

# Collaboration

Summer 2007

Journal of the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother

Vol. 32, No. 1



**'Psychic Aspiration'**

- Seyril Schochen's "A movement is abroad"
  - Narad on the Matrimandir Gardens
- Richard Pearson on the hibiscus flowers of Auroville
- Shyam Kumari on the significance of flowers, and flower vignettes
  - Current affairs • AV almanac
  - Source material • Poetry • Apropos



### About the cover

The Mother gave this ixora flower (*Ixora chinensis*) the significance, "Psychic aspiration—Constant, regular, organized, gentle and patient at the same time, resists all opposition, overcomes all difficulties." (Photo by Miresh)

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## From the office of Collaboration

In this issue we focus on the world of plants and flowers, with special emphasis on the Matrimandir Gardens, which are now undergoing rapid and steady development as the Matrimandir structure nears completion. After having selected the theme, I met with Narad to see whether he would contribute an article about the gardens and he readily agreed. After telling me about his involvement with the Gardens, he showed me a print-out of a talk he had done about a year earlier to the Matrimandir Gardens' workers to see if it was suitable. It seemed perfect as it gave a wonderful history and conveys how much work—the work of a lifetime—has gone into preparing for the Gardens, which are just beginning to manifest. It also touches on other aspects of his life such as his interests and work with the Om Choirs and with *Savitri*. He later wrote a postscript to the talk describing the recent work on the Gardens and some of its future needs.

I will add that Narad invited me to join with a group of Ashram-connected people who are working on the Gardens Sunday mornings to learn first-hand the nature of the work and the collaborative effort that is ongoing. It was a wonderful experience which I continued for a number of weeks and is one which others are invited to join.

During this time I heard that Richard Pearson had given a wonderful talk at Savitri Bhavan in Auroville about flowers. I was able to get a recording of the talk, and transcribed it. I was delighted to learn that it was focused on the flowers that the Mother had chosen for the Matrimandir Gardens! While the talk was very lucid and well-presented from the start, Richard did a wonderful job of revising, expanding, clarifying and polishing. The result is a remarkable record of his work with the Mother in selecting the central flowers for the 12 gardens that will surround the Matrimandir. It was the perfect companion to the talk by Narad.

It was Shyam Kumari, a great support in my work for *Collaboration*, who first suggested to me the theme of flowers and plants for the issue. She offered to contribute some pieces of her own and made other suggestions. She located an essay that she had written on the spiritual significances of flowers, and then selected some stories relating to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother regarding flowers and plants that she had written for her series of 'Vignettes' books, including a long one on the Service Tree that stands over the Samadhi, and another about the Banyan Tree at the center of Auroville.

We start out our issue in 'Current Affairs' with several articles concerning the recent passing of Seyril Schochen, who founded the Sri Aurobindo Learning Center in Colorado. We also include a brief article about the passing of Bina Chaudhuri, who since her husband's passing in 1975, directed the Cultural Integration Fellowship in San Francisco.

In 'Chronicles' we include a published article written by Seyril in the 1970s and now out of print. It concerns her turning to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and her coming to the Ashram and Auroville, and powerfully conveys the deeper significance of this adventure in which we are all participating. This article has been edited to meet *Collaboration's* style conventions, which included adding references for the quoted material. However, several brief quotes of only a few words length were not referenced, and two longer ones could not be located.

In 'Source Material,' we have included a conversation with the Mother about the psychic nature of flowers, and a second conversation on the five attributes of 'Psychological Perfection,' a name she had given to the five-petaled plumeria flower. In 'Auroville Almanac' we have a touching and encouraging report about a new collaborative learning and cultural center that has started for Auroville villagers. You will also find an enchanting selection of poetry about flowers and nature, 'Apropos' quotes, many of which are related to our theme, and plenty of beautiful photos.

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**About SAA:** The Sri Aurobindo Association distributes information about Sri Aurobindo, the Mother, and Auroville and supports various projects related to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Auroville, and Integral Yoga activities in America. Current officers: Theresa Boschert, coordinator; Kalpana Patel, treasurer; Chandresh Patel, secretary.

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## Current affairs

### The passing of Seyril Schochen

by Julian Lines

**S**eyril Schochen—playwright, Matrimandir worker, founder of Savitri House and Sri Aurobindo Learning Center near Crestone, Colorado, Advisor to International Yoga College, and radiant being—passed away at her home on 12 December 2006 at the age of 91. Seyril passed while listening to Mother's *Prayers and Meditations*. Part of her ashes will remain in the Baca and part will come to Auroville.

It was through Marjorie Spalding that Seyril found out about Sri Aurobindo, the Mother, and Auroville. Marjorie lived on 88th Street and Park Avenue in New York City and had been reading Sri Aurobindo for years. Seyril lived nearby and they met.

Unlike others who may have been content to read and observe from afar, Seyril picked up and went to live in Auroville, first at Matrimandir and later with her friend, Eleanor, at Verite. Jack Alexander tells the charming story of her early days at the Worker's Camp greeting him in the morning with her radiant smile while brushing her teeth and saying, "Truoooth"!

While older in years, she was always younger in spirit, constantly putting forward her dream of an ocean-going university of young people who would travel to Auroville by sea. A great lover of Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*, among her favorite lines were these:

And laughter of the heart's sweetness and delight  
Freed from the rude and tragic hold of Time,  
And beauty and the rhythmic feet of the hours. (p. 279)

She was dramatic in nature and wrote a number of plays, some of which were read during the All-USA Meetings. In her early years, she was included in an anthology of the best one-act plays of 1939. In our circle, it was her play about Nishta, the daughter of President Woodrow Wilson, who came to live at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, that was the most popular.

Seyril spent her last years living in Crestone, Colorado, where Maurice and Hanne Strong had founded a community linking many faith traditions. June Maher and Rod Hemