Guru as the Representative of the Divine who knows the way and therefore is in a position obviously, to help others in finding it. That is the path followed by the aspirants here, in the Ashram—the path of Guruvad."²

These words place Sri Au-

Did Sri Aurobindo expect us to receive guidance from Him in following the integral Path? The answer is unquestionably "Yes."

robindo's vast literature of spiritual knowledge and Yogic experience, which is so luminously complimented by the Mother's writings and words, in a clear context: that of a uniquely effective and powerful guidance to the modern man or woman in their self-conscious attempts at spiritual growth. For the integral Yoga that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother hold out to us as our ultimate goal is essentially a self-conscious spiritual evolution of the individual human being.

But wherein the vast treasure house of Sri Aurobindo's spiritual and Yogic writings shall we begin our search for guidance? I know of nothing that either Sri Aurobindo or the Mother have spoken on this question. There is a wide difference of opinion among the disciples. The choice certainly depends to a great extent on the temperament of the individual disciple.

But if we have the requisite "colossal faith" in Sri Aurobindo it would not be amiss to follow in His footsteps to the extent that we are capable.

Alipore Jail Reading List

Sri Aurobindo's intensive sadhana began with his confinement in the Alipore Jail, May 4, 1908. Of his sadhana He said:

"I began my Yoga in 1904 without the aid of a Guru. In 1908 I received help of a Marathi Yogi (Lele Bhaskar) and discovered the foundation of my sadhana. I got three things from Lele: (1) Silent Brahmic consciousness with its infinite wideness—an experience which was concrete; (2) Power to speak and write without using

the mind; (3) The habit of putting myself under the guidance of a Power higher than the mind"³ . . .

"but until the Mother came to India I received spiritual help from no one else. My sadhana before and

after was not founded on books but upon personal experiences that crowded upon me from within. But in jail I had the *Gita* and *Upanishads* with me, practiced the Yoga of the *Gita*, and meditated with the help of the *Upanishads*, these were the only books from which I found guidance; the *Vedas* which I first began to read long afterwards in Pondicherry rather confirmed what experience I already had than was any guide to my sadhana. I sometimes turned to the *Gita* for light when there was a question or a difficulty and usually received help or an answer to it."⁴

The Isha Upanishad

While I have found no proof, it seems certain that the *Isha Upanishad* was among those that Sri Aurobindo "meditated with the help of" during the early days of His intensive sadhana in the Alipore Jail. *Isha* is one of the eight *Upanishads* that He personally translated; and, one of the other two (the other is *Kena*) for which He wrote extensive commentary.

The basic importance of *Isha* to Sri Aurobindo's Thought is emphasized by His own description of it:

. . . if we have the requisite "colossal faith" in Sri Aurobindo, it would not be amiss to follow in His footsteps to the extent that we are capable.

"The *Isha* is concerned with the whole problem of the world and life and works and the

human destiny in their relation to the supreme truth of the Brahman. It embraces in its brief eighteen verses most of the fundamental problems of the supreme

Self and its becomings, the supreme Lord and His workings as the key that shall unlock all gates. The oneness of all existence is its dominating note."⁵

"Every verse of the *Isha Upanishad* reposes on a number of ideas implicit in the text but nowhere set forth explicitly, the reasoning also that supports its conclusions is suggested by words, not expressly conveyed to the intelligence. The reader, or rather the hearer, was supposed to proceed from light to light, confirming his intuitions and verifying by his experiences, not submitting the ideas to the judgment of the logical reason.

"To the modern mind this method is invalid and inapplicable; it is necessary to present the ideas of the *Upanishad* in their completeness, underline the suggestions, supply the necessary transitions and bring out the suppressed but always implicit reasoning."⁶

Integral Knowledge

Sri Aurobindo provided the *Commentary* as a necessary vehicle to expose the meaning of the *Isha* to our modern minds. The titles of its chapters further emphasize the fundamental

importance of the *Isha* in guiding our progress towards the true unifying integral knowledge.

This integral knowledge, implicit in the *Isha* is in Sri Aurobindo's words: "... the true unifying knowledge and that has two aspects, the essential, *jnana*, and the comprehensive, *vijnana*; the direct spiritual awareness of the supreme Being and the right intimate knowledge of the principles of his existence, Prakriti and Purusha and the rest by which all that is can be known in its divine origin and the supreme truth of its nature."⁷

"The essential knowledge, *jnana*, the direct spiritual awareness of the supreme Being can be realized on any plane of consciousness. It is a traditional goal of Yoga. But in the lower world, in the material, vital and mental planes it can only be realised in its static aspect, in the silence, in samadhi.

But the true unifying knowledge, the goal of integral Yoga, includes both the essential, *jnana*, and the comprehensive knowledge, *vijnana*, the right intimate knowledge of the principles of his (the Lord's) existence. "The soul that aspires to this perfection draws back and upward, says the *Upanishad*, from the physical into the vital from the vital into the mental Purusha,—from the mental into the knowledge soul, *vijanmaya purusha*, and from that self of knowledge into the bliss Purusha, *anandamaya purusha*. This evolution of the capacities of the individual Purusha, says Sri Aurobindo, is something "of which few are even willing to conceive."⁸

Because the integral knowledge is a supramental knowl-

edge it cannot be attained by the human mentality nor can it be accurately described in mental terms by even the most brilliant and developed human mentality.

To evolve to the supramental

We must reverse the normal thrust of our consciousness . . . from outward and downward . . . to inward and upward.

consciousness we must revolutionise our mental ideation. We must reverse the normal thrust of our consciousness, a psychological habit which is firmly imbedded in us through inheritance, education and practice, from outward and downward, which is implicit in the rational action of the intellect, to inward and upward. We must progressively still our active, rational, dividing intellect and replace it with an increasingly silent, intuitive mentality turned upward towards the silence of the supramental plane.

This reversal of the thrust of our consciousness is a formidable obstacle in evolving our consciousness. It provides a moral affront to our well developed mental ego; and is automatically and powerfully resisted by deeply ingrained habits of our lower nature, in mind and life and body.

The philosophical and Yogic writings of Sri Aurobindo provide a fertile basis for the development of a truly dynamic meditation, especially the writings which deal with the higher planes of consciousness as the *Isha* does.

Dynamic Meditation

Many books have been written on the art of meditation. I am sure that most of you are familiar with at least one of them.

But how many of you are familiar with and practice "dynamic meditation?" The Mother's description of dynamic meditation should be of interest to all of us and is of special importance for those who are following the integral path.

This is what She says about it:

"It is meditation that has the power of transforming your being. It is meditation which makes you progress, contrary to the static meditation which is immobile and relatively inert and which changes nothing in your consciousness nor in your way of being. A dynamic meditation is a meditation of transformation.

"People generally do not have dynamic meditation. When they enter into meditation—or at least what they call "meditation"—they enter a kind of immobility in which nothing moves. And they come out of it exactly as they entered without any change in their being or in their consciousness and the more they are immobile the more they are happy. They could meditate in this way through eternities, that would change nothing, neither in the universe nor in themselves. That is why Sri Aurobindo speaks of dynamic meditation which is precisely just the contrary of usual meditation. It is a transforming meditation.

"I believe the most important thing is to know why you medi-

tate. It is that which gives the quality of the meditation, and determines that it belongs to one order or the other.

"You can meditate to open yourself to the divine Force; you can meditate to reject the ordinary consciousness; you can meditate to enter into the depths of your being, to learn to give yourself; you can meditate for all kinds of things. You can meditate to enter into peace and silence, that is what people generally do without succeeding very much. But you can meditate also to receive the Force of transformation, to discover the points to be transformed, to trace your line of progress. And you can meditate also for very practical reasons, when, for example, you have a difficulty to get through, a solution to find, when you wish to be helped in a particular action.

"Each one, it seems to me, has his or her own way of meditation. But if you want your meditation to be dynamic, you must have an aspiration for progress and the meditation must be done to help the aspiration and to realize it; then the meditation becomes dynamic."⁹

Reading

A natural and most effective way to develop dynamic meditation is through the proper method of reading spiritual works, which is quite different from normal reading. Again we turn to the Mother for guidance:

"The true method is to read a little at a time, with concentra-

tion, then keep the mind as silent as possible, without trying actively to understand, but

turned upward in the silence and aspiring to the light. The understanding will come little by little.

"And later, in a year or two, you will

reread the same thing and then you will know that the first contact was vague and incomplete and that the true understanding comes later when you have tried to put it into practice."¹⁰

Both the true method of reading the books of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and dynamic meditation, as the Mother has described them, require inner psychological disciplines which are alien to our western culture. At first glance they appear to be anti-intellectual, but in reality they are supra-intellectual. They are based on a knowledge of our complex, closely interrelated inner nature of which most of us are completely ignorant.

The beginner must have a favorable environment in order to make any real progress in these alien and difficult inner disciplines—there must be a minimum of interference from the outer nature which cannot be found in any meeting like this.

But if these ideas strike a responsive chord in your consciousness, the next time you are in quiet solitude take the *Isha* or one of your favorite passages from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother which deals with the higher planes of consciousness

and read it "truly" as the Mother bids us. This true reading will develop, naturally, into a dynamic meditation on the ideas which are implicit in the text. And, concurrently, there will be the development of an increasingly silent, global, intuitive consciousness which will facili-

**"I believe
the most important
thing is to know
why you meditate.**

References:

tate the integral surrender to the Grace from above, the Divine Mother.

¹ *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Introduction; Chapter 5, paragraph 10

² *The Life of Sri Aurobindo*, A.B. Purani, p. 279.

³ *Ibid*, p. 207.

⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 127-28.

⁵ *Kena Upanishad*, Sri Aurobindo's Commentary, Chapter 1, pp. 17-18.

⁶ *Isha Upanishad*, Sri Aurobindo's Analysis; Prefatory, pp. 19-20.

⁷ *Essays on the Gita*, Sri Aurobindo, Second Series, Chapter 1, Paragraph 4.

⁸ *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Sri Aurobindo. Part 2, Chapter 19, last paragraph.

⁹ *The Destiny of Man*, Rishabhchandra and Jhunjhunwala, p. 265.

¹⁰ A letter written by the Mother, Oct. 16, 1967.

Isha Upanishad

Translated by Sri Aurobindo

1. All this is for habitation by the Lord, whatsoever is individual universe of movement in the universal motion. By that renounced thou shouldst enjoy; lust not after any man's possession.

2. Doing verily works in this world one should wish to live a hundred years. Thus it is in thee and not otherwise than this; action cleaves not to a man.

3. Sunless are those worlds and enveloped in blind gloom whereto all they in their passing hence resort who are slayers of their souls.

4. One unmoving that is swifter than Mind, That the Gods reach not, for It progresses ever in front. That, standing, passes beyond others as they run. In That the Master of Life establishes the Waters.

5. That moves and That moves not; That is far and the same is near; That is within all this and That also is outside all this.

6. But he who sees everywhere the Self in all existences and all existences in the Self, shrinks not thereafter from aught.

7. He in whom it is the Self-Being that has become all existences that are Becomings, for he has the perfect knowledge, how shall he be deluded, whence shall he have grief who sees everywhere oneness?

8. It is He that has gone abroad—That which is bright, bodiless, without scar of imperfection, without sinews, pure, unpierced by evil. The Seer, the Thinker, the One who becomes everywhere, the Self-existent has ordered objects perfectly according to their nature from years sempiternal.

9. Into a blind darkness they enter who follow after the Ignorance, they as if into a greater darkness who devote themselves to the Knowledge alone.

10. Other verily, it is said, is that which comes by the knowledge, other that which comes by the Ignorance; this is the lore we have received from the wise who revealed That to our understanding.

11. He who knows That as both in one, the Knowledge and the Ignorance, by the Ignorance crosses beyond death and by the Knowledge enjoys Immortality.

12. Into a blind darkness they enter who follow after the Non-Birth, they as if into a greater darkness who devote themselves to the Birth alone.

13. Other, verily, it is said, is that which comes by the Birth, other that which comes by the Non-Birth; this is the lore we have received from the wise who revealed That to our understanding.

14. He who knows That as both in one, the Birth and the dissolution of Birth, by the dissolution crosses beyond death and by the Birth enjoys Immortality.

15. The face of Truth is covered with a brilliant golden lid; that do thou remove, O Fosterer, for the law of the Truth, for sight.

16. O Fosterer, O sole Seer, O Ordainer, O illumining Sun, O power of the Father of creatures, marshal thy rays, draw together thy light; the Lustre which is thy most blessed form of all, that in Thee I behold. The Purusha there and there, He am I.

17. The Breath of things is an immortal life, but of this body ashes are the end. OM! O Will, remember, that which was done remember! O Will, remember, that which was done, remember.

18. O god Agni, knowing all things that are manifested, lead us by the good path to the felicity; remove from us the devious attraction of sin. To thee completest speech of submission we would dispose.

The face of Truth is covered with a brilliant golden lid; that do thou remove, O Fosterer .

Recollections of Admiral Rutledge B. Tompkins

By Anie Nunnally

WHEN I WAS ASKED to write my recollections of the late Rear Admiral Rutledge Tompkins, I wasn't certain I'd have a sufficient amount to say because I had not actually spent that much time with him. However, when I began to think back, although the meetings were few, the quality of those get-togethers is what stands out most in my memory.

As a retired Rear Admiral in the United States Navy, Rutledge ran an equally tight ship in his own life. He was a remarkable man and a very disciplined yogi. I was introduced to him by Dimitri Von Mohrenschildt, who now lives in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, and later visited Rutledge and his petite, charming, well-bred and outspoken wife, Ann, in their Dorset, Vermont home.

Ann had just accidentally run over the family dog with her car and was in a terrible state of depression. I was impressed with how tender and sympathetic he was toward her while at the same time helping her to see the situation from a detached, philosophical viewpoint.

I had only known of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo for about a year at that time and had just begun to read their writings. Rutledge had read everything and was quoting long segments of *The Life Divine*. He had read the *Upanishads*, the *Vedas*, and the *Gita*. He was clearly the

most advanced western yogi I had met up until that time. I was so impressionable in those early days—I hung on his every word during that weekend visit. It was Rutledge who taught me pranayama. "The slow rhythmic inhalations and exhalations will help in your meditations and quiet your body," he said.

He made a daily routine of hatha yoga, pranayama and meditation. His foods were very specially prepared, and great care was taken to mix the right combinations for proper digestion. He practiced brahmacharya. In one of his discussions with me on this practice of sexual abstinence his wife (who was not a disciple) said, "I don't know what that word means, but I know what he is talking about, and I don't think it's anything to be proud of!" She was adorable.

During that weekend I became curious about his first name, "Rutledge." My paternal grandmother, Willie Anne Rutledge Nunnally, was the great grand-daughter of Edward Rutledge, an orator and statesman from South Carolina, who was a signer of the Declaration of Independence. His daughter, Anne, was the sweetheart of Abraham Lincoln (remember your history books?) but died of fever before their marriage. My



Rutledge Tompkins

grandmother and I share the name Anne after this early American ancestor of ours. I also thought I observed a resemblance in facial structure between Rutledge and my grandmother.

I asked Rutledge about his name, and he told me that his mother had been a Rutledge. We both then discovered that we could trace our family line to that same South Carolina statesman. I was overwhelmed. Here was a yogi with my family blood running through his veins. Here was a retired Rear Admiral and a Rutledge. I was convinced that this was the credibility needed to assuage my father's doubts and concerns about the fact that his daughter had left her religion to practice yoga. (He wasn't convinced, however.)

In any case, that visit and a subsequent one forged a lovely friendship. I corresponded regularly with Rutledge, met up with

him in Sedona, Arizona at the Sri Aurobindo Center there and visited with him in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. In later years, when he had become friendly with the Matagiri community and paid many visits there, I would see him and share long walks and talks with him.

I could always depend on Rutledge for an update on the latest methods of health and healing practices. He would send me books and pamphlets on Do-In, herbal remedies, etc. He was so gentle, so kind.

He left us and his earthly body somewhere in his early

eighties on October 27, 1980, and I am certain he is one of those souls on that supramental ship as seen in a symbolic vision of the Mother . . . maybe even the Rear Admiral!

Anie Nunnally teaches music in Woodstock, New York and is on the board of the Foundation For World Education.

An Unusual Meeting With Sri Aurobindo

Editors' Note: We have excerpted the following article, edited by Shraddhavan, from the December, 1989 issue of *Mother India*, for its remarkable view of Sri Aurobindo by an "outsider." Although M. Maurice Schumann was there on a political mission to try to keep Pondicherry from being immediately annexed by the new Indian government, we have deleted the references to this complicated issue. Lack of space prevents us from doing justice to it. Readers interested in the full story are directed to the December, 1989 and January, 1990 issues of *Mother India*.

From the Introduction

By Shraddhavan

Towards the end of September 1947, leading Indian newspapers carried reports that Sri Aurobindo, in seclusion since 1926, had received two visitors . . . the first, it was said, since his meeting with Tagore 19 years earlier. These two visitors, who remained with Sri Aurobindo in his room for three-quarters of an hour, were M. Maurice Schu-

mann, leading a cultural mission despatched to newly-independent India by the Government of recently-liberated France; and M. François Baron, then Governor of Pondicherry.

Three members of Auroville International France were privileged to meet M. Schumann in December, 1988 and to interview him about his visit to Sri Aurobindo. The text that follows is an extract translated from the account of this interview published in the Summer, 1989 issue of *La Revue d'Auroville*. It tells us something of what happened in Sri Aurobindo's room that day.

M. Maurice Schumann, at that time 35, had been an official spokesman of the Free French forces in London throughout the war. Later he became Secretary of State in his country's Foreign Affairs Ministry and was its Minister from 1969-73. He is still alive, now approaching his eighties, a member of the French Senate and the Académie Française, known not only as a statesman but as a philosopher and writer.

Outside his own country he is

best known for his championship of the idea of a united free Europe, and the steps he has taken to foster the formation and growth of the European Economic Community, which is now moving closer to the political union envisaged by Sri Aurobindo.

Interview

Maurice Schumann: When I reached Pondicherry, I found as governor there François Baron... a disciple of Sri Aurobindo, steeped in Hindu mysticism, but, above all, a former volunteer in the Free French forces, linked to me by those ties of loyalty that very rightly still connected... all those who had made the right choice already in 1940—and not just in 1942-3 or in 1944.

And François told me, "We'll go straight away to see the Mother of the Ashram, Mme Alfassa—an extraordinary woman I have often spoken about."

[We then] spent an hour with Sri Aurobindo, who impressed me vividly by the tremendous radiance that flowed from him. I also noticed at once something that struck me several times in

India, that the modern Hindu thinkers were essentially and initially marked by the West. In return they were to have an enormous influence upon the West, but it was from the West that they came.

This struck me at the bedside of Gandhi, with whom I spent a whole day. I noticed, in particular, that he was reading the *Bhagavad Gita* in Edwin Arnold's English version. That struck me forcibly. Sri Aurobindo's essential book is *The Life Divine*, also in English.

He also spoke excellent English, and if one closed ones eyes one would have thought oneself in Oxford rather than in Pondicherry, listening to a man who had discovered Hindu mysticism through his Western culture. This impression was above all a physical one—I don't want to make a doctrine or a theory out of it, much less a discovery.

The conversation with Sri Aurobindo was very short. The interview was long, and the conversation was very short: one has to know India to understand what that means. There one can remain together for I don't know how long, look at each other, and not say anything. This was true, on the political plane, with Nehru; and it had been true with Sri Aurobindo, who cultivated silence and had lost the taste or feeling for conversation.

But at the beginning there was a very characteristic scene: François Baron, who was a disciple of his, knelt before him and expressed the emotion he felt at seeing him for the first time almost alone. And it started with a conversation, in which each spoke only a few words, about how François

Baron's life had been transformed: brother of a surrealist poet, a Parisian of between the wars, that was François Baron . . . dreaming of writing (and he did write a novel later); and he had been transformed by two encounters: he had become a man of action because he met de Gaulle; and he became a mystic and thinker because he met Sri Aurobindo. He was dreaming of retiring to Pondicherry for the rest of his life.

. . . if one closed ones eyes one would have thought oneself in Oxford rather than in Pondicherry. . .

I think I must have been the last person from outside the Ashram to have met Sri Aurobindo, and especially to have had such a long interview with him, because he was already very old. He even referred to his departure from the earth in the near future . . .

Do you remember what he said?

No, no . . . It was quite commonplace, but clear: "I who already no longer entirely belong here..."

Did Mother take part in the conversation?

At the beginning, to make the introductions; after that she did not say a word. In 1947, she must have already been 70 . . .

She was born in 1878.

In '78? 1947 . . . yes, she was 70. No need to tell that to me, who am 77 today. She seemed like a great-great-grandmother. How could anyone be 70 years

old? But she floored me, because, after the frugal evening meal, she asked me, "Wouldn't you like to play ping-pong? I've heard you know how to play . . . " And I replied, "Yes, I used to play well when I was 18, but

now I have other things to do . . . "

"But that makes no difference, come along quick!"

And then I saw this 70-year old lady flying from one

side of the table to the other . . . and she beat me hollow! (laughter)

Did you discuss anything with her?

She only asked me about France.

About the political situation in France?

About the political situation in France, how things were after the war, Alsace, etc. I told her, "You remind me of Marco Polo, who thought only of Venice . . . but he returned . . . "

Well, that's what the Mother was interested in. She was completely absorbed in Sri Aurobindo and his thought, and at the same time she remained—there where she was—totally French. She was completely . . . I don't want to say 'Hindu,' but completely immersed in Hindu mysticism; and at the same time, totally connected with the land of her origin.

Did you meet Pavitra?

Barbier de Saint-Hilaire? Yes, for quite some time. He was not disposed towards conversation. The atmosphere of the Ashram was one of witness . . . one



Mother playing the organ

could not start questioning or interviewing. Barbier de Saint-Hilaire, with his Polytechnician's mind, explained to me at length the difference between a community of thought and a community of life. He was the one who explained to me what the Ashram was. He didn't want me to confound it with a seminar at the Sorbonne, if you see what I mean

When I left Pondicherry, I was two people: the man charged with a mission; and the man who had practised or taught philosophy all his life, and who was, naturally, enthralled by *The Life Divine* But since I had never gone any deeper into the superficial knowledge that I had

about Hindu philosophy and thought, I felt myself carried several years back into the past as soon as I met Sri Aurobindo. Why? Well, because the *Song of the Blessed Lord* had been a real bedside book for me. And what interests me very much in the *Bhagavad Gita* is that it celebrates resistance to evil, not non-resistance . . . It is a gospel of commitment. the dialogue of Arjuna is something absolutely extraordinary.

(When M. Schumann was told that the Mother had left her body in 1973, he exclaimed, "She died at 95! At 70 she was playing ping-pong as if she were 18!")

From Twelve Years With Sri Aurobindo By Nirodbaran

Among the interviews granted to public figures by Sri Aurobindo the first one was in September, 1947, followed by a few others at a later date. It was a great concession on his part to break his self-imposed seclusion. A prominent French politician, Maurice Schumann, was deputed by the French Government as the leader of a cultural mission to see Sri Aurobindo and pay him homage from the French Government and to propose to set up at Pondicherry an institute for research and study of Indian and European cultures with Sri Aurobindo as its head.

I was happily surprised to hear this great news, great in the sense that Sri Aurobindo had at all consented to the proposal, for I hailed it as an indication of his future public appearance. The fact that it came on the heels of India's Independence pointed to her role as a dominant power in the comity of nations, as envisaged by Sri Aurobindo.

It seems Sri Aurobindo asked the Mother in what language he should speak to the delegates. The Mother replied, "Why in French! You know French!" Sri Aurobindo protested, "No, no! I can't speak in French."

The Mother, Sri Aurobindo, and the French delegates were closeted in Sri Aurobindo's room, and we didn't know what passed among them.

Samadhi Epiphany

By Ariel Browne

APPROACHING the Samadhi of Mother and Sri Aurobindo, one takes a leap into the mystical unknown. One can be assured of Their presence because it is dynamically, palpably there. But one never knows quite what the quality of each visit will be, precisely because Their presence is so dynamic. And one's approach adds a committed, and vulnerable, integer. Their Love is assured us; the dance of "US" is ever evolving and open. Isn't this partly why we go to the Samadhi?

New Years Morning

The approach to the Samadhi on January 1 each year has a different quality. First, it is traditional at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram to meditate collectively at the Samadhi early in the morning, as the first day of the new year rises. Heralding the dawn, and the new year, at 6 a.m., is Sunil's music, originally composed for this occasion as a loving annual paean to Mother.

I too approach this annual New Year's meditation at the Samadhi with anticipation along with hundreds of others. But I am a visitor to the Ashram. This is a first for me. And I am bringing my gift of clairvoyant vision, wondering if the exquisite light-energy phenomena which I see around the Samadhi will be different today.

It is recommended by the Ashram that if one wishes to have a seat in the large central courtyard around the Samadhi one must arrive early in the

morning. I arrive with many others, both Westerners and Indians, a 4:45 a.m. We all, hundreds, slowly find places to sit on pavement, on verandah, on dirt and steps.

As always around the Samadhi, despite the hundreds of people, there is silence. Incense wafts its sweet smoke in the wind. Many make their way directly to the Samadhi itself to pray, stand, kneel. Slowly, slowly, the sky light grows despite thick clouds. But none of this peaceful appearance reflects the tremendous phenomenon which is building, that dynamic energy of Them which I felt even as I cycled to the Ashram this morning.

Crows and the Column of Energy

Two extraordinary things. First, the gathering of crows in the Service Tree, the branches of which overreach the entire Samadhi courtyard. All these branches are filling with crows, hordes of them. And many more keep coming in. Crows are ubiquitous in Pondicherry so their presence by itself is not noteworthy. But hundreds of crows, pushing each other out of the branches so that they, flapping and cawing, are pushed down toward the crowd, onto the lattice beams which run across the courtyard? This rouses my curiosity. Why are they here?

Second, compelling and extraordinary aurically (I have not seen this before.) is a huge stream of vertical energy through the Samadhi which

manifests as both direct and powerful yet soft and columnar. It isn't in the least frightening. Its locus is the Samadhi itself, but it is directed deeply into the earth, to the very core, playing upon it. And it is simultaneously directed celestially, rising upward to a point which cannot be determined. Even clairvoyant vision, extended, cannot follow it.

This column is extraordinarily beautiful and awe inspiring. One has the sense that it is purifying since it is so straight and brilliant with a fiery course in behavior, fierce and sweet. Its force, shape, and color all indicate unitive power: blue-white-crystalline, indomitable. However, it is not directly affecting anyone's energy field in the courtyard. The column involves just the Samadhi. I am compelled by the anticipation of how it will develop; how it will involve us.

At 5:45 a.m., delicate sitar and tabla music begins broadcasting as a preamble to Sunil's music. There is somehow a hush in the crowd. Just the silent rushing and fierce cry of the column. The lights in the Ashram go off. And just then, for one millisecond, the column brightens and tenses to an unbelievable force—but completely contained.

My breath stops completely. It is so strong: a sword. But out of time . . . and then the most unimaginable sudden widening of the column. Beyond sight it changes. Instantaneously! It simply is! . . . a lowering into compassion and revelatory tenderness as if Love itself, the very essence, bends over the crowd, the Ashram, from heart to heart leaning with tenderness

and evocation. And the music begins . . .

It is such perfection, such an inhumanly perfect orchestration that my body forgets itself. Like a child I am caught in the palm of Love, lifted by Music itself, working together in an embrace of swelling compassion and inclusion. The light has changed color absolutely. Now it is a warm soft,

soft gold-yellow. And the music of Sunil, rising and receding, yet each rise into a

crescendo of yearning almost beyond sensibility.

Involuntarily I begin to weep. A rather strange weeping: convulsive. A release of old longings and vested needs I had long forgotten. It rises in my chest with spasms. Around me, others too seem to be weeping. Quietly, handkerchiefs are being pulled out and held to faces. As I watch, all around the courtyard area comes a wave of release, like a sigh which is collectively expelled and very much in concert with the music. As it recedes, the roll of release comes. As it rises there is a lapse back into the inner self, the individual self.

Formations

And then . . . strange little formations begin to arise. At first just one or two, but then, *en masse*, these formations begin rising from bodies all over the courtyard, responding to the provocative tenderness and

pulling-toward-itself of the Love and the pulsing, passionate collaboration of the music. The thoughtforms (beings) which arise from the massed crowd are quite reptilian, not-beautiful things of the Subconscious: dark, snake-like stuff in forms which under other circumstances would be repellant but here are captured, held by the Force.

These are all rising into the sweet and finer air above and around us. As they rise, slowly, by ones and

twos, the crows begin to flap away as if satisfied, finished. At the same time all the bodies around me begin to release sharp, acrid odors, like those which can be released in strong physical exertion if the body is toxic: sweat, alcohol, meat, fat, putrefaction, excreta. But this group is still, if in a somewhat nervous excitation.

Not everyone responds in this involuntary fashion. The collaboration of refined Love and music is compelling and most people are responding in a cellular and visceral way.

A Drift of Rain

Just before 6:30 a.m., a most delicate drift of rain begins to descend on all of us. Just a touch, a lightness, to substantiate, if you will, the blessing of reception and care which has contained us all on the body of the earth. And the crows continue to leave, as the carrion thoughts and odors, the subcon-

scient formations, rise into transformative Love. As if their job is done; they have gotten what they came for.

The gentle rain continues. The exquisite music ends, as if it too has completed its work. And slowly, thoughtfully, the great crowd rises to leave. I sit for a time, noting that the odors have completely gone, as if they had never been.

But the Love remains exactly as it was, still so completely covering and accenting us: golden, tender, vastly kneeling . . . vast. And so to each heart, each being, that touch.

Leaving

As I leave I feel very vulnerable. There is still a spasm of weeping in my chest, a feeling that if I do not master myself I could again break into weeping. It is right there, a poignant memory in the chest. But this is not about weeping. Weeping is there, a prologue, but a great height is there also. A height of release, of surrender of the old, of victory by giving to Love and accepting Love's Grace. Of being willingly possessed in a perfection of Love.

Outside the Ashram is a huge crowd of people who look at us leaving, it seems, as if we are the chosen people.

Such quiet reigns. Such inward turned eyes. Such pensive faces. A new place for us . . . and then it begins to rain in earnest.

* * *

Since 1983, when I first visited the Samadhi and noticed the supernormal energy dynamics there I have been keep-

. . . as if Love itself, the very essence, bends over the crowd, the Ashram, from heart to heart leaning with tenderness and evocation.

ing abreast, clairvoyantly, of what is developing. I cannot describe from before 1983, but since I began looking there has been a triple phenomenon: the numinous presence of gold, white, and blue radiation from the Samadhi itself radiating out for about 9 feet in every direction, into the earth as well. This is the "field" of Samadhi pneuma which is very dynamic in energy. Then, above the Samadhi, both about 5 feet tall and also enormous, dually, there is the intertwining, dancing

Then, above the Samadhi, both about 5 feet tall and also enormous, dually, there is the intertwining, dancing twin flames of the HE/SHE.

twin flames of the HE/SHE. This is an emanation of pure delight and joy, dancing and intertwining perpetually. This beautiful flame is usually gold and green but iridescent in brilliance and also encompassing, most delicately and lightly within itself, every other color. Third is the enormous field of Their "working," one could say. This is a concrete BEING which is alive and dynamic and effecting a work which we don't yet have

words to describe. It is vast and in partnership as it works in many dimensions. Its power, its life, its force, its field is clear as total Lovingness. This field is most of all blue and white, but it has a delicious pulling in of gold and then out again like a play which hurts to perceive but is delight beyond imaginable delight.

These are all representative of what could be described as Their subtle dynamic forms with enormous power to effect.

Ariel Browne is a psychotherapist in private practice in Atlanta, Georgia. She has seen auras and possessed clairvoyant vision all her life. She was doing Ph.D. research in Psychology at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram between December, 1989 and April, 1990.

Matrimandir Reflections

By Seyril Schochen

AS IF ONE had not been away from Her Mandir for two long years, I thought, looking up at its beauty glowing in the night . . .

Then upon reflection, of course I had not really been away! The "House of the New Creation Rising in Auroville, India," can be seen everywhere in Savitri House, Colorado, USA: on its walls; its tables covered with Matrimandir Newsletters; its bookshelves where *House for the Third Millennium* daily heralds its approaching era; and always—in the remembering heart: those years in Matrimandir Worker's Camp; days of concretings; nights of nightwatch patrollings;

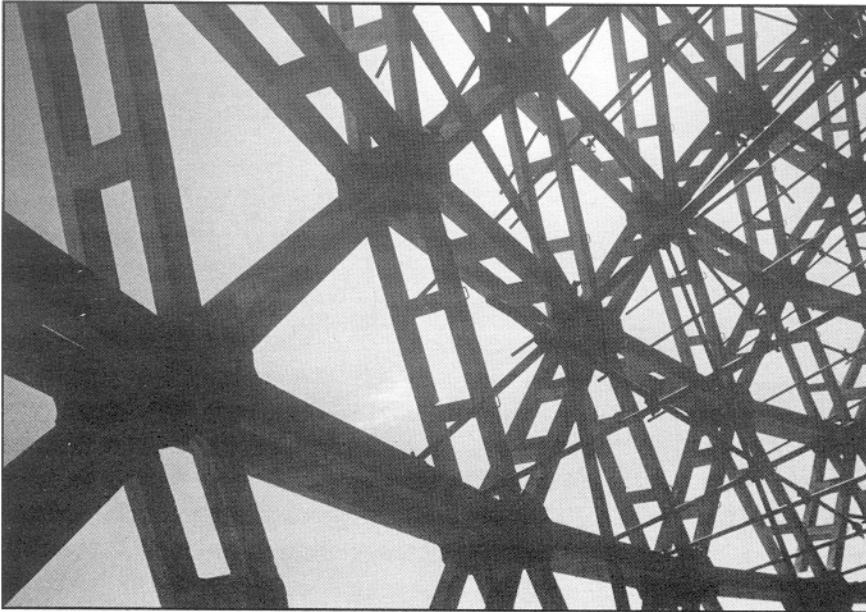
hours of climbing its scaffoldings to cure and be cured of fear of its heights; moments of chipping away at residue cement for future joinings to discover one was chipping away old layers of resisting past from pillars inner and outer, ramparts of *the future that must be* . . . and is becoming. At every moment. In our very being.

And yet, after the two years away, one is not quite prepared for the sheer majesty of its Being here and now. In the moonlight one reflects.

Hers is the mystery the night conceals and half-reveals before sunrise on Auroville's birthday this 28th February, 1990. It is

companied by the morning star so brilliantly translucent one can almost see the *forerunners of a divine multitude* coming out of its paths as they *cross the twilight of an age . . . chanting an unknown anthem of the soul*, the future's omnipotent pioneers flaming in the bonfire of our collective aspiration towards the new world born that other February when the year itself leaped into the unknown.

"A new light breaks upon the Earth," she wrote of 2/29/56: "The things that were promised are fulfilled." Her message for 24th April of that momentous leap year made it clear: "The manifestation of the Supramental upon Earth is . . . a living



Outer skin of the Matrimandir

Photo by Verne Henshall

fact, a reality.

"It is at work here, and a day will come when the most blind, the most unconscious, the most unwilling will be able to recognize it."

The Curtain

Not in reflections, but the light itself radiating from within, already at work here. One catches glimpses of its brightness in faces of the workers building Her Mandir. Even in those powdered white by marble dust from the engraving machine—cutting edge of *the future that must be*.

Still less is one prepared for the Force vibrating in spiral movements as it circles the 12 veiled walls of the inner chamber which has been cleared of ongoing work, swept and cleaned with meticulous care.

A corner of the plastic curtain protecting its polished white marble has been lifted for this birthday. As though a window opening to the future, a very

special light radiates. "In matter shall be lit the spirit's glow . . ."

One is again reminded of Her incredible gift to us, to all humanity to whom Auroville belongs, of this instrument for our collective transformation of consciousness. Surely a Divine alchemy is possible here, for *The Spirit's alchemist energy is Hers*.

Champaklal

This auspicious morning of 2/28/90, Champaklal and Nirodbaron are expected. From his silence Champaklal has expressed a wish to enter the inner chamber itself today. Through the years both have watched the Matrimandir rise from the hard Earth depths—Her body the Earth symbolized in that rising.

One remembers a signal occasion—concreting of the Ring of Unity—when Her mantra was incised in its concrete. OM NAMO BHAGAVATE engraved in the very matter of our collective

soul, vibrating, vibrating.

Now, as on a palanquin, Champaklalji, seated in a chair, is being slowly, carefully carried up the steep stairs and ladders by stalwart young Aurovilians and Ashramites in a harmonious movement together. The ascent from ground level is solemn yet secretly festive with an undercurrent of joy. "The very nature of the Soul is divine delight," She has reminded us. Yes!

And as this tiny figure, so like a white-tipped flame of ever-burning aspiration and devotion, is silently borne up into the white-walled inner chamber, a wave of joy, a powerful vibration of exultant harmony seems to sing from the silence. As if the heavenly seer from paradise, passing *across an intangible border of soul-space* into that soul-space itself through the opening of the unveiled corner of white marble wall, were drawing us all into Her immense embrace of flame-white love.

"A living embodiment of human unity" in our common *adventure of consciousness and joy*.

(Italicised lines are from *Savitri*)

Seyril Schochen, Director of the Sri Aurobindo Learning Center in Baca Grande, Colorado, recently returned from Auroville.

All-USA-Meeting, 1990

THE 1990 All-USA-Meeting (A.U.M.), held in Buck Creek Camp near Seattle, Washington, was the first such event to focus on a theme of sadhana. Lasting from June 28th until July 5th, it was also the longest. Presenters from Auroville, the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, and the North American continent were joined by over 100 attendees to meditate, reflect upon, and talk about "Finding the Flame Behind the Heart."

What follows is a description of the major sessions of the week's program and the comments, sent to *Collaboration* by Ron Jorgensen, of four participants: Bhaga, a longtime resident of Auroville; Ulrich Mohrhoff of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Bina Shupack, an Auroville-born student at Skidmore College in New York, and Ron, a former Ashramite who leads study groups in the Seattle area and was the program coordinator for this year's AUM.



Bhaga and Ron Jorgensen

Friday, June 29

The first major session featured Dr. Chitta Goswami who gave an introduction to Sri Aurobindo and Mother's vision of the theme of finding the flame behind the heart, the psychic being. Ron writes: "Despite his doctor's warning to stay home, Chitta Goswami's courage and devotion to Mother's work brought him

and his wife, Sheila, to the opening session. Sheila sang invocations I still remember.

"Dr. Goswami spoke from the perspective of a new explorer in the Yoga whose discovery of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother would bloom during the week of seeking the psychic being. He was thorough, comprehensive, clear and gracious in receiving questions long afterwards." Dr. Goswami has lived in North America since the late 60's and brought his experience as a teacher and scholar to his presentation.

Saturday, June 30

The next morning's major session focused on "Work," with a presentation by Chotti Narayan Sharma and Walter Wagner.

Bhaga writes: "Does spiritual life lie in 'spiritual' activities only? Most people's idea of spirituality would, consciously or not, say 'yes.' But

washing dishes and other apparently trivial occupations can be done with a different attitude within, an attitude which will change everything: 'I am washing the feet of the Lord . . .'"

The afternoon was devoted to Auroville. A new video cassette made in Auroville was shown. This was followed by presentations: Auroville afforestation by Ed Giordano, who spoke about



Group of 1990 AUMers

how greenbelters were sharing their successful land regeneration methods with areas all over India; Quieté, a project for a healing center of the future; the Matrimandir and the progress of the inner chamber; and the Auroville schools, including a proposal for a new center for higher learning

The evening session featured Carl Peters and Marcia Pugsley, two psychotherapists who have been increasingly using Psychosynthesis and Integral Yoga in their practice. Ulrich writes: "Sitting in groups of 5, we were taken on a meditative search for the flame behind the heart, led by the warm, confidence-inspiring voices of Carl and Marcia."

"We then exchanged our impressions, within our group, on an exceptionally high level of psychic awareness and mutual trust and understanding, recording the chief observations on larger sheets of paper for general sharing. A second meditation led us to explore the qualities of our mental, vital, and physical parts, which was followed by another period of sharing in an exceptionally loving and happy togetherness. A beautiful experience and tuning-in to the spirit of this year's AUM."

Sunday, July 1

In the morning, Paul Molinari, a student and practitioner of meditation in the Integral Yoga since

1973 and a member of the East Bay Study Group where *The Psychic Being* is now the focus of study, presented Meditation.

Bhaga writes: "A review of the basic conditions required for the beginner to have a good and useful meditation, without and within. Concentration within at the heart level can put us in contact with the Flame there. (Concentration is also what the Matrimandir and its Inner Chamber are meant for, remarked longtime Matrimandir worker

Seyril Schochen).

"How long does it usually take to actually come in contact with one's Psychic Being? About 30 years, Sri Aurobindo and the

Mother used to say, without making a rule of it. But in the last years of her physical life, Mother explained that now it could be done in a few months . . . if one had the necessary intensity of aspiration!"

Ron Jorgensen presented the evening session on Vitality. Bhaga writes: "Ron managed to say just enough to give us a clear idea of what we wanted to talk about, in a way that invited participation from all and evoked the true answers from within, giving us the opportunity to find out in ourselves and from our own experience (shared in duets this time) what difference there is between the ordinary, outer vital, the true vital, and the

psychic vibration . . . a most important difference to know of indeed in this yoga!"

Ulrich comments that, "We used meditation to understand the deceptive glamor of the vital and its subtlety and skill in 'leading us down the garden path' and to distinguish it from the very different quality of the psychic being leading us to true happiness."

Monday, July 2

The morning's topic was Difficulty.

"Through Ulrich and Walter (Wagner)," Bhaga writes, "two complementary ways of dealing with that topic expressed

themselves, giving a sense of completeness to the whole session: Ulrich underlined the fact, more and more obvious as one goes consciously into Yoga, that all the difficulties we meet are sent to us by the Divine Grace, to be the very stepping stones of our progress; to remember that can always diminish greatly the 'unpleasantness' of the difficulty and allow it to have its full positive effect.

"To what extent can we help others when they are in difficulty and ask us for help?"

"Quite a few among us happened to be therapists of one kind or another, which led the gathering into the deep question of the value and truth of coun-

selling when done from any other place in us than the *Psychic Being*...although any help we can come up with will also do in the emergency cases we encounter often enough in the present craziness of the world.

"Walter told us then, in a very simple and moving manner, how he himself, before he knew of Yoga at all, had been rescued out of the total despair he was in by a man of true wisdom and love: Medhananda, the person who has translated most of the major works of Sri Aurobindo into German. Both Ulrich and Walter have been in contact with him, and we were all happy that they shared with us the beautiful memories they have of that remarkable friend who left his body a few years ago at the age of 90, after quietly helping so many out of their difficulties."

The evening's major session was on Knowledge, presented by Madhusudan Reddy. Dr. Reddy, has written extensively on the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo and is now the director of Aurodarshan, a center he founded for the integral education of currently about 1,500 students from kindergarten to graduate level in Hyderabad, India.

"Although Madhusudan Reddy's first session was on knowledge," Ron writes, "he clearly is a man of great devotional ardor. We moved with him in the swing, power, simplicity, and feeling of his informed cadences and felt the landscape of knowledge alter in this light."

Tuesday, July 3

In the morning, Bhaga took up the subject of Devotion. In her own words, "(I) brought a home-



On a hike above camp

made video recording of some sequences from the Mahabharat series being broadcast for a year already on Indian TV (nothing to do with the film by Peter Brook). The dialogues are very beautiful and elevating, but in Hindi, which most of us here will not understand, and the recording is not so good technically (and sometimes even interrupted by power cuts!), so don't expect anything great on the outer level.

"But for those who don't mind those kind of 'details' this video cassette will offer the opportunity of being exposed to wonderful moments of true 'Bhakti,' devotion to Sri Krishna, incarnation of the Lord upon Earth. The recording includes a part of the long passage in the Mahabharat known as the *Bhagavad Gita*.

"An introduction and commentary sheet by Bhaga and Raina Imig (from Portland, Oregon) will accompany the cassette for those who want to borrow it." (This video is available from Ron Jorgensen, 2020 Roosevelt Ave., Enumclaw, WA 98022, (206) 825-3431)

Bhaga did not use her prepared talk on devotion but spoke in a very personal way. Ulrich writes: "The indisputable climax of the whole AUM. The ardent quest of a beautiful soul in revolt against the Divine—and the heart-blowing response of the divine lover of all souls, Krishna."



Nejama Shtull on her birthday, July 4

In the evening, Madhusudan Reddy presented *Savitri*. Ron writes: "*Savitri*, a difficult session for anyone to lead, was used by Madhusudan Reddy as the occasion for envisioning the transformation of Earth to its divine secret of manifestation.

Of course, he looked with us at the Book of Yoga, especially Canto V, "The Finding of the Soul," and left us *Savitri* as the guru of the journey inward for finding the flame behind the heart."

Wednesday, July 4

Two sessions were held: Groups, facilitated by a group of presenters, and Planning.

Participants traveled to a spot known as Sunrise on the slopes of beautiful Mt. Rainier, a mountain regarded as sacred by naive American tribes.

The conference closed on Thursday. Besides the sessions in the morning and evening, the following workshops were presented during the week of AUM:

"Parenting," by Nejama

Shtull;

"Science and Spirituality," by Ulrich, Amit Goswami, and Paul Molinari;

"Money in Spiritual Use" and "Dealing with Earth Energies," by Marcel Thévoz;

"Therapeutic Touch" and "Traveling in Japan: Esthetic Pilgrimage," by Joe Peckel;

"Holodynamics: Unfolding Your Full Potential," by Barbara Bouchet;

"The Seven-fold Quadrature of Sri Aurobindo" and "Collective Yoga and Physical Immortality," by Madas;

"Turbulent Passage: Global Sadhana During the 1990's," by Ken DeBell;

"Illumined Heart," by Marcia Puglsey and Carl Peters;

"Quanta and Vedanta," by Ulrich;

"Global and Savitri Solar Villages," by Seyril Schochen;

"Community in North America," by Mordechai Sctull.

