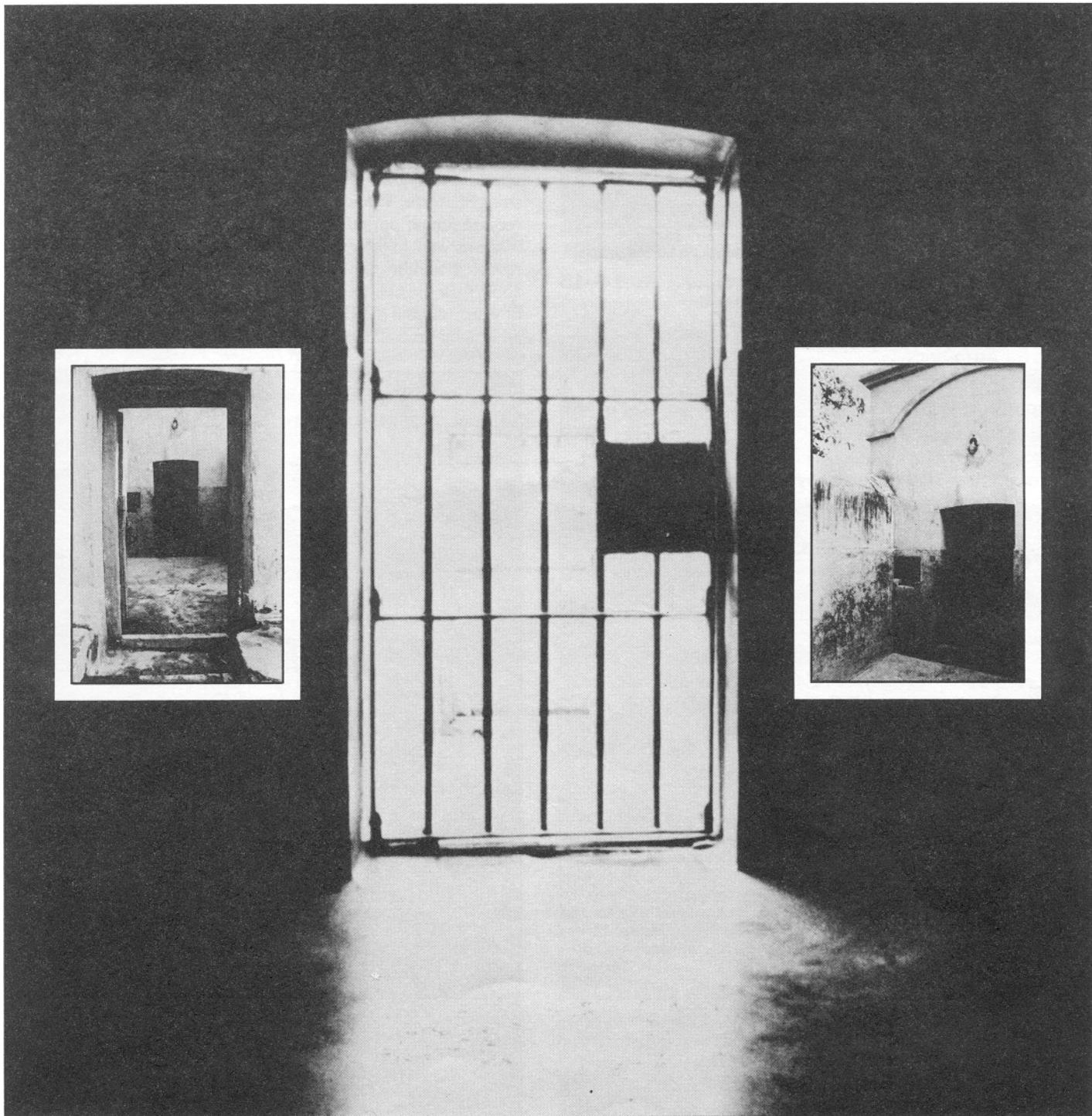


Collaboration

WINTER 1987

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**Sri Aurobindo's Cell in
the Alipore Jail**

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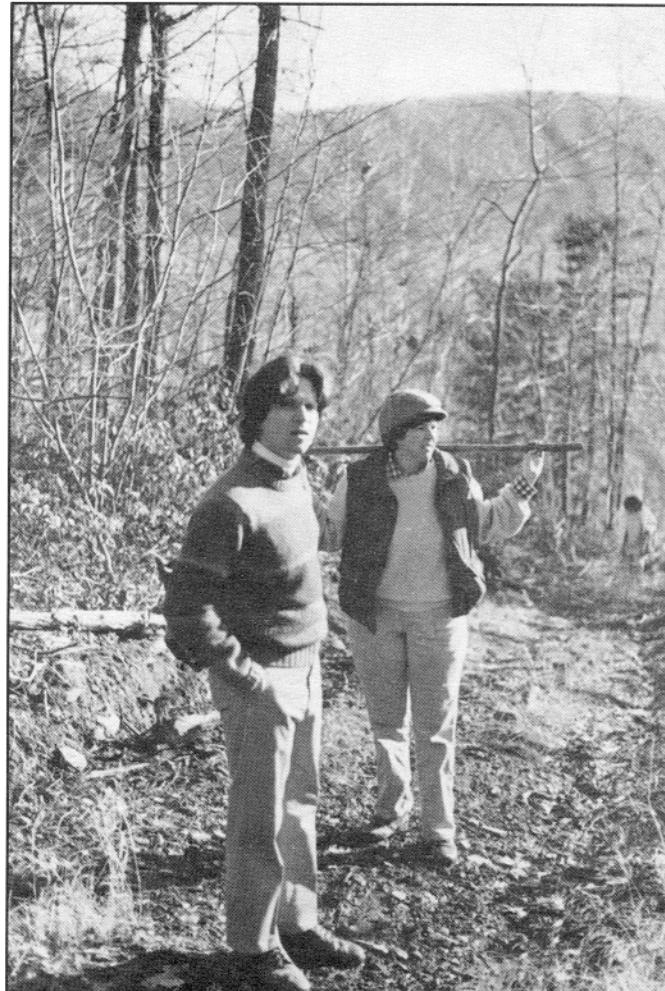
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Climbing Matagiri

After long drives to longer meetings, after all work and no play, we balked. "Walk before talk," we said and went up Matagiri. It was a crisp, sun-bathed December day thirty-six years after Sri Aurobindo lost interest in his body. The recently fallen leaves crackled underfoot. How long had it been since we had climbed Mother's mountain? As the path grew steeper we shed our jackets and noticed that part of the hill had been logged. Fallen trees lay like pick-up sticks down its side, a reminder of how the hard facts of economic necessity play such a role in our collective yoga and a portent of yet another discussion to come about keeping our Center sincere and still solvent.

Then we rose above the wreckage to a deer trail where bare trees afforded a view to the surrounding Catskill foothills. I had forgotten how high this Matagiri was! Our group drifted apart, one-half taking the steady switchback route, the other the steep straight ascent. We soon discovered that precipitous ascensions require longer periods of recuperation. Besides, the warm sun made us want to linger among the leaves and each level reached revealed another still to go. Someone kept making remarks about how the Sherpas had lived in the Himalayas for thousands of years without climbing Everest. Matagiri was here, she said, all around us, not there—beyond. We moved on.



Julian Lines and Margo MacLeod climbing Matagiri mountain.

The summit was spacious and inviting, even without the hoped-for tea stall. We were in time to see the winter sun plummet toward the hills beyond Route 28 and the other half of our group descend down the back of the mountain toward further adventures with hunters (who were to chastise them for daring to appear in the woods during open season without bright orange clothing. "Thank you for not killing us," they replied).

Julian and I watched them leave and returned to an area below the summit where we had found a natural grotto with a deep but

*It was that time of day in
India when people begin to gravitate
towards the temples for evening puja.
Was that a conch shell I heard
or a car horn?*

narrow recess in the rock. It was that time of day in India when people begin to gravitate towards the temples for evening puja. Was that a conch shell I heard or a car horn? I hunkered down in front of the opening, placed a blessing packet with Mother's picture on it as far against the back base of the rock as I could and broke the stillness of Matagiri with Sri Aurobindo's Gayatri Mantra:

"Om Tat Savitur Varum Rupam Jyotihi Parasya Dhimahi Yanaha Satyena Dipayet—I call upon that Supreme Sun, that Light, to illuminate me with the Truth."

We stood for a few minutes looking at Her photo nestled in a fold of the mountain, wondering how long the handmade paper and rose petals could withstand the wind, rain, and snow. Whatever happened, She would still be part of it we figured, and so turned back toward the exigency of this other Matagiri, this book selling, yarn-swapping group of people who have little photos of Mother tucked away within them somewhere.

We found the gradual path going down and passed through the same leaves, same fallen trees. But somehow it was no longer quite the same mountain.

Gordon Korstange

We have not received much of a response to our request for American centers to send in overviews of their activities and photos of their members and buildings. Thus our attempt to publish a directory of centers is postponed until the Spring issue. The next deadline for submissions is March 15.

In this issue we add a new section entitled *People*. It is a way to cover activities and events that do not fall under the heading of *Center News*. If you are doing something of interest to the readers of *Collaboration* or know of such news, please send it along. Photos are particularly welcome.



Blessing packet on Matagiri mountain.

Beginnings And No End

In the silent push of a secret force
I felt impelled like the stream
In a living wood that spoke to me
While gently, gently the layers around my heart
Were pulled away and I left crying,
No words for the one who stood asking
As I emerged from the green—
What's the matter? What's the matter?—
But only my tears on her shoulder in reply.
Would she have believed me if I had said
I have just come back from the dead?

What is this power which can rise in a human being
And lift him free from his body and say—
You think you have suffered in your little human life?
Cut deep then, into your flesh.
Spill the blood
That now runs channeled in your veins,
Set free the life from the circuits of this mould
And roam loose this great universe of pain,
You who cannot bear the little pricks of life
If you dare—
And then return him to consider
What is the meaning of a life that has no death?

This gentle stream which has pushed me
And made me feel so empty that I could not bear my life
And then led me into loving arms
And quiet spaces where silent stone spoke
Of consciousness infinite in the solid mass
Has found for me at every step
The aid I cried for in my heart and mind
And secret soul.

Clifford Gibson

From the Journal of the Sri Aurobindo Archives and Research

Editor's Note: For those unfamiliar with the Ashram's Department of Archives and Research, it has been at work for many years editing Sri Aurobindo's unpublished manuscripts, fragments, drafts, and letters. They do this task (his handwriting can be almost illegible at times) with an eye to general readers and scholars, employing all the techniques and equipment (cameras and computers) used in the West.

One result of this labor was the revised edition of The Hour of God published in 1982. Another is the Journal, a twice yearly publication which includes Sri Aurobindo's unpublished writings as well as material surrounding his life. From the former we present a poem published in 1883 in a British journal, Fox's Weekly, and tracked down by the department. By way of further introduction we quote from the Journal's Notes on the Texts: "Although it is unsigned, there can be little doubt that the writer was the young Sri Aurobindo, then a ten-year-old child living in Manchester. In January 1939, in answer to the question, 'When did you begin to write poetry?', Sri Aurobindo replied: 'When my two brothers and I were staying at Manchester. I wrote for the Fox family magazine. It was an awful imitation of somebody I don't remember.' (Nirodbaran, Talks with Sri Aurobindo, Volume I, page 151). It (the poem) is also certainly an imitation though hardly an 'awful' one-of-the much-anthologised lyric The Cloud, by P. B. Shelley, one of young Aurobindo's favorite poets. As for the biblical imagery, it is known that in the house of the Congregationalist minister W. H. Drewett, Sri Aurobindo read the Bible 'assiduously,' although he was never compelled to embrace the Christian faith."

Light

From the quickened womb of the primal gloom,
The sun rolled, black and bare,
Till I wove him a vest for his Ethiop breast,
Of the threads of my golden hair;
And when the broad tent of the firmament
Arose on its airy spars,
I pencilled the hue of its matchless blue,
And spangled it around with stars.

I painted the flowers of the Eden bowers,
And their leaves of living green,
And mine were the dyes in the sinless eyes
Of Eden's Virgin queen;
And when the fiend's art in the truthful heart
Had fastened its portal spell,
In the silvery sphere of the first-born tear
To the trembling earth I fell.

When the waves that burst o'er a world accurst
Their work of wrath had sped,
And the Ark's lone few, tried and true,
Came forth among the dead,
With the wondrous gleams of the bridal beams,
I bade their terrors cease,
As I wrote on the roll of the storm's dark scroll
God's covenant of peace.

Like a pall at rest on the senseless breast,
Night's funeral shadow slept—
Where shepherd swains on Bethlehem's plains,
Their lonely vigils kept,
When I flashed on their sight, the heralds bright,
Of Heaven's redeeming plan,
As they chanted the mom, the Saviour born—
Joy, joy, to the outcast man!

Equal favour I show to the lofty and low,
On the just and the unjust I descend:
E'en the blind, whose vain spheres, roll in darkness and tears,
Feel my smile—the blest smile of a friend.
Nay, the flower of the waste by my love is embraced,
As the rose in the garden of kings:
At the chrysalis bier of the mom I appear,
And lo! the gay butterfly wings.

The desolate mom, like the mourner forlorn,
Conceals all the pride of her charms,
Till I bid the bright hours, chase the night from her flowers,
And lead the young day to her arms.
And when the gay rover seeks Eve for her lover,
And sinks to her balmy repose,
I wrap the soft rest by the zephyr-fanned west,
In curtains of amber and rose.

From my sentinel steep by the night-brooded deep
I gaze with unslumbering eye,
When the cynosure star of the mariner
Is blotted out from the sky:
And guided by me through the merciless sea,
Though sped by the hurricane's wings,
His [companionless], dark, lone, writhing bark,
[To] the haven home safely he brings.

I waken the [flowers] in the dew-spangled bowers,
The birds in their chambers of green,
And mountain and plain glow with beauty again,
As they bask in their matinal sheen.
0, if such the glad worth of my presence on earth,
Though fitful and fleeting the while,
What glories must rest on the home of the blessed,
Ever bright with the Deity's smile.

(Sri Aurobindo: Archives & Research
Vol. 9, No. 2, Dec. 1985)

The other aspect of Archival work is the unearthing of documents and the gathering of oral history. This, too, is difficult work in a country where the climate causes rapid deterioration of papers often stored in un-airconditioned rooms. Through much painstaking effort the Department has published material shedding new light on the major outward events of Sri Aurobindo's life.

Collaboration here presents extracts from the Archival Notes concerning the assassination of Narendranath Goswami in the Alipore jail while Sri Aurobindo was a prisoner there on suspicion of making bombs and plotting the attack in which two English women were killed. Along with him were many young,

radical Bengalis, members of the secret society (for details of this group, read Nolini Kanta Gupta's Reminiscences of Jail Life). Narendranath Goswami was one of these young men who had decided to help the British. (These extracts are from the Bengal Government File on the Assassination, dated 31st August, 1908.)

It appears that the prisoner Narendra Nath **Goswami** who had been intentionally kept separate from the other prisoners confined in the European Ward was brought, from that ward, to the Jail Hospital by a European Convict Overseer named **Highens**. Narendra Nath had apparently previously arranged to meet, at that time, in the Hospital, two fellow prisoners, who were already patients in the Jail Hospital, named Kanai Lal Dutt and Satyendra Nath Bose. He had apparently been approached by the second of these prisoners, who had pretended that he also wished to make a statement; and his visit was really in order to get this statement. Evidently it was however part of a plot to get Narendra Nath within striking distance for it appears that almost immediately on Narendra Nath's arrival on the landing, at the head of the staircase leading to the second story of the Hospital, these two prisoners opened fire on him with two revolvers which they had secreted on their persons. **Highens** the Convict Overseer attempted to arrest one of them and was shot through the wrist.

Narendra Nath although shot in several places was not mortally hit and fled down the stairs, out of the Hospital Compound and along an alley way towards the gate.

The prisoner Kanai Lal Dutt pursued him and shot him fatally through the back. He was then secured by a Eurasian Prisoner named **Linton**.

... the sight of two prisoners suddenly brandishing revolvers and firing shots in a jail would be enough to shake the presence of mind of most people.

The Final Shot

The European prisoner **Linton**, however, grappled with Satyendra, either from the front or from behind, but while struggling with him was startled by a shot close to his ear, and on looking up to see who had fired saw Narendra as if spinning round. Satyendra seized the opportunity to fire a shot which, according to **Linton**, hit Narendra, and he fell into the drain by the side of the pathway along which they were proceeding. At the same moment **Linton** wrested the revolver from Satyendra and threw it away. Kanai in the meantime, according to **Linton**, had **levelled** his revolver at the jailer. **Linton** sprang forward and seized Kanai, who then pushed the muzzle of his revolver against **Linton's** forehead, causing a triangular cut in the forehead. **Linton** ducked and twisted himself behind Kanai and tried to master him, but before he could do so Kanai fired another shot at Narendra. **Linton** then succeeded in getting the revolver away and both the accused were overpowered and taken to the cells. Narendra was found to be insensible and apparently dying. He was carried to the hospital, where the Civil Hospital Assistant tried some remedies, but he expired in a few minutes.

The whole occurrence could have taken only a few minutes, and every one was so confused and horror struck with the result that none of the witnesses have told exactly the same story, and some have made statements which appear to me to be clearly untrue and invented on the spur of the moment to account for the real fact that they were afraid and were thinking much more of getting out of the way than of seizing the accused or rescuing the deceased. That this should be so is only natural, since the sight of two prisoners suddenly brandishing revolvers and firing shots in a jail would be enough to shake the presence of mind of most people.

(Report of the Commissioner of Police)

*As the days passed
the terrible desire to get out
of this torture by any means took root
in his heart.*

Archival Notes

The proceedings at Alipore, sensational enough in themselves, were four times shaken by acts of murder. All of the unfortunate victims were Bengalis. One was the Public Prosecutor of **Alipore**, Babu Ashutosh Biswas. Two others were members of the investigating police, Inspector Huq and Maulavi **Shams-ul Alam**. The efficiency and zeal of detective **Shams-ul** have been described with much **humour** by Sri **Aurobindo** in his *Karakahini*. He wrote these reminiscences of his jail life a few months before the Maulavi was gunned down in the high court by Birendranath Datta Gupta. Audacious as that shooting was, it cannot compare in drama and significance with the first of the acts of revolutionary justice at Alipore, the killing in the jail hospital of the approver Narendranath **Goswami**.

Sri Aurobindo relates in *Karakuhini* how **Goswami**, an early member of the secret society, was persuaded by his father, a rich landowner, to turn King's Evidence.

A Zamindar's son, he had been brought up enjoying comfort, luxury and evil ways. The harsh discipline and austerity of jail-life afflicted him greatly, and he did not hesitate to let others know this. . . As the days passed the terrible desire to get out of this torture by any means took root in his heart. At first he cherished the hope that after withdrawing his confession he might be able to prove that the police had used physical torture to make him confess his guilt. He told us that his father had made up his mind to procure false witnesses who would give appropriate testimony. But after a few days another idea came out. His father had an attorney started coming to the jail very frequently to visit him. Ultimately the detective **Shams-ul Alam** too began to come and see him. They carried on long and secret conversations. . . Very soon everybody had heard about Gossain's thirst for knowledge, and his intimacy with **Shams-ul Alam**, instead of remaining confidential love talk, became an open secret.²

Goswami's former companions did not take this betrayal lying down. From the time of his turning approver, reported a newspaper,

the men on trial have uttered threats against Gossain promising him he will not live to enjoy the liberty he gained by turning approver and helping the police to prove their case.

On the last occasion the men were on trial at Alipore, one of them on leaving the Court house was over-heard to tell Gossain that his fate was sealed.³

The police were naturally apprehensive about the safety of their star witness. "From the time Gossain became an approver, he was accommodated in the European cells [a special block for European prisoners], where he had his quarters up to the day of his death." The other prisoners were at the time either confined in small batches in the part of the jail dubbed the "44 decrees," or else, like Sri Aurobindo, kept in solitary confinement. Later all were put together in one large hall. But even here they were subjected to what the police thought was adequate surveillance. It was especially "those who were strong and well-built" that the authorities feared. Such boys, even if ill, had difficulty getting admitted to the jail hospital. The man in charge, one Dr. Daley, had the "mistaken idea that if anything untowards happened in the jail, it would be done by the strong and exitable boys." The doctor was wrong. "In the end," continues Sri Aurobindo

It was just the opposite that happened. The incident that took place in the hospital was the work of the sick, weak, emaciated Satyendranath Bose and the ailing, quiet, soft-spoken Kanailal.⁴

Satyendranath Bose was the son of a younger brother of Sri Aurobindo's illustrious grandfather Raj Narayan Bose. He lived in Midnapore, where Raj Narayan and his brothers had been settled since around 1850. At the time of the Alipore arrests **Satyen** was in jail as a result of his conviction in the Midnapore Arms Act Case. Implicated in the Bomb Case, he was removed to Alipore. **Satyen** was at first put in the jail's quarantine yard because he was suffering from bronchial asthma. On 27 July, he was admitted to the jail hospital.

The incident that took place in the hospital was the work of the sick, weak, emaciated Satyendranath Bose and the ailing, quiet, soft-spoken Kanailal.

On the 36th he was joined by the seriously ill Kanailal Dutt. Whether the two men had already taken their martyrs' resolution is not known, but by the 29th or 30th, the plans of their desperate act had been laid.

Both were armed. It never occurred to the watchmen at the jail that the visiting mothers and sisters of the prisoners had hidden pistols in the billowing folds of their saris.⁵ Tearful embraces at the grating provided a perfect opportunity to pass the weapons over. They were intended for a prison-break planned by **Barin** and others. This never materialised, but two of the guns did not go unused.

The story of the assassination is told in detail in Document 1. Other accounts provide additional details. One of them reports:

Monday morning, the 31st of August, was fixed for the third interview between Satyendra and Gossain. What happened was this:-A message was brought to the European

quarters by **Anrup Das**, watchman, that Satyendra wanted to see Gossain. Gossain thereupon accompanied by Higgins, warder, proceeded from the European Cell towards the Hospital. Gossain and Higgins on climbing the stairs first went to the dispensary, when Gossain asked Higgins to call Satyendra. As Higgins was turning towards ward No. 1 he saw Kanai coming... Gossain went to the verandah to the north of the staircase, where they began to talk slowly [i.e. softly].

A few minutes after Kanai, Gossain and Satyendra had gone to the verandah, a report was heard, and immediately after, Gossain was seen running into the dispensary, shouting "for God's sake, Mr. Higgins, save me, they will shoot."⁶

A newspaper account gives Goswami's terrified words as simply, "My God, they are going to shoot me."⁷

And shoot they did, nine times in all. "Four bullets were found, two inside the dispensary, one just outside the dispensary and one was extracted from the dead body of **Narendra**.⁸"

Both were armed.

It never occurred to the watchmen at the jail that the visiting mothers and sisters of the prisoners had hidden pistols in the billowing folds of their saris.

The jail meanwhile was in a panic. "The alarm bell was clanging and the hooter blowing cheerily. The inmates of the hospital got out the best they could and spread the report that a saheb was shot and a bomb had been thrown in the hospital...⁹ According to Nolini **Kanta Gupta**, the report was not actually so exaggerated. He writes in his "Reminiscences of Jail Life":

All of a sudden, one evening [sic], the alarm bell of the jail rang out. This bell with its furious clang was rung only in a grave emergency. At the same time a prisoner ran wildly about, shouting in Hindustani, "**Naren Gosain thanda ho gaya, Naren Gosain thanda ho gaya,**"—“Naren Gosain has been done for. Naren Gosain has been done for!” Before we had time to think or realize what had happened, swarms of armed policemen with rifles and fixed bayonets trooped into the courtyard where we had been taking our evening [sic] stroll. They pushed us back into our quarters like a drove of sheep or as if we were animals for slaughter. Everyone was searched and we got a few rude jostlings. We were made to form a line, sit down on the spot and the order came, “Now to the 44 Degrees.”¹⁰

How had two boys come to the decision to do this terrible deed? Kanai's statement at his murder-trial was simple and straightforward:

I wish to state that I did kill him. I don't wish to give any reason why I killed him. No, I do wish to give a reason. It was because he proved a traitor to his country.¹¹

To be sure simple vengeance, although it may have played a part, was not Kanai's motive. Neither was the murder just the carrying out of the sentence of a revolutionary tribunal. Nolini Kanta Gupta explains:

Nolini Kanta Gupta recently affirmed in conversation that Kanai and Satyen, acting on their own, killed Goswami with the conscious intention of saving Sri Aurobindo.

Kanai and others had wanted to get rid of Naren Gosain as soon as possible, not simply because he had been a traitor to the country but in order that his testimony be rejected in the Sessions court, for his evidence would have no value unless it could be tested in cross-examination. This saved us all, at least from the clutches of the law.¹³

One cannot be sure how much Kanai and Satyen knew about the ultimate effect of their deed. Even the lawyers working on the case seem for some time to have been uncertain that Goswami's death would invalidate his evidence. But Nolini Kanta Gupta recently affirmed in conversation that Kanai and Satyen, acting on their own, killed Goswami with the conscious intention of saving Sri Aurobindo. This they did, and they gave their lives doing it.

Kanai and Satyen submitted to capture peaceably. Their trial was held at the Alipore sessions court. Kanai was convicted and sentenced to death. Asked if he wanted to appeal this decision, he declared "There shall be no appeal." This brings up an

amusing sidelight. Kanailal was a bright English scholar. During his stay in jail he learned that he had passed his college examinations. When Professor P.C. Roy read Kanailal's bold declaration, his reaction was to remark with a smile that here was the right use of the auxiliary verb "shall."

Satyen was at first acquitted of the charge of murder, but later convicted. Because there seemed a chance of saving his life, his lawyers appealed the high court decision. Kanai, meanwhile, was hanged to death. The body of this pioneer martyr of Indian freedom was borne through the streets of Calcutta in triumph.

Sri Aurobindo, Archives and Research, Vol. 6, April, 1982, pp. 98-108.

¹"Gossain" is a familiar form of "Goswami."

²Sri Aurobindo, Karakahini. Chapter 8 (new translation).

³Bengalee (Calcutta). 1 September 1908.

⁴Sri Aurobindo, Karakahini. Chapter 4.

⁵Contemporary reports concentrate on female relatives (Bengalee, 1 September 1908). In his reminiscences, Nolini Kanta Gupta speaks simply of "visitors and friends." He rejects the theory, apparently first formulated by Barrister Norton, that the guns were smuggled in inside of jackfruits. See Nolini Kanta Gupta, "Reminiscences of Jail," Sri Aurobindo Mandir Annual, No. 21 (1962), p. 22.

⁶Private Papers I 30/2.

⁷Bengalee, 1 September 1908.

⁸Private Papers I 30/2.

⁹Bengalee, 1 September 1908.

¹⁰Nolini Kanta Gupta, "Reminiscences of Jail Life," pp. 15-16.

¹¹Private Papers I 30/2.

¹²Nolini Kanta Gupta, "Reminiscences of Jail Life," p. 16.

DESCRIPTIVE ROLL.

1. Name and alias Aurobindo Ghose
 2. Father's name D. K. D. Ghose.
 3. Village Ghoshpara.
 4. Police station Komagur.
 5. District Itahli.
 6. Caste Hindu - Bengali.
 7. Occupation
 8. Age 37 yrs.
 9. Height 5' 6 1/2".
 10. Build Slim.
 11. Hair
 12. Complexion Medium.
 13. Eyes wears spectacles.
 14. Nose
 15. Mouth
 16. Chin
 17. Ear mole right ear.
 18. Forehead
 19. Beard
 20. Moustache beard on chin.
 21. Marks and scars 3 moles on neck.

PHOTOGRAPH.



Convictions.

No.	District.	Court.	Date.	Section	Term.	Police Officer to identify.
1st	Alipore 24 Parg.	Sessions	6.5.09		acquitted	
2nd						

*Photo reproduction
of Sri Aurobindo's
undertrial Prisoner record.*

*(Sri Aurobindo Archives and
Research, Vol. 6 No. 1, Plate 1,
April 1982, S.A.A., Pondicherry.)*

Karakahini: Extracts from Tales of Prison Life

Sri Aurobindo

Before imprisonment I was in the habit of sitting down for meditation for an hour in the morning and evening. In this solitary prison, not having anything else to do, I tried to meditate for a longer period. But for those unaccustomed it is not easy to control and steady the mind pulled in a thousand directions. Somehow I was able to concentrate for an hour and half or two, later the mind rebelled while the body too was fatigued. At first the mind was full of thoughts of many kinds. Afterwards, devoid of human conversation and an insufferable listlessness due to absence of any subject of thought, the mind gradually lost its capacity to think. There was for a time a condition when it seemed a thousand indistinct ideas were hovering round the doors of the mind but with the gates closed; one or two that were able to get through were frightened by the silence of these mental states and quietly running away. In this uncertain, dull state I suffered an intense mental agony. In the hope of mental solace and resting the overheated brain I looked at the beauties of nature outside, but with that solitary tree, a sliced sky and the cheerless prospects in the prison how long can the mind, in such a state, find consolation? I looked towards the blank wall. Gazing at the lifeless white surface the mind seemed to grow even more hopeless, realising the agony of the imprisoned condition the brain was restless in the cage. I again sat down to meditate. It was impossible. The intense baffled attempt made the mind only more tired, useless, made it bum and boil.

Troubled by mental listlessness I spent a few days in agony in this manner. One afternoon as I was thinking, streams of thought began to flow endlessly and then suddenly these grew so uncontrolled and incoherent that I could feel that the mind's regulating power was about to cease. Afterwards when I came back to myself, I could recollect that though the power of mental control had ceased, the intelligence was not self-lost or did not deviate for a moment, but it was as if the intelligence was watching quietly this marvellous phenomenon. But at the time, shaking with the terror of being overcome by insanity, I had not been able to notice that. I called upon God with eagerness and intensity and prayed to him to prevent my loss of intelligence. That very moment there spread over my being such a gentle and cooling breeze, the heated brain became relaxed, easy and supremely blissful such as in all my life I had never known before. Just as a child sleeps, secure and without fear, on the lap of his mother, so I remained on the lap of the World-Mother.

The Inner Chamber: Extracts from Mother's Talks on Matrimandir

I saw clearly, very, very distinctly. It is there (gesture indicating an eternal plane), the interior of this place. .. We will make it in white marble.

It will be a tower with twelve facets.

The walls and then twelve columns.

And right at the centre-on the ground there is my symbol and above it four of Sri Aurobindo's symbols, joined, which form a square, and above that a globe.

The colour (of Sri Aurobindo's symbol), a strange colour, it is an orange-tinted gold, very warm. I don't know where one could find that. And it is the only colour in the place; all the rest is white and the globe transparent.

The sun ought to strike the globe. Not a diffused light, a ray of light which strikes it, always, which turns, turns, turns with the sun.

There will be no windows or lights in it. It will always be in a kind of light shadow, day and night. By day with the sun, by night with artificial lights.

And on the ground, nothing except a floor like this one (in The Mother's room). First, wood or something else, then a sort of rubber foam, thick, very soft, and then a carpet. A carpet everywhere except at the centre.

A fixed day or a fixed time for the visitors, and the rest of the time only for those who are serious, serious, sincere, who want to learn to concentrate.

No fixed meditations, none of all that, but they should stay there in silence, in silence and concentration.

A place for trying to find one's consciousness.

And let it not become a religion, for the love of Heaven's sake!

Crystal-Clear

by Jeanne Korstange

How does the Matrimandir appear in our consciousness? I am certain that many of us have experiences of Mother's vision of that building, that room which represents the new consciousness.

The Inner Chamber where everything is white... There one floats in a space without boundaries because all is white, all is pure and there is hardly anything to give one support... in the light of the Ray and the Crystal, one holds up one's questions, one's actions, one's mental, vital and physical movements...

These words are from a marvelous little book which is really a journey into the symbolism of Matrimandir. The beauty and simplicity of *A House For The Third Millennium*, written by Ruud Lohman, is derived from that pure white space, that sun illumined crystal which lives in Mother's vision of the Inner Chamber. Incorporated into Ruud's experience of building Matrimandir is his past and his vision of the completion of the construction. All of these elements are intertwined in five essays that make this a book that will be read many times on many levels.

In the opening essay, "Nightwatch at Matrimandir, or How I came to Auroville," we find out that Ruud was an Aurovillian the moment he got off the bus from Pondicherry and picked up a basket of earth along with the 30 other people who had just begun the excavation of Matrimandir. He tells us that "I am only now slowly becoming what I then, spiritually and occultly, was supposed to be." Ruud came to Matrimandir as a Franciscan, a theologian. These writings are filled with the play of theology and the spiritual adventures of a man being initiated into the "elements of the soul and psychic sparks" that are the foundation of Auroville.

We know, we are here to learn to live and feel and act according to categories of the soul... We know that we have to pass through a silence, a great big silence in order to realize in ourselves the qualities of the world of the soul which awaits us almost impatiently. By listening to the Mother, by reading Sri Aurobindo and by our first attempts at identification, we come to know the... qualities expressed by Mother in the names of the 12 gardens of Matrimandir, the 12 meditation chambers, the names of flowers and trees and communities and projects in Auroville and in a continuous flow of messages. The vibrations of these soul sparks all around us ultimately seem stronger than our smallness and closedness, and that is what gives us all the confidence that slowly our deeper beings will open up and begin to vibrate to the intensities with which the Auroville atmosphere is charged.

There was never any question for Ruud. When he left Auroville his soul stayed. He had to return to unite with his inner being. The second essay, "A City with a Soul," was written in 1973. Here Ruud perceives that in Auroville one does The Yoga of Matter and the Matrimandir is the symbol of the Divine Manifestation. In this essay we are thrown into the process of a new creation and our initiation is the Yoga of Work:

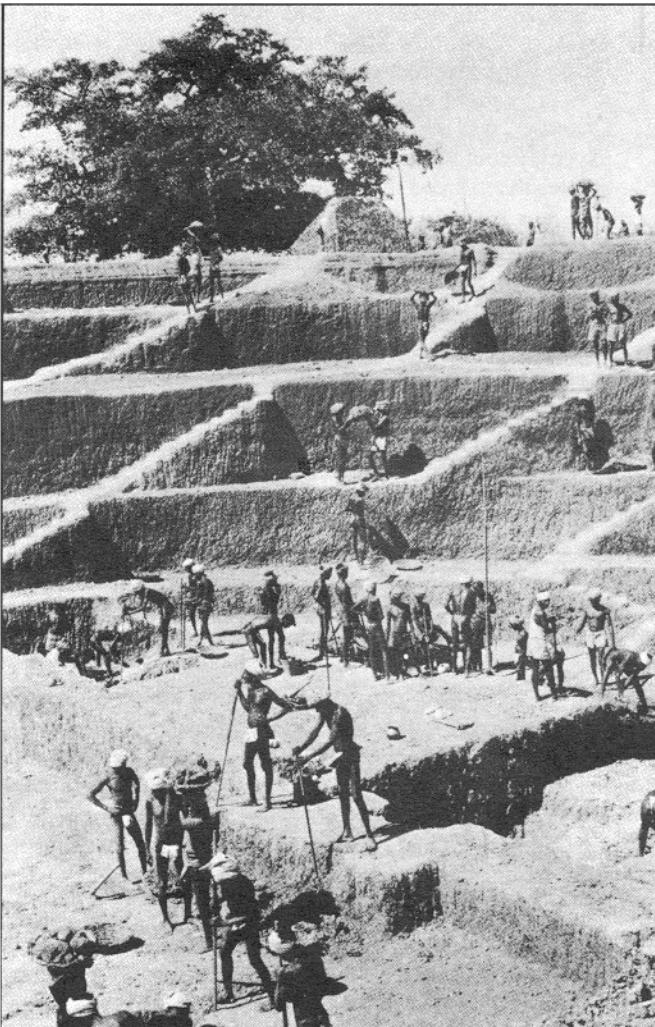
Nowhere have we felt so keenly how simple acts such as carrying chetties of red earth away from the excavation, or erecting scaffolding and concrete forms, are charged with a multifaceted meaning, as if each single contribution to Matrimandir were an act with a body and soul—a soul of divine significance and earthly transformation.

It is at the Matrimandir that Ruud discovers the "soul-qualities" which make it the heart of the divine manifestation. We are reminded of the Mother's Message:

"The Matrimandir will be the soul of Auroville. The sooner it is there, the better it will be for everybody and especially for Aurovilians."

This essay contains an expression of empowerment which comes through the work at Matrimandir. The spiritual reality of the physical work unfolds with each phase of construction.

...the excavation of a vast crater ten meters deep, or the reaching into the collective unconscious, or both;...the construction of the four pillars back up to zero level,... We are once again at the same level, but we feel enriched with the experience.



Digging the foundation of Matrimandir in 1971. (Matrimandir All India Press, Pondicherry, 1977.)

We are at zero level with Ruud as the third essay, “**Matrimandir**,” 1978, begins with the disappointment of not having completed the construction for Mother’s Centenary. Ruud asks the question, “When will the Inner Chamber start **functioning**?” He goes on to write a love letter:

I am in love with Matrimandir, that's all, and therefore like all true lovers I am blind; I see only Matrimandir and I see everything through the eyes of Matrimandir, and what does not fit into (my idea) of Matrimandir I reject... I see it as an enormous privilege to be allowed to work at Matrimandir and I fully realize that it is not I who have chosen to be here but Mother who has called me from far off places to be here and work and discover... On a certain day I could not see myself staying in Holland any longer... That was the 2 1st February, 1971, Mother's birthday, and it was also the day the first stone was laid at Matrimandir... I asked Mother for permission to become an Aurovilian. Upon reading my application form, which stated my work preference as Matrimandir, she said, “Tres bien!” and it has always been tres bien for me.

Nothing occurs by chance in Ruud's yoga. Everything which happens can be seen in the work on Matrimandir. He is totally identified with the construction.

It was once shown to me while standing at the Samadhi of Sri Aurobindo, how Matrimandir and my own being coincide... The topmost ring of the sphere, where the sun's rays are caught and sent down to the crystal in the Inner Chamber, was the top of my head, the crystal itself was the psychic being located behind the heart, and the ray was the subtle silver thread linking the centres.

The essay grows in depth and insight as Ruud reads the Matrimandir for us. He becomes the spiritual teacher as he takes us from one level to the next until we reach the physical presence of the universal Mother. Through various images of Matrimandir he makes aspects of consciousness available to us. His interpretation of the four pillars of Matrimandir, Maheshwari, Mahakali, Mahalakshmi, and Mahasarasvati is the soul of this book.

*I am in love
with Matrimandir, that's all,
and therefore like all true lovers
I am blind*

Knowing all too well the conflicting tendencies of man and nature to get stuck in one of these four aspects of the Mother, Ruud asks Matrimandir: “Where do the powers meet and create unity?” Matrimandir does not give one point as an answer. Rather we must seek on all the different levels of the structure, to find where the four powers join together in supporting the Inner Chamber.

Before we cast the footings of the pillars we laid an enormous net of thick steel rods to tie the feet of the pillars together. On top of the pillars... there is the bottom layer of the sphere bending the four powers together and forming the basic ring of the globe... Two metres higher we find the second slab of Matrimandir, the point from which the

ramps start, again joining the four ribs to the central ring... Then, on the level of the chamber floor once again the ribs reach out their arms towards each other in the form of long cantilevered brackets which also support the floor of the chamber. On top of that meeting point will rest the Crystal. Yet one last time the four powers meet: right on top of Matrimandir is the point where the sunlight will be focussed on the Crystal, some 15 metres below it. The top ring provides the final balance, structurally as well as psychologically or spiritually, for the four movements which started deep underground... a third dimension must be added... the central vertical axis which connects Earth and Heaven along which fall the several junctures of contact between the four ribs, we find symbolized the various levels of consciousness on which an integration is possible.

*One also sees how
a collective should be run...
One is together around the Crystal the
Spark, the Soul in silence, listening,
integrating, receiving and then
manifesting what has been received.*

Once we have perceived unity on the physical plane we can seek it on the subtle levels of consciousness. Ruud has the perception that Matrimandir represents the body of the universal Mother, teaching us how to unify our being. All the body chakras are symbolically present except for the mind-centers. Ruud points out that there is a new path revealed to us when we look at the structure through the system of body chakras:

One of the most interesting symbolisms of Matrimandir is that the mind-centers are not found; the whole space has been taken up by the psychic chamber. But the Ajna chakra, which commands thought, will, vision, can be clearly seen in the optical device which catches the sun's rays and sends them down the Crystal. And finally the crown, which is the place of passage between the **body**-consciousness with all it contains of mind and life and the higher being above the body. It is there that the two consciousnesses begin to meet. And then we move into the higher spaces above and around Matrimandir... as Sri Aurobindo says “The supramental is not organized in the body, so there is no separate center for it, but all that comes from above the mind uses the sahasrara for it.

Ruud warns us that Matrimandir does not simplify things for us. Rather it multiplies them and even confuses us. The only way out is to jump into the fourth dimension... The Inner Chamber.

The Inner Chamber is not just a room, it is a space in the fourth dimension... where all the other parts and planes of the being can reflect a variegated unity and in which all the other centers of consciousness can be integrated.