What is not included in this report are the personal meetings and sharing between old and new members of the scattered MirAurobindonian family, much of which went on during meals, meditations, and long walks. *Collaboration* welcomes these kind of comments and also additional perspectives on the presentations and overall format from readers who attended the 1990 AUM for its next issue.



Bina Chaudhuri

People

Julian Lines has moved back to the Catskill mountains, north of Woodstock, New York, where he and Mary Kate Gregory are purchasing land. His permanent address is: 1527 Manorville Road, West Saugerties, NY 12477. His phone number is (518) 678-9690.

Alan Lithman (Savitra) wrote an article for a special environmental restoration issue (Spring, 1990) of *Whole Earth Review*, a quarterly from the publishers of the *Whole Earth Catalog*. It's called "Revisiting Auroville" and focuses on reforestation.

Tom O'Brien co-presented "A Man's Workshop: The Hero in Every Man" on March 25th at the New Age Center in Nyack, New York.

Dr. Vasant Merchant, consultant and adjunct professor of humanities at Northern Arizona University, is the editor of *The International Journal of Humanities and Peace*, an annual publication. The 1989 issue focused on "Contributions of Women" and included an article by Dr. Merchant entitled "The True Role of Women: Awakening to the Beauty of the Future," and "Women and the War," by the Mother.

"Children and Peace" will be the focus of the 1990 Annual, followed by "Ecology and Environment" in 1991 and "Development and Sufficiency" in 1992.

The *International Journal of Humanities and Peace* (\$15) is available from Dr. V.V. Mer-

chant, 1436 N. Evergreen Drive, Flagstaff, AZ 86001 (602) 774-4793.

Ida Patterson is raffling off a lace tablecloth, all proceeds to benefit the Matrimandir. Tickets are \$6 each or 3 for \$15 (limit 3 per person). She can be reached at (612) 822-9444 for further information.

Arlene Mazak, faculty member in the East/West Psychology Program at the California Institute of Integral Studies, gave a workshop on Sri Aurobindo's Yoga entitled "All of Your Life as Yoga" from July 28-August 5 at the Far Horizons camp in King's Canyon National Park, California. The workshop was presented in conjunction with a program in hatha yoga by Kali Ray, "Tri-Yoga: Union of Body, Breath, and Mind." For more information contact Far Horizons, Box 857, Kings Canyon National Park, CA 93633 (209) 565-3692.

Rajavani, Selvaraj, Aurora, and Rathanam, (see photo, p. 26) from Auroville, took part in an Urban Peacetrees program in Washington D.C. organized by Dannan Perry founder of, Earthstewards Network that brought Peace Trees to Auroville in December 1988.

These Aurovilians worked with teenagers from the Anacostia area of D.C., Northern Ireland, Latvia, Costa Rica and Siberia to plant trees and clean up run-down areas of the Anacostia neighborhood.

The program ran from May 1 to May 18. With little time to recover from jet lag the Aurovilians found themselves breaking up cement to plant trees in one

of the most run down areas of D.C., while trying to relate to inner city youth and their environment.

At the conclusion of the project, the 4 Aurovilians traveled across the USA, including a stop at the All-USA Meeting.

Boomi, Radha, and Arumugam, three young men from Auroville, will participate in an upcoming PeaceTrees program, from October 1-18 in Los Angeles, California. They write: "We are very eager to travel around from the West Coast to the East Coast for six weeks after the end of the program. We would deeply appreciate it if you could accomodate us at your house for a couple of days." Contact Jean and Gordon at (802) 869-2789 if you would like to host them.

They are also in need of funds for the journey. \$300 to finish paying for plane tickets is the most urgent amount. Contributions should be sent by cashiers check to the Auroville Fund, Bharat Nivas, Auroville, Kottakuppam-605104, Tamil Nadu, India. Please specify your contribution for "Urban Peace Trees."

Funds for their general expenses in the USA can be sent to AVI-USA, P.O. Box 162489, Sacramento, CA 95816.

For more information on these Peace Trees programs, contact The Earthstewards, P.O. Box 10697, Bainbridge Island, WA 98110.

We were all saddened by the recent death of **George Nakashima**. For years he has been, in his own quiet way, the epitomy of an American yogi.

George melded his experience

in Pondicherry as chief architect of the internationally acclaimed, Ashram guest house, Golconde, his Japanese artistic heritage, and American know-how in order to literally draw spirit out of matter. His creations formed from the wood of fallen trees brought him fame, but also a quality of inner peace that was apparent to visitors to his Pennsylvania workshop.

George Nakashima's accomplishments are legion. His work was exhibited in many art museums, and he worked with the Metropolitan Museum of Art to create Japanese galleries. The Japanese government honored him as a member of the Order of the Sacred Treasure. He created an Altar to Peace in the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in

New York (where a memorial service was held).

His autobiography, *Soul of a Tree*, with its beautiful photos of wood and his creations, is available from bookstores and shows why these honors were given.

Although none of the official obituaries mentioned Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, George acknowledged their influence in an interview with *Collaboration* in the fall of 1986.

"I don't think that I could have done this kind of thing," George said, "without first having experienced the Ashram and Sri Aurobindo's teachings."

What George Nakashima has done is to live his life in the spirit of the name that was given to him by Sri Aurobindo: Sundarananda: One who delights in beauty.

1991 All-USA Meeting

Time: Wednesday July 3 through Sunday, July 7

Place: Madison, Wisconsin

Program Committee:
Paula Murphy, Brian and Fenou Walton, Joel Goodman, Ariel Browne, Jean & Gordon Korstange

Contact: Brian and Fenou Walton, Rt. 3, Spring Green WI 53588 (608) 583-2626 to give suggestions or get involved on the committee.

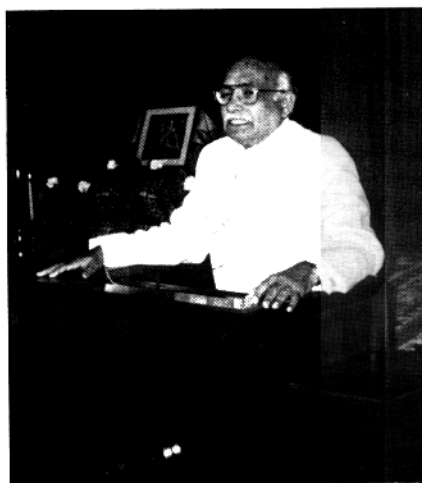
Center News

Cultural Integration Fellowship

2650 Fulton Street
San Francisco, CA 94118
(415) 626-2442

The Mother's Birthday was observed at CIF, San Francisco, on the 18th of February. Dr. Chittaranjan Goswami spoke on the concept of God as Mother and then about the life and works of our Mother of Pondicherry. He emphasized the great significance of the incarnation of the Divine in a female body at this age of awakening of the woman power all over the world.

Shila Goswami chanted Mother's hymn from the *Chandi*. Mrs. Bina Chaudhuri presided



Dr. Chittaranjan Goswami

over the program. The meeting was well-attended.

Dr. Robert McDermott, editor of *The Essential Aurobindo*, will become the new president of CIF.

Wilmot Center
P.O. Box 2
Wilmot, WI 53192
(414) 988-9396

The Center was happy to sponsor a two-day overnight meeting of the Midwest Regional Group in February. The meeting was energetic and invigorating for all attendees, including a number of children of the participants. The meeting included an introduction to Ayurvedic Panchakarma Therapy, for those interested, in addition to the usual meditation and reading sessions. A videotape of Sri M.P. Pandit speaking on the *Essays of the Gita* was the feature activity on Sunday morning.

The "Vedic Deities" conference was delayed to await warmer weather and allow easier travel for the participants, some of whom will be coming from quite distant places. It is hoped that it will occur in mid-June.

The Institute of Wholistic Education is sponsoring a two-day meeting and discussion with several prominent Ayurvedic physicians and educators from India who will arrive here in mid-May. We are hoping to videotape the meeting to preserve the knowledge for others who are interested. The Institute is finalizing work on the 2nd year correspondence course in Ayurveda as well as a book on advanced Ayurvedic applications. A 42 cassette tape series is being prepared for release later this month on Ayurvedic science.

Lotus Light Publications division reports the release in April of *Wisdom of the Veda* (\$7.95) by Sri M.P. Pandit, complementing the earlier release of *Vedic Symbolism* and *Vedic Deities* in our "Veda" Series.

In addition, the *Psychic Being* (\$8.95) and *Hidden Forces of Life* (\$8.95), both compiled from the writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother by Dr. A.S. Dalal (the compiler of *Living Within*) are now available through Lotus Light.

The new American edition of Sri Aurobindo's *Life Divine* is in active preparation for release in the fall. Wayne Bloomquist's compilation of Mother's writings in *Search for the Soul* is being readied for a summer release. *The Ayurvedic Cookbook* will also appear in the summer season. *Gems*

from Sri Aurobindo (compiled by M.P. Pandit) is also expected during the summer season. A new catalog, including all the new titles, is being prepared and will be ready in May.