We are told that this leap into the fourth dimension is a dramatic change of consciousness. Mother tells us that “thinking of things” is not consciousness at all. We must be totally lucid, speechless. “The true peace is neither inertia nor immobility,” she says.

One can begin to understand why the Inner Chamber is also called the Hall of Silence... One also sees how a collective should be run... One is together around the Crystal the Spark, the Soul in silence, listening, integrating, receiving and then manifesting what has been received.

The beginning point of our transformation is our entrance into the Inner Chamber. We are at that moment in the spiritual consciousness and the descending force can enter our being. The ray of sun pouring down into the Crystal is now the potent symbol. It can show us the way into the supramental consciousness.

The Crystal stands out as the focussing point in this new dimension: pure, translucent, solemn, immobile, inviting, smiling. We have found a point of rest, we can sit down in awe and be at peace and concentrate.

The way is clear, crystal-clear, sun clear. Now one has only to become a receptacle of the Light and the Warmth. The sun is the supermind, the symbol of that link-world in heaven.

And the Matrimandir is the vehicle which will carry man into the new age.

... providing all the indications and mechanisms to operate consciously the great mutation. Matrimandir is the symbol, the witness, and the prime mover of this Mystery of Mutation of the coming age.

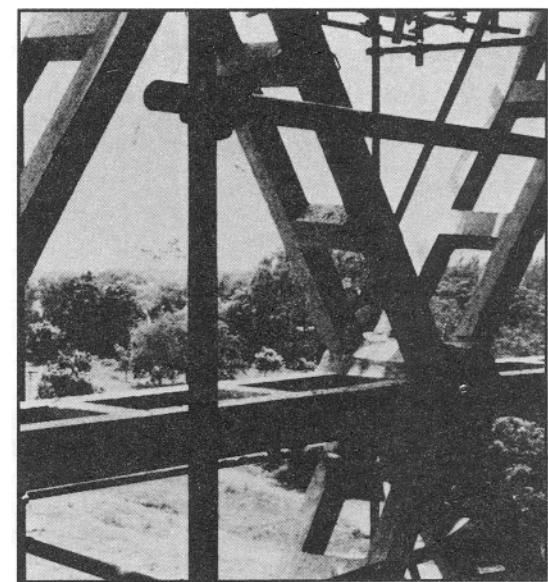
*The way is clear, crystal-clear, sun clear.
Now one has only to become a receptacle
of the Light and the Warmth.
The sun is the supermind,
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"The Fantastic Materialism of the Fantastic Matter" will be familiar to some disciples and Aurovilians. Written in 1981, it was published in the *Auroville Review*, Summer/Fall 1982. Here Ruud answers the question of an old friend who is passing through on a business trip from France. His friend wishes to know how he could still be in Auroville working on the Matrimandir.

Well it's quite simple, I replied. It still satisfies me fully, everyday; it gives me fulfillment. It is the place where I am totally at home, totally happy, and where I don't want to leave even for a moment.

Ruud goes on to relate the conversation he has with his friend who feels that the first and second anchors of the supramental consciousness have left earth. That the psychic materialization of the first supramental being did not occur and a new attempt is needed. All this leads Ruud to the inner conviction that Matrimandir is the third anchor.

That precisely is the point, a big, concrete-and-golden point in matter, on the Earth, where it has a hold, where the flow through, the transformation, takes place. We don't really know what it is, we don't understand fully what we're building, but for myself I call it the 'transformer.' It's the third step.



Looking at the gardens through the Matrimandir's outer structure.

Gordon Korstange, 1985.

In this essay we witness the interaction of the theologian and the spiritual novice. This visit from a man in the outer world brings Ruud face to face with his religious past. He has a dream that expresses how this past has become integrated into his realization that the Matrimandir is pure matter being divinized.

Last night I dreamt that I was in the Mother's room... when I went toward her to merge into her, she pointed to a door in her room which stood open, and through it I looked straight into the upper chamber of the Matrimandir. "Enter there," she said. "This is my body."

Ruud believes that man is materializing matter. And Matrimandir is one first cell that is being transformed into the stream of consciousness.

The beginning of the transformation is the peeling off of all the layers of ideas, and ideals, of feelings and convictions, of habits and behaviour patterns, in order to let matter be matter, the body be the body, the cells the cells, in a free flow, in a direct communication.

The Matrimandir is the womb which we enter to be reborn into the world of spiritualized matter. Going into the Inner Chamber represents the process of interiorization. It is a place of silence and concentration. Matrimandir is involved in the world of the soul, the fourth dimension. Even the dimensions of this room are a symbol of this inside-out consciousness where we are restored to the wholeness of a pure white light.

The final essay is dated 1985. "A House For The Third Millennium" is a vision of the inauguration of Matrimandir. It describes the consciousness which lives in that house.

There was the great golden sphere, but rather vague, and there were hundreds of people flocking towards it. The forms were not explicit; more prominent was the certain knowledge that it was the year two-thousand, February 21, 2000.

Each great Age had its great building. In the next millennium evolution may well more passively work out human-after-human, the new intermediate creatures, and it is one more master stroke in the Divine's Play that the House of that Being will stand manifest in all its glory right at the beginning of the next age.

*He and She, everywhere.
Good for them; but what about
this tiny bubble 'me' floating somewhere
in the mighty world-seas?*

Thus we enter the House with the sense of the divine play. The humor of divine paradoxes and the love which unifies man with his soul can be found throughout this essay. Ruud turns to Sri Aurobindo and Mother to teach us that matter is divine and to understand how Matrimandir expresses the truth of the unification of spirit and matter. He points out that in *The Life Divine* and *Savitri*, Sri Aurobindo insists that we surrender to the "Mother-Creator," because to do so takes us into "realms of an unknown and almost unbearable splendor." Veils have been lifted, the spiritual seeker has tracked the mystic secrets into the Inner Chamber and the sun has sent its single ray down through the body.

Working at Matrimandir for the last fourteen years I have thought I wanted only one thing in life, one thing which is three: The transformation of the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and Mother; the psychic, the spiritual, and the supramental transformation. But having a closer look at Matrimandir . . . the perspective is slowly changing. To hell with all transformations . . . Having, in this boundless light another look at Matrimandir, it reveals itself as "the Lover's everlasting Yes."

Ruud says Yes with all his being. He asks, "Where do I find Her, my Beloved?" He sees, like others, that the Divine is illusive. Sometimes there are only glimpses, but then he realizes that there "IS NOTHING ELSE." There is only the play of Savitri, of HE and SHE.

He and She, everywhere. Good for them; but what about this tiny bubble 'me' floating somewhere in the mighty world-seas? At nine in the morning I climb the structure of

Matrimandir to place one more beam in the outer shell, or bend a few more rods of steel, or add more shutterings of wood or cast some more concrete or write more letters to raise funds . . . What's so great about it? . . . It is not when Matrimandir is ready that She will move in in some subtle or supramental form and inhabit it as a queen adored by her subjects. It is rather all the perspiration, all the aspiration, all the physical work, all the designs, all the money, all the steel, all the concrete, all the shapes and spirals and curves of the building that is He and She. There is nothing else. All is either He or She, or when fulfilled in love, both.

The vision of the Matrimandir as the "Chamber of Their play of Love" is the last secret to be revealed through Ruud's reading of the Matrimandir. The key to this insight is total surrender to the creative Force and a "big jump into the playful consciousness . . . where rapture and joy and love are the means of transmutation, of transformation." After this the only question is how much of this Love can we absorb? He reminds us of Mother's vision of the all pulsating love which kept expanding and expanding.

And it is the same thing: The Crystal bathing in the light of the sun and the physical Mother stretched out on her reclining chair.

It is only a matter of being open to that embrace because it is always there. The Presence and the continual outpouring of love never ceases.

To become the pure Crystal without even one bubble of ego, and simultaneously be, feel, live the Ray.

Here are the secrets of the work of Sri Aurobindo, Mother, and the symbols of Matrimandir. This book tells us very simply that we have only to identify with the manifestation of Divine Love on Earth "in greater intensity, more physically, more thoroughly, more lovingly." Ruud reaches deep into our hearts and fills our bodies with an intensely joyous experience.

(*A House For the Third Millennium* will be available soon through Matagiri Books, High Falls, NY.)



*Mother in her
reclining chair*

Champaklal's Darshan at Matrimandir

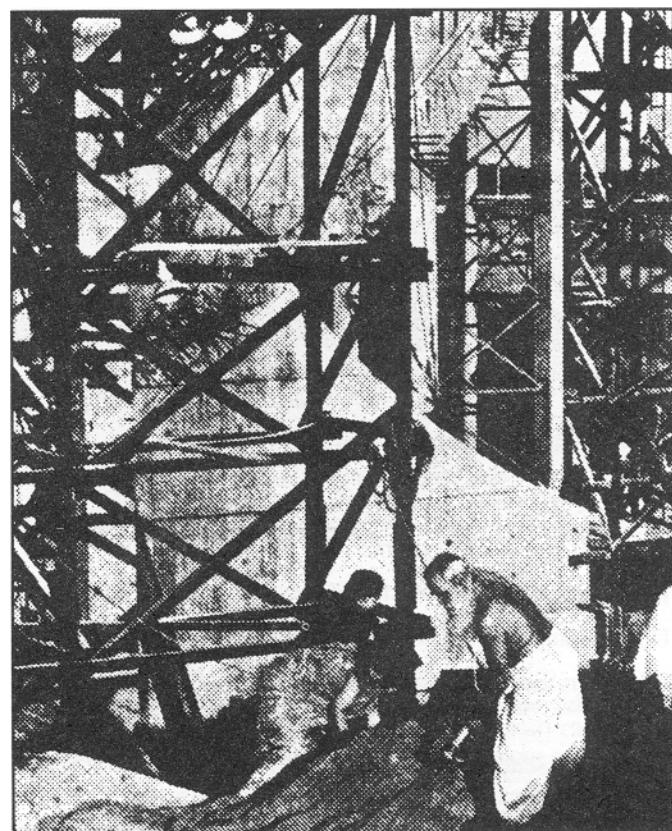
On January 7, 1986 Champaklal visited the Matrimandir and went to the Inner Chamber. When he came down he wrote a few words: "pure gold everywhere." Later, on Auroville's birthday, he wrote this description of what he had seen. It has already been published in the May 1986 Matrimandir Newsletter. We felt that it would be appropriate to publish it in this issue along with Ruud's work on Matrimandir.

As soon as I stepped in, she saturated me. I entered an altogether different world. I had to struggle to keep my eyes open. Ultimately they got closed. The whole of Matrimandir seemed to be rolling from side to side. So I opened my eyes and saw that Matrimandir was steady, but again as I shut my eyes, Matrimandir appeared to be tossing and turning like before. Once more I opened my eyes and found that it was stable. This happened three times. I don't recollect when actually it ceased tumbling. Later it started whirling slowly like a merry-go-round. Suddenly it was spinning very fast. Then its pace slowed down and it began to plunge down, deep down in the abyss. Finally when it got settled, a marvellous figure was seen. As soon as it touched Matrimandir, I do not know what happened but I felt that I was back to my original place inside the Matrimandir.

Now the walls of Matrimandir were transparent and luminous. Then gradually they were interchanging their colours many times. Eventually they appeared to be translucent, brilliant and resplendent golden colour. I could see very vividly far off objects on all sides, all in one expansive gaze. It was a fantastic sight! Around Matrimandir, up to a certain distance, there were different kinds of beautiful, bright and fascinating flowers and plants of varied colours and hues, never seen before. Behind them were numerous trees of various kinds. Many of them were adorned with lovely, glistening blossoms while many were of lustrous colours. Beyond them, very very far, there was a vast open space in the midst of which shone an exquisite, radiant and magnificent throne of superb workmanship and golden glow . . .

My eyes turned again to the throne and I saw that the golden light was continuously emanating from it. It seemed that the Mother was seated there in her golden translucent body. Again it appeared that Sri Aurobindo was there. In between, time and again was seen an incredible vision of the two in one body. It seemed to be a transparent body but I could not comprehend how it was inside . . .

The Mother and Sri Aurobindo, two together in one body, were seen in front of each and everyone at the same time, in a benediction pose, with their right hand showering grace and love. What an indescribable scene of wonder and beatitude! Everything became quiet and peaceful. Suddenly an ear-piercing resounding victory conch was heard. Simultaneously the children were wonder-struck as their physical bodies were slowly and gradually undergoing change and they became youthful. The young people turned strong and well-built while the aged were transformed into the prime of youth. The animals and birds were released from their genetic lineage and were seen in different beautiful forms. Now it started drizzling and then pouring. The novelty of the phenomenon was that it rained in many different colours and finally in silver and gold. This view was also fascinating. Eventually the rain stopped and nothing but the golden light was visible everywhere.



Champaklal working on Matrimandir, 1975.
(Matrimandir, All India Press, Pondicherry, 1977.)

All of a sudden my glance fell on the upper portion of Matrimandir and I beheld a blazing, glorious, ravishing and golden sun covering the entire firmament! Instead of heat, it effused golden light and delightful coolness. My gaze went back to the throne and I saw everyone (men, women, children, birds, animals) standing in adoration in a posture of Namaskar (folded hands in obeissance). The marvel of this moment brought me a novel experience. It was a peerless spectacle. Everything appeared to be golden. Instantaneously a cascade of golden light from the sky poured into Matrimandir. At this time I sensed that a number of persons were sitting nearby but I could not see them clearly. I had a feeling that the golden light fell on all and penetrated inside. The whole hall was suffused with golden light. Now one would not see anything except the golden light. Suddenly Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's hand of blessing were seen caressing not only my head but everyone's. Everything became peaceful. Once again a sweet melody was heard. My eyes opened. It is just impossible to formulate in words the impact of this moment on my body. As I write this, golden Lanka of the Ramayana comes to my mind.

When I came down, saturated with Peace, Ananda, Love and Joy, a Matrimandir worker put into my hands an enlarged 20" x 24" size photo of Matrimandir. This seemed to me very interesting. It was a photo of Matrimandir in golden colour. Another person also gave me a number of other photos of Matrimandir.

Victory, Victory, Victory, to the Mother!

Touching Base Quiz

by Dave Hutchinson & Marta Belen

Once, away from the exigencies of city life, between two periods and places, we asked each other "How can we share the joy of searching within oneself, of examining the hidden recesses of one's being? Is it possible to pass this on, to kindle a spark in another, without sermonizing and without recourse to sectarian jargon?"

In this way we put together the following list of questions. Initially written for people who have never deliberately trod the path of self-examination, it may perhaps be useful for serious players also, as an index of current state. In the process of condensing the survey we saw that in addition to its purpose as an introspective tool, it also reveals much about the authors. So here we are, looking at ourselves. Who do you see?

Do you feel time? Is your experience of time static, or like a river, or a wheel, or a changing Now, or a spiral, or a changeless Now, or...?

Who will you be in 10 years'?

Do you regularly step outside of yourself? Where do you go?

Do you jump when the telephone rings?

When was the last time you laughed out loud?

How many times in conversation during the last month have you used a term such as "God" or "Supreme Being" in an **ontological** sense?

Look in a mirror for 5 full minutes. What did you do and who did you see?

Do you think there is an eternal struggle between evil and good? If yes, which do you think will win?

When was the last time you had a conversation with someone under 9 or over 90?

Do you go to sleep easily?

How often do you enter the world of nature?

Do you have a true friend?

Have you ever met a person with true wisdom? How did you know it?

Do you feel yourself to be a product of the place where you grew up (Ohio, the USA, the Deep South, etc.)?

Does your past carry you along, do your personal goals direct your steps, or are you a leaf in the ambient wind?

When was the last time you were enthusiastic? What happened?

Do you encounter large moral issues in your life on a regular basis?

How often do you sit or walk outside at night alone and look at the sky and stars?

Do you look *into* a person's eyes when you are talking together?

How many people are you? Are they all the same sex? Do they get along with each other?

The Udavi School

by Mario J. Santonastaso

Udavi is the Tamil word for help. Mother gave this name to a settlement in Auroville and asked its founder, **Nata**, to help the nearby village of Bdayanchavadi. **Nata** began by establishing what was to become Auroshikha Agarbathies, but soon realized that the help that Mother had asked him to give would have to go beyond providing work for the people of the village. Soon a nursery and a kindergarten and then a first grade and a second grade were established; and as the children were promoted, higher grades had to be established with new buildings and expanded services. The school at Udavi is now up to the eighth grade and numbers about 200 students. Plans are underway to establish a high school that will go up to the twelfth grade. The children are taught basic hygiene; they receive three meals a day and are given uniforms to wear to their classes. The plans for the high school include the building of new classrooms, a science laboratory and carpentry and pottery workshops.

My own connection with the Udavi School began when its present director, Maggi Lidchi **Grassi**, visited the United States in 1985. Maggi is the school's most energetic spokesperson and works tirelessly fundraising for Udavi. When I decided to visit the Sri Aurobindo Ashram this past summer, I knew I would be visiting Udavi to see the place Maggi had spoken so much about. What started out to be a visit became many visits and soon developed into my taking regular classes. I would travel the six miles from Pondy to Udavi on the school staff bus three times a week and teach the seventh and eighth grade science classes. Since the medium of instruction in the school is English, by the time students reach the seventh and eighth grades they are able to read, write, speak, and understand English. This made it easy for me to teach the classes; however, in spite of my having taught physics and astronomy for fifteen years at the high school and junior college levels, I didn't necessarily feel qualified to go into a village school and teach physics in a thatched hut to twelve and thirteen year old Tamil children. All these mental difficulties notwithstanding, the experience proved to be extremely rewarding and surprising.

I decided that rather than simply lecture about some topic in astronomy I would teach them exactly what I teach my high school physics students in California.

The seventh and eighth grade classes were small-about 12 students in each class-with-about an equal number of boys and girls. The students were very polite and attentive and extremely eager to learn. I decided that rather than simply lecture about some topic in astronomy I would teach them exactly what I teach my high school physics students in California. This would give them some concrete skills rather than information that they might soon forget. We began with a simple experiment on uniform and accelerated motion. In this experiment students measure the distance between the dots on a strip of paper made by a laboratory cart moving first with uniform motion and then with accelerated motion. Normally groups of two or three

students perform this experiment and obtain their own data; however, since there were no carts or recording timers available, I provided the strips of paper for each student with the dots already marked at the correct positions. Students measured the distance between the dots with metric rulers; recorded these measurements in a notebook in the form of a data table, constructed a graph and then plotted the data on the graph. Constructing a graph by simply using a ruler and a piece of paper is not an easy matter, but they were able to do this without any difficulty. Plotting their measured points was also something they were able to do easily. Their measurements and graphs were excellent and the results showed very clearly the difference between the two types of motion. The surprising thing is that all the students were able to follow my instructions without very much difficulty and they understood what is a fairly sophisticated experiment designed for older high school students. In short, the children of the Udavi School are very, very capable students.

The capacities of the students at Udavi are in no small measure due to the outstanding work of the teachers who give of themselves tirelessly to the education of the children. The accomplishments of the students in arts and crafts is noteworthy; their preparation in reading and writing English equals or exceeds that of any English medium school in India; their background in science and mathematics is excellent and their fine reports and projects on the history of India, and the rest of the world, attest to their accomplishments in history and social studies. Classical Indian dance has been taught at the school since its beginnings with about twenty five of the girls in the higher grades now taking part in the weekly dance class. There are some exceptional dancers in this class. All this is in addition to studying Tamil and Hindi as well as taking part in an expanding physical education program.

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The children at Udavi also have an excellent attitude toward learning. They are extremely motivated, interested and eager to learn. Many visitors came to Udavi while I was there and they all went away feeling there was hope for these children of a poor village. They all sensed something special was happening there. Indeed, one can see something of the dynamism of the Divine Mother at work in this school. All this does not suggest that there are no problems and needs. There is a need for funds to expand into a high school. There is a need for funds to purchase textbooks, equipment, and supplies. There will be a need for buildings to house the new high school classrooms, laboratory, and workshops. There is a need to expand the staff and provide higher salaries for the dedicated teachers there. There is a basic need to provide a more abundant and better source of water for the village. There is a need to provide modern learning materials, including a computer learning center. And at another level there will always be a need for dedicated teachers who are devoted to the ideals of the spirit.



Udavi School Children. Photo by Anie Nunnally

In addition to the incense production and the school, the Gentillesse Childrens Home at Udavi provides care for abandoned children. These children also go to the school, but live at Udavi instead of at the nearby village of Edayanchavadi where most of the school's children make their home. The Gentillesse children are indeed special for they have been given very clean and comfortable surroundings as well as an excellent education. There are now eight children being cared for at Gentillesse. While I was there a new full time homeopathic doctor had been hired to see to the needs of all the children at Udavi. Children with more serious medical problems are sent to nearby Jipmer Hospital. The medical attention doesn't stop here. When one little girl had vision problems that could not be corrected with glasses she was sent to a famous eye surgeon in a nearby city. Other cases of the special attention given to the needs of all the children of Udavi abound.