The Ayurvedic Products division reports on the development of an Ayurvedic toothpaste to be available in May. Under the Herbal Vedic brand name, this product was developed to provide a viable herbal alternative with serious scientific support for its benefits to the teeth and gums.

The Center is still actively seeking a teacher to take up the full-time position for the children's school. Applicants need to be prepared to practice the methods espoused by Sri Aurobindo and Mother for education in a wide-ranging field of inquiry, with insight and understanding of the mind and heart of the children involved. It will be a serious challenge and opportunity for anyone who responds.

Now that a core, in-residence group is being established, plans are being discussed to add a weekly study/meditation session for the community of seekers in the area, focusing on reading from the writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, followed by meditation. We are hoping to develop a regular session by early summer. Anyone wishing to participate should contact the center for details.

**Sri Aurobindo Learning
Center
Savitri House
Baca Grande, P.O. Box 80
Crestone, Colorado 81131**

"All groups and individuals in the process of creating new communities in the new and global

consciousness" were invited to gather in Crestone-Baca from August 11-15 for the Global Village Network Conference.

Panel discussions were held to share experiences, address critical issues such as responsible land stewardship, self-governance and interpersonal relationships.

The program was in three parts. On Aug. 11 and 12 participants from Auroville and the USA spoke about their plans, experiences, and visions concerning self-sustainable development, as well as aspects of community building. On Aug. 13 and 14, the emphasis was on sharing through workshops in the areas of healing arts, personal growth, art and dance. On Aug. 15th, Sri Aurobindo's birthday and India's independence day were celebrated and the Herbal Flower Garden Mandala at the center of Savitri Village was dedicated.

Participants were to have included Seyril Schochen, Philip Tabb, solar architect and designer of Savitri Solar Village, Dr. Mathur, Minister of Education and Culture, Embassy of India, Washington, D.C., C.V. Devan Nair, Director of the Tata Institute of Research in India, Ameeta Mehra, a teacher at the Mother's School in New Delhi, Madhusudhan Reddy, Bhaga from Auroville, Wahid Shiloh, expert in computer Communication Networks for Communities, Marcel Thevos, and C.S. Reddy, Executive Director of the Institute of Human Study in Hyderabad, India and a Yoga Acharya.

**Matagiri
Mt. Tremper, New York
12457**

Matagiri observed the birthday of Sri Aurobindo and the inauguration of the new book room on August 15th. The former crafts building has been renovated to house a representative selection of titles. Please call to inform Eric or Sam of your intention to visit to find a mutually convenient time.

Dr. H. Maheshwari, Sanskrit scholar from the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, was to present a special week long seminar on "The Bhagavad Gita in Sri Aurobindo's Light" at the Omega Institute in Rhinebeck, New York, near Matagiri, from August 27-31.

Dr. Maheshwari will be touring the USA with stops in Boston, New York City, New Jersey, Washington D.C., Houston, Los Angeles, and San Francisco.

**Sri Aurobindo Association
2550 9th St., Suite 206
Berkeley, California
94710
(415) 848-1841**

A Letter From the Board:

This letter is to bring you up to date with changes that have taken place in the Sri Aurobindo Association, and in the national book distribution and networking services coordinated for the past few years out of the office in High Falls, NY.

For some time, many people throughout the United States have aspired to see the Association become a more vibrant, living network—a network

enlivened and energized by a broad-based and diverse participation. Many also have wanted to find ways to accomplish the work in a more cost-effective manner.

Over the past several months, a new board has sought to address these concerns and take the steps necessary to open the way for the next stage of the Association's development. Working closely with the Foundation for World Education, the board—consisting of Martha Orton from Virginia, Wayne Bloomquist from California, Bill Moss from Massachusetts, Julian Lines from New York, and David Wickenden from Washington D.C.—has undertaken the following changes.

• **Book Distribution:** The principal book distribution facility has moved to Berkeley, California where national mail-order sales will be managed as a volunteer service by Wayne and Surama Bloomquist. Wayne and Surama have been actively involved with the work of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother for many years and operate a successful real estate appraisal business in the Bay area. Wayne expects to receive approval shortly from the state of California for establishing the new office as a non-profit branch of the SAA, which continues to be legally based in New York state.

• **East Coast:** Sam Spanier and Eric Hughes have volunteered to make available a selection of the books at Matagiri, providing access to aspirants on the East Coast who may wish to visit and/or purchase books on site. A representative selection of titles is now available in the former crafts building there.

Incense also will be available for purchase.

• **Coordinated Distribution:** Discussions have been underway between Wayne, others, and Santosh Krinsky regarding better coordination of book distribution efforts nationwide. Through his "Lotus Light" business, Santosh and his associates distribute some titles of Sri Aurobindo, the Mother, and various disciples. At the recent AUM, Wayne and Santosh pooled efforts to provide a full array of titles for attendees. The board expects further cooperative efforts will be explored in the future.

• **Organizational Restructuring:** With the shifting of the primary office to California, the High Falls, New York office has been closed and the position of paid Coordinator has been phased out. Julian Lines continues, however, to be actively involved as a member of the board.

The Sri Aurobindo Association thus becomes an all-volunteer organization. In order for the various networking and general support activities to continue, help will be needed from all who feel moved to be of service. Work undertaken in the past includes letter-writing, answering inquiries about the Yoga, and arranging visits and speaking engagements for visitors from India. A mailing will be going out in the near future listing tasks and ways in which people can contribute.

• **Collaboration:** *Collaboration*, the primary communication link and means of collective expression in North America, will continue to be edited and published by Jean and Gordon Korstange from their home in

Vermont. They have, in addition, also volunteered to undertake the mailing and distribution tasks formerly handled in High Falls. At present they are searching for someone to take up the work of gathering information and writing the People and Center News sections of the publication.

Subscriptions and renewals to *Collaboration* should be sent to the SAA office in Berkeley, California.

- **AUM Support:** The SAA board will continue to take an as-needed role in ensuring the continuity of the All-USA-Meetings. The level of involvement, as in the past, will depend on the interest level of individuals and organizational needs of conference organizers.

In addition to these steps, other activities are underway to clear up remaining matters of business and open new channels of participation. All developments will be communicated through direct mailings and through *Collaboration*. In the meantime, we'd like to urge you to call directly with any questions, concerns, comments, or ideas.

We have been very encouraged by the response to steps taken to date, and, with your help, look forward to moving ahead with other activities that will make the work increasingly responsive to the needs and interests of all those throughout North America who share a connection to the vision of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

Sincerely,

Wayne Bloomquist, Julian Lines, Bill Moss, Martha Orton, and David Wickenden.

Sri Aurobindo Association: Names, Address, and Phone Numbers

Main Office: For national mail order and on-site book sales and other related items; centralized national database (names, addresses, phone numbers); general information and assistance: Sri Aurobindo Association, 2550 9th Street Suite 206, Berkeley, CA 94710 (415) 848-1841; Wayne and Surama Bloomquist.

East Coast Access: For on-site book and incense sales; general information, and assistance: Matagiri, Mt. Tremper, NY 12457 (914) 679-8322; Sam Spanier, Eric Hughes.

Collaboration: To contribute articles, offer input or assistance: *Collaboration* c/o Jean and Gordon Korstange, P.O. Box 297, Saxtons River, VT 05154 (802) 869-2789.

Board Members: Wayne Bloomquist, 2550 9th St., Suite 206, Berkeley, CA 94710 (415) 841-5841; Julian Lines, 1527 Manorville Rd., Saugerties, NY 12477 (518) 678-9690; Bill Moss, 14 Hosmer St., Watertown, MA 02171 (617) 926-3114; Martha Orton, P.O. Box 4472, Charlottesville, VA 22905 (804) 589-1202; David Wickenden, 1325 15th St. NW #713, Washington, D.C. (202) 234-8389.

AVI-USA
P.O. Box 162489
3112 'O' Street, Suite 13
Sacramento, CA 95816
(916) 452-4013

Sitting around a crackling woodstove fire, the AVI-USA board of directors met from May 25-28 for its semi-annual conclave. June Maher hosted the weekend at her cabin in Yosemite National Park, a beautiful forest retreat where in the past she had welcomed many Auroville friends.

Paula Murphy and Larry Tepper guided the meeting—a major focus of which was improving communication skills and learning efficient group process.

In the opening session Friday night, Jocelyn and Chris Gray updated the board with a report from Auroville, having recently returned from a several-months visit. The first session on Saturday morning—perhaps the most moving of the weekend—was devoted to finding the level on which we were truly connected. We had many names for it: the psychic being; consecration to the Mother; manifesting the Divine as the purpose of life; faith in the future and transformation—all part of a deep commitment to Auroville.

Our next step was to examine the ways we best express the inner truth in our outer work as AVI—and in so doing grow more clear in our organizational purpose. We identified many AVI functions, dividing them into four categories: (1) Channeling contributions and resources to Auroville; (2) Maintaining communications to and from Auroville, AVI centers,

and individuals and groups in the USA; (3) Providing hospitality and "people support" and helping visitors to and from Auroville; (4) Marketing Auroville materials, e.g. books and videos.

With a stronger sense of identity, we then developed a list of 20 issues we felt were important to address at the meeting, such as: improving communications with Auroville; helping Auroville stay current in the global context; supporting an AVI project in Auroville; handling the AVI work load; improving office functions; making our meetings more effective; and developing new directions for AVI. We took action on some issues, delegated some to working groups, and postponed others to future teleconferences.