As more people from all over India and the world visit Udavi they see the uniqueness of the school and its value as a model for other villages—a local industry using some of its profits to establish schools and provide medical and other services for all the people of the village. The South Indian UNICEF representative visited Udavi and was so favorably impressed that he promised help in equipping the high school laboratory and workshops when they are built. Maggi is in the process of acquiring land adjacent to the present school that will be the home of the high school. Funds are needed for this purpose as well as for buildings. UNICEF does not provide funds for land and buildings.

If you would like to visit Udavi or work with the children as a teacher or in some other capacity, it can be arranged. If you are able to make a contribution to the high school land and building fund, any amount would be appreciated. If you can send books and other useful items, they would be appreciated. Your good will is also appreciated. If you have any further interest in Udavi you may write to Maggi Lidchi Grassi, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry 605002, India.

Reincarnation & Evolution In The Teaching of Sri Aurobindo

by John White

Editor's Note: This article is reprinted from the magazine *Reincarnation Report*.

Central to Sri Aurobindo's teaching is "the descent of the Supermind." This concept involves a spiritual evolutionary process which began only recently as the culmination of Sri Aurobindo's years of concentrated yogic effort. Eventually, he said, the Supermind will penetrate the entire human race with its power, light and truth, producing the Superman. Supermind is a previously unattained level of consciousness toward which the human race is tending as it returns to godhead. Unlike many earlier yogic endeavors, which directed people to "leap into nirvana" and thereby dissolve altogether out of the manifest universe of space-time, Sri Aurobindo sought to bring forth the divine potential of humanity in the realm of everyday life and to **embody God** in the material plane of existence. Rather than turn away from Earth and Man, he sought to transform Earth and Man.

The immense poverty and fatalism that pervades Indian culture, it has been said by various commentators, is due in large part to its spiritual heritage, which often denigrated earthly life, thereby preventing the sort of material and technological progress achieved in the West. Sri Aurobindo sought to redirect his country's impetus from a world-shunning, body-denying spirituality to one which saw God-realization as possible within earthly affairs. It will not happen overnight, he said, but in the course of our reincarnational progress, Supermind will be embodied more and more by ever-greater numbers of people. Thus the world of Matter will become pervaded by Spirit and humanity will be perfected. "It is the Supermind which links the higher and lower hemispheres of the One Existence," he said. Integral yoga is a way of speeding up immensely one's evolutionary journey through the planes of consciousness and attaining Supermanhood, the life divine.

In the course of his inspection of the entire spectrum of human experience, Sri Aurobindo examined reincarnation and gave it new meaning. He preferred to use the word "rebirth" and said in his principal book on the subject, **The Problem of Rebirth**, that it better captured the fundamental idea of the ancient doctrine.

"Birth is the first spiritual mystery of the physical universe," he wrote in **The Life Divine**, "death is the second which gives its double point of perplexity to the mystery of birth; for life, which would otherwise be a self-evident fact of existence, becomes itself a mystery by virtue of these two which seem to be its beginning and its end and yet in a thousand ways betray themselves as neither of these things, but rather intermediate stages in an occult process of life."

When one becomes aware of the continuity of existence on either side of birth and death, then the notion of a succession of individual lives becomes problematic. Either they constitute a painful and futile existence from which it is necessary to liberate yourself by dissolving the process altogether-as do yogis who attain nirvanic release-or they constitute a growth of consciousness which culminates in a **terrestrial** fulfillment. The latter, of course, was Sri Aurobindo's experience. As Satprem put it in his study, **Sri Aurobindo or The Adventure of Consciousness**, "there is an evolution, an evolution of the consciousness behind the evolution of the species and... this spiritual evolution must

end in a realization, individual and collective, on the earth."

The human being, Sri Aurobindo said, is compounded from elements of the various realms or levels of being that constitute reality. The universe has differing gradations, ranging from the lowest form of insentient physical matter through the vital/bioenergetic and then the mental to the psychic-spiritual and, finally, the Supermind (and even beyond). All these planes of being are in actuality a continuum since they are ultimately none other than forms of God, the only reality. However, their nature is such that some take more permanent forms than others.

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The physical constituents of the human being do not last beyond a single lifetime, Sir Aurobindo says. Likewise, at death, the **vital/bioenergetic** aspect of a human returns to the cosmic reservoir from which it was drawn. The mental—that which produces intellectual life and the ordinary psychological aspects of Man—may continue as part of the makeup of that which evolves from life to life, the "**psychic being**"—Aurobindo's term for soul. However, he says, the personality does not persist to any strong degree and, indeed, should not, since the evolutionary nature of life requires increasing refinement of character and intensification of consciousness, which necessarily brings change of personality, the facade or "frontal being" of the individual.

Who or what is it that evolves in consciousness, through birth after birth, and what is the goal of the evolutionary journey? Sri Aurobindo's answer: There is a supreme consciousness which has descended into matter and is gradually working itself back, through the multitude of life forms that inhabit the universe, to a state of realization of the Oneness that has been its condition all along. "The universal Man, the cosmic **Purusha** in humanity, is developing in the human race the power that has grown into humanity from [the grades of life] below it and shall yet grow to Sup&mind and Spirit and become the Godhead in man who is aware of his true and integral self and the divine universality of his nature," Sri Aurobindo says in **The Life Divine**. He continues:

"Our conception of the spirit is of something which is not constituted by name and form, but assumes various forms of body and mind according to the various manifestations of its soul-being. This it does here by a successive evolution; it evolves successive forms and successive strata of consciousness: for it is not bound always to assume one form and no other or to possess one kind of mentality which is its sole possible subjective manifestation. The soul is not bound by the formula of mental humanity: it did not begin with that and will not end with it; it had a prehuman past, it has a superhuman future."

In other words, the popular conception of "an immortal soul" is not true. All things, even souls, are evolving into greater and greater degrees of wholeness, harmony and awareness. Ultimately there cannot be a multitude of immortal souls

because the soul's perfection will be to know itself as the One, in the realization that it has been none other than God all along the evolutionary journey, but God in hiding from itself, as a playful gesture of the Supreme which chose to create the universe in the first place.

Reincarnation or rebirth, then, is not simply a process whereby certain memories, talents or personality traits are carried over from one life to the next; those are merely the more superficial and ephemeral aspects of the process. "Nature develops from stage to stage and in each stage takes up its past and transforms it into stuff of its new development." Sooner or later the human will be transcended altogether into the superhuman, whose characteristics were boldly explored and recorded in their more notable outlines by Sri Aurobindo.

The soul does not slip back into animal form once it has reached the human level, according to Sri Aurobindo, nor does it continually cross over from one gender to another, but rather tends to remain either male or female in the course of its evolution. Likewise, the departed soul generally retains memory of its past experiences only in their essence, not in their form of detail.

The process of rebirth is governed by the lawful operation of the cosmos, a many-leveled process of cause-and-effect called **karma**. But this is not a process of inexorable determinism beyond our control and from which escape is impossible. Paradoxically, karma is the very means by which release, liberation, enlightenment is possible. As Jesse Roarke comments in his biography, Sri **Aurobindo**:

"Karma, inexorable though it may be at some times and in some ways, is a part of man's evolutionary freedom; he makes his own karma, and he is continually modifying it, making it anew. Absolute freedom is not to be had short of the divine consciousness; but the more one advances, the more spiritual and less egoistic he becomes, the more freedom he has, relatively; and, as one advances from level to level, karma changes its character, and becomes less a burden and more a help and collaborator; until in the spiritual liberation one is beyond karma altogether; at least, not bound by it."

Sri Aurobindo explains it thus in **The Problem of Rebirth**:

"The idea of Karma has behind it two ideas that are its constituent factors, a law of Nature, of the energy or action of Nature, and a soul that lives under that law, puts out action into that energy and gets from it a return in accordance and measure with the character of its own **activites** . . . As is [an individual's] use of the energy, so was and will be the return of the universal energy to him now and hereafter. This is the fundamental meaning of Karma."

The conditions of one's future birth are determined at the time of death. The psychic being then chooses what it should work out in the next appearance and the conditions arrange themselves accordingly. It sloughs off the elements of the lower planes—the **material**, the vital and the mental—and passes through the subtler worlds, eventually coming to abide in its native sphere, where it rests, assimilating the life just past and preparing for the future.

When the time for rebirth comes, Roarke explains, the psychic being or soul "takes, or in more advanced cases, makes new instruments for himself, with a new personality, and descends to the plane of evolution and takes birth in a new physical body. How long he remains out of incarnation, and when and where he returns, is by no means a mechanical thing, and depends on his development, his needs, and what he is to work

out in his next life, what sort of experience he is to have for his further development; in which he may have more or less choice."

From life to life, the soul or psychic being, acting under the law of karma, grows behind the frontal being that is the personality of each lifetime. "Each life," writes Satprem, "represents then one type of experience. . . and it is by an accumulation of innumerable types of experience that slowly the psychic being acquires an individuality, stronger and stronger, more and more conscious and more vast, as if it had not really begun to exist before it had run through the whole gamut of human experience." He continues:

"And the more it grows, the more the consciousness-force individualizes itself in us, the more the psychic tension increases, pushes through, till one day it needs no longer its frontal chrysalis and springs up into full daylight. Then it can become directly aware of the world around; it becomes the master of the nature instead of being its sleeping prisoner; consciousness becomes the master of its force instead of being glued down in the force. Yoga is precisely the point of our development at which we pass from the interminable meanderings of natural evolution to an evolution that is conscious and self-directed; it is a **process of concentrated evolution**."

According to Sri Aurobindo, then, rebirth "is an inevitable logical conclusion if there exists at the same time an evolutionary principle in the Earth-Nature and a reality of the individual born into evolutionary Nature. . . It is rebirth that gives the birth of an incomplete being in a body its promise of completeness and its spiritual significance."