One project AVI hopes to implement is an "expert" exchange. AVI would like to send one person a year to visit Auroville and share expertise in a field (such as sports or town planning) in which state-of-the-art knowledge might be useful.

Another idea is to establish an AVI-USA base in Auroville that could house visitors and serve as an office/communication center. It would be built ecologically and start small; it could grow by modules into a larger complex. Eventually, it might even evolve into the American pavilion.

After three days of increased solidarity, board members packed their suitcases, hugged each other good-bye, and drove away through the Yosemite forest.

Little did we know that two-and-a-half months later, the place of our retreat would be a blackened wasteland. A raging fire, started by lightning and



Jack Alexander, Jyothi Alexander, June Maher, Chris Gray, Paula Murphy, Mary Alexander, Jocelyn Gray, Lynda Lester, Larry Tepper, Constance Walker

fueled by drought-parched timber, stormed up the ridge on August 9 and devoured everything in its path. June's cabin collapsed into a wreckage of charred cinders.

Because of National Park regulations, she cannot rebuild it. We share her grief. We, and many others, will remember the deeply spiritual experiences we had there.

—Lynda Lester

Crystal Trip, 1991

As completion of Matrimandir's inner chamber draws near, Aurovilians and friends of Auroville are looking forward to the installation of the crystal in February, 1991. AVI-USA is in the early stages of planning a trip for those wishing to visit Auroville at that special time. The trip will be led by experienced travelers who have been to Auroville many times; arrangements will include a charter flight plus room and board. AVI needs 15-20 people to reserve a charter and obtain reduced fares.

If you are interested in the trip, please ask AVI to put you on the Crystal Trip 1991 mailing list. Contact AVI-USA at the above address.

The House of *Mother's Agenda* Aspiration-Auroville Kottakuppam 605104 (Tamil Nadu) India

On October 30, 1989, The House of *Mother's Agenda* was re-opened in Aspiration, Auroville. It is a meeting point for all those who seek to study Sri Aurobindo's and Mother's work. There is a lending library for books and cassettes of *Mother's Agenda*, as well as a display of photos, books, and quotations which explains the history and relevance of their work and draws special attention to the unique document of *Mother's Agenda*: Her exploration into the consciousness of the body.

The House of *Mother's Agenda* is open every day, and on two evenings each week adults and young people meet to share and discover together the inner reality of our life in Auroville.

We hope that this place will be a gathering point especially for Auroville youth to look within, and also to look outside, because Sri Aurobindo's action can be encountered anywhere in the world. To help us in this exploration we would like to ask all those who are connected with Sri Aurobindo and Mother to send us any kind of documentation of Their work on earth, wherever and in whatever form you see a new consciousness manifesting: through articles, photographs, works of art, music, etc.

In your own life, when you have some special encounter with Him and Her, share it with us. *Mother's Agenda*, which She subtitled "Agenda of the Supramental Action on Earth," is

continuing, and we can document this action. Such an ongoing research can become a focus of study and experiment for the youth of Auroville, and a way of connecting with friends in India and abroad.

Auroville has begun to look up and to look out and is glad to recognize partners. We all learn to listen.

An Interview with Selvaraj and Aurora

Editors' Note: After we received the announcement about the House of Mother's Agenda, we had an opportunity to speak with two young people who are very much concerned with it. Selvaraj is a young Tamilian from a nearby village who was educated in Auroville and is now helps run the Last School. Aurora, born in Auroville from Dutch parents, educated in Holland, returned to Auroville 3 years ago and works in the township administrative center.

Selvaraj: The House of Mother's Agenda came about because Auroville youth expressed the fact that we didn't know much about Mother and Sri Aurobindo's experience and even Satprem. We had heard a lot of controversy about the Agenda in Auroville. Also, living in Auroville we heard quotes from Sri Aurobindo and Mother off and on, but we didn't really sit down and read much.

We put this feeling of wanting to learn more about all of this out to other Aurovillians, and they said yes it is important to have a place where youth can come to have their questions

answered, or just to share, and that's how we started. Lots of adults came to the first meeting. We put questions to them and some of them also said they had some of the same questions.

Both younger and older spoke about whether we would ever reach anywhere near the spiritual point that Mother and Sri Aurobindo reached; of when the transformation was going to happen, and can we all achieve it; and even how much we see the truth in what they said.

Aurora: We are not only focused on the Agenda. We talk about people's experiences of coming to Auroville; what is happening in India and Auroville; why are we here together; and then questions arise.

Selvaraj: Around 10 young people and 30 adults came to the first meeting—that's the usual number, though sometimes fewer.

Collaboration: Is there an agenda for the meeting?

Selvaraj: Sometimes. Later we found out that a lot of us felt we should read a book, like the *Adventures of Consciousness*, by Satprem. Many people had said that they had come to Auroville by reading that book. That's why we chose it.

Aurora: Lots of our young people have experienced Sri Aurobindo and Mother through growing up in Auroville, with their parents and friends around



L-R: Selvaraj, Karen Moawad (Peacetrees), Aurora, Danaan Perry (Peacetrees), Rajavani, Rathanam

them, not needing to talk much about Sri Aurobindo and Mother. When they have to explain them to outsiders they felt they did not know enough. They had it inside them, but they needed the basic biography of Mother-Sri Aurobindo and information which could be helpful to introduce people.

Selvaraj: We meet lots of people who ask us about this, and we feel quite shy to talk about it. Thinking that we don't know much, we don't want to say anything.

Collaboration: People in the USA also say that they're not used to talking about the Yoga in this country. They just keep it secret.

Selvaraj: That's how it is in Auroville. People don't feel like talking about it with their children because it feels like preaching. They don't want to do that. They think that everyone should learn by themselves not by their parents pushing them into it.

The other thing is to have a place where young people can get together to express what they are thinking, and what they want to do and create; where some of the adults who are interested can

come and listen and get to know what are the interests of the youth.

Collaboration: Can you think of an example of something you discussed?

Aurora: In the House of *Mother's Agenda* we speak about things that are very very personal. So others have to really listen without laughing or making fun—then when you hear it you don't go around talking about it. Some people express their special experiences—dreams or out-of-the-body experiences that people normally don't speak about.

Collaboration: What about the generation that's younger than you?

Selvaraj: There are only about ten people our age (early twenties) who come; a lot more don't come. The younger ones are just watching what happens. In Auroville there is a lot of controversy—talking about what is really the Yoga—and sometimes people make fun of it. It is all mixed there. So the younger ones are just watching. Some do come and sit for one or two meetings, and then they don't come to the next.

Aurora: Sometimes the younger ones don't understand what we are talking about. It can be complicated. We tried to have topics for every meeting, but usually we listen to music in the beginning, start reading, and then discuss what we read. Anything which comes up we talk about.

Selvaraj: We're also trying to collect experiences of people from all over the world who have had something that relates to what has happened in Auro-

ville. People could send us information, and we could make it a part of the exhibition in the House. (See preceding letter)

Aurora: We also talk about education in Auroville. We come up with some nice ideas. Like every Saturday we now have a bus that takes the young children to the different places in Auroville where they can learn what is going on in a production unit or the green belt or wherever. Especially those kids who are getting ready to finish school.

Selvaraj: This is to give these students a sense that there are things in Auroville for them to get involved with, rather than a feeling of there's nothing here for them once they finish Last School. They sometimes feel like that, and it's not true. There are a lot of things that are happening around Auroville. You have to see them.

Aurora: Now that we have this place the young people feel that when they have a question or want to get in touch with something they can come there. It has to grow naturally. We can add more people to it, but a certain interest is not there yet with the younger children—but it will come.

Collaboration: How will they get interested?

Aurora: I don't think it's a question of the level of your interest. It's more the level of your own progress. There are young children who ask big questions that they want answered. There are some who only think about things when they grow up and are faced with some experience in Auroville, and then they say, "Hey, I want

to know more about that."

Collaboration: Do you see young people coming in from outside becoming interested in Sri Aurobindo and Mother? Is Auroville a good way for young people to get involved in the Yoga?

Aurora: I think it goes slowly. When they get to know about Mother and Sri Aurobindo outside of Auroville that makes a connection. I don't know about 18 and older, but looking at younger ones between 7 and 12, when they come from outside they just go with it and ask questions and find out about it.

Selvaraj: But I don't see the youth coming from outside so involved with meditation or the Yoga. Youth who are 18 and 20 are mostly interested in different activities, or they relate through work rather than spirituality. That doesn't mean they aren't interested. It comes later, I think.

Aurora: They have this feeling of really knowing Sri Aurobindo and Mother. They carry it around before it really awakens. Then they get interested.

Collaboration: So the House of *Mother's Agenda* is a way for there to be something in Auroville for the youth when they want to know.

Aurora: It's for anyone in Auroville who wants to know about the Yoga. It started because of the young people. For the older Aurovilians it's a wonderful place for them to meet young people. They feel they can offer something by being there, listening and trying to help.

OM Sri Aurobindo Mira

Open my mind, my heart, my life
to your Light, your Love your Power..In all
things may I see the Divine

(OM Sri Aurobindo Mira

Open my mind, my heart, my life to your Light, your
Love, your Power. In all things may I see the Divine.)

16-7-1938

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