That completeness and significance should not be mistaken for the ego games that can be played in the name of **reincarnation**. It is not perfection of the ego that is the goal of the rebirth process, Sri Aurobindo says, but rather transcendence of the ego into the fullness and splendor of a God-conscious existence. As Roarke puts it:

"A yoga as large, complete, **difficult** and exacting as that of Sri Aurobindo may well require more than one life for its completion. In the process of rebirth nothing essential is lost, and one may take up where he left off, when the time comes. He may even make some advance on the inner, non-evolutionary planes themselves. But nevertheless the disciples of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother are urged to aspire and labor to the utmost, with the expectation or the hope or the goal of finishing now; not waiting for the next life, or entertaining an easy and too complacent reliance on the Eternal to get everything done eventually."

In concluding, it seems best to quote Sri Aurobindo once again, to give you a further taste of the inspiring vistas of soul growth awaiting through the processes described by this incredible explorer of the universe. In **The Problem of Rebirth** he says:

"Our humanity is the conscious meeting place of the finite and the infinite and to grow more and more toward that Infinite even in this physical birth is our privilege. . . To grow in knowledge, in power, in delight, love and oneness, towards the infinite light, capacity and bliss of spiritual existence, to universalise ourselves till we are one with all being, and to exceed constantly our present limited self till it opens fully to the transcendence in which the universal lives and to base upon it all our becoming, that is the full evolution of what now lives darkly wrapped or works half-evolved in Nature."

People

The joyous dedication of George Nakashima's Altar for Peace was held on New Year's Eve, December 31, 1986, at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City. Among the 5,000 attendees were members of the High Falls Sri Aurobindo Center.

Nakashima, named Sundarananda by Sri Aurobindo, started work on the Altar three years ago when he found a 300 year old 125 foot American Black Walnut tree on a Long Island estate. He dreamt that this tree would be a symbol of peace and began the project with the faith that others would help him realize his aspiration for a creative peace, free of political overtones, an expression of love for humanity.

The finished Altar is ten and one-half feet long and weighs three-quarters of a ton. It is made of two boards joined by butterfly rosewood inlays. The Altar stands in the Cathedral's nave where, Sundarananda says, "Some will lay flowers, some will sing songs, and others may simply pray," as they did on New Year's Eve with Leonard Bernstein conducting a concert which included Schubert's Mass in G, two meditations for cello by Mr. Bernstein, and Odetta singing "Amazing Grace." The Reverend James Parks Morton, Dean of the Cathedral, led a special prayer for peace.

In his earliest proposal for the project, Sundarananda expressed the vision of peace he was striving to realize:

Peace should be born as a genuine expression of nature and an act of beauty. There can be at least one small object on earth to be dedicated to Peace in a tangible form instead of an abstract idea and an absence of war. It can be a positive creative force of its own, carrying its own momentum.

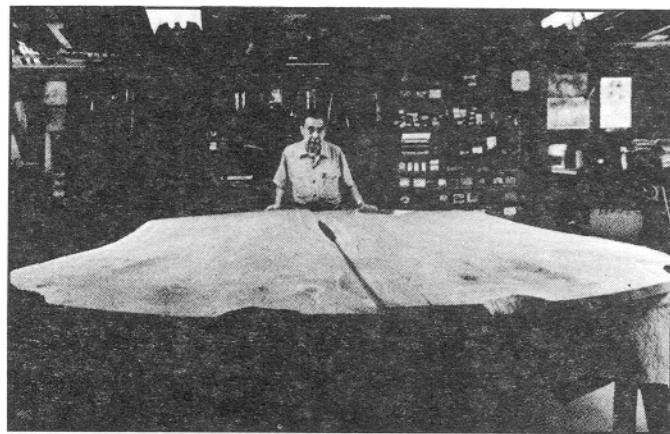
With the completion of this Altar, Sundarananda continues to dream of two more matching altars which may be offered as gifts to the Soviet Union and possibly Hiroshima.

Seyril Sochen is spending the winter in Auroville. When she returns to the U.S. in April she will move to Baca Grande, Crestone, CO, the site of a project to create a community of diverse spiritual traditions.

One of Auroville's village action program co-ordinators, **Dee DeCew**, spent six months in the U.S. to develop support for village development in and around Auroville. She began her trip in New York where her family is located and remained in the Northeast until August when, after attending AUM, she traveled across the country visiting people in the Midwest, Colorado, California, the Southwest, Texas, and Washington, D.C. She received much positive response to her slide show and talks about village work.

Since returning to Auroville in November, she has started a newsletter, **The Auroville Communicator** which describes current projects with Tamil villagers. Social workers are encouraging local people to develop their own sense of community awareness and work creatively with Auroville. There have been workshops on childcare, nutrition, and family planning, government funded schemes for reconditioning open wells, and mat and cloth weaving projects.

In addition, she reports, the "Trickle Up" projects, \$100 grants to new micro-businesses in the Auroville area, have begun with a small shopkeeper, a tailor, a used sack broker.



George Nakashima with Altar.

Finally, a Tamil Aurovillian, **Sundaranaiakam**, has become a full time member of Village Action and will be helping to bring Aurovilians and Tamilians together.

If you would like to receive the newsletter, send a contribution to cover postage to:

Co-Evolution: Auroville Village Action Group
c/o Centre-Auroville
605101 Tamil Nadu, India

Sponsored by the Merriam Hill Center and AVI-USA, **Gothandaraman** of Auroville visited the U.S. last summer and fall. During a three month stay, he attended AUM in New Hampshire and then traveled west via bus. He spent three weeks working and studying in the Arcosanti project near Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Raman returned to Auroville and his wife and new baby in November. He is again working at the Matrimandir and promises to send us impressions of his stay here.

G. Jothi of Aspiration, Auroville, arrived in the U.S. in September for one year of study at the Northfield Mount Hermon school in Massachusetts. Since then he has worked diligently at his subjects. During the Christmas vacation he was invited to visit France by the Auroville composer, **Igor. Jothi** will be traveling to California during March.

Rohit Mehta, author of many books on Sri Aurobindo's yoga, including **Dialogue With Death**, gave a talk at the Long Island home of **Advait** and **Sree Dwivedi** on November 1. There were many people from the New York area present and Sri Mehta encouraged the formation of study groups. He will visit this country again next summer. If you are interested in having him speak to your group, please contact Julian Lines at the High Falls office.

On November 15th, **David Reck**, Professor of Music at Amherst College and **Gordon Korstange** gave a South Indian vina and flute performance at the Merriam Hill Center in Greenville, New Hampshire during the culminating weekend of the Center's year-long instructional program in Organizational Energetics, a method of evaluating group process using the five elements of Chinese acupuncture.

Center News

**Integral Life Center
Sri Aurobindo Circle
Box 177H, Ashland, Missouri 65010**

You asked for information regarding the Integral Life Center. We teach **Hatha** Yoga with a spiritual emphasis two to three times a year. I am developing a regular monthly talk for the community. I plan it for at least seven times this year. I will see how it goes before further plans are set.

Our group meets weekly and we are reading *The Synthesis of Yoga*. We also produce a monthly newsletter.

Katie Walker

Ma tagiri-Mt. Tremper

Matagiri-Mt. Tremper was host to a meeting of Matagiri Sri Aurobindo Center on December 6, 1986. After a hike up the mountain, the business meeting was held, after which everyone enjoyed a communally prepared dinner. Further business was discussed during dinner.

Some physical changes have been made at Matagiri. The bank at the front of the property, which created a dangerous blind exit from the driveway, has been removed (the earth was used to enlarge the lookout area near the house). The driveway exit now has a clear view in both directions.

Another change was the removal of the breezeway roof at the back door of the house. It collapsed under the weight of wet snow and rain. A new one will be put up in the spring.

A small shop for the handmade paper has been opened in one of the buildings at Matagiri and is doing very well. While it is small, it is large enough to show off to advantage the gorgeous marbled and other handmade paper and gift items from the Ashram and the marbled silks. A larger shop, or gallery, is being considered for the possibility of showing art work as well as other products from the Ashram and Auroville.

Matagiri will host the darshan gathering for Mother's birthday, Saturday, February 21, 1987. Anyone wishing to attend should call 914-679-8322 or write Matagiri, Mt. Tremper, NY 12457, for further details.

**Sri Aurobindo Circle
Tucson, AZ**

Above all, the Sri Aurobindo Circle of Tucson is a testament to the transcendence of spirit over personality. The four people who constitute our enduring membership are so different from each other that only the overarching and compelling vision of

Sri Aurobindo could unite us. Through the months we have puzzled out many passages in the *Synthesis*, spreading our wings to test the open air. We have soared in unison-and collided on more than one occasion.

At its inception there were a few others who had different goals in mind for a study group. Some wanted to simply read from Sri Aurobindo as one reads from scripture, without question or discussion. Others had in mind a continued comparison among all the teachers and religions of the world. The general consensus and the ongoing focus, however, has been to seek to explore Sri Aurobindo's Yoga *as* a group, using all the tools available to us. We read crucial sections verbatim, present synopses, relate sections to the Mother's teachings, validate with personal experience, meditate upon passages from Savitri.

In the beginning we tried to set specific time limits for the weekly meeting-two hours-but gradually the evenings began to lengthen as people increasingly opened up, to the point where we now spend three or four hours together. The group began in January 1986, after Dave H. placed furtive notes in all 30 volumes of the SABCL and the 15 of the Mother's Collected Works of the university library. He had tried to find people before through conventional notices on bulletin boards and in local publications, but without success.

At this point the group is well-balanced between two who are familiar with most of the writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother (Steve and Dave) and two who are relatively new to this yoga (Sandra and Paul). Hence authority has not rested with a single person. Some of the other interests of the members involve Feldenkrais bodywork (Steve), Buddhism (Paul), alternative healing (Sandra). No one of the group has been to Auroville. Although we have become very close through our shared endeavor, we are **open** to new members at any time.

Steve Streeter
1201 N. Belvedere
Tucson, AZ 85712
602-795-2968

Dave, Sandra, Paul, and Steve

**Sri Aurobindo Center
High Falls, NY**

We are grateful for the kind words from those who are renewing their subscriptions and making tax-deductible donations. Each gesture of support makes such a difference, since we rely on contributions to close the gap in our deficit. While we receive income from books and incense sales and aspire for greater self-sufficiency, so much of our work is service oriented and can only continue with your 6 lp. A strong vision for the future work of our Center is evolving and your participation is welcome. Please contact the Center for more information.

If you would like to introduce a friend to our work, back issues of *Collaboration* and introductory booklists can be sent. Please provide us with the names and addresses and we will do the rest.

Winter will be focused on completing our 1987-88 book list. We **hope** to supply a limited number of 1987 Calendars from the Ashram and a number of new titles which will be featured in the Spring issue. Please renew your subscription. Bonne Annee!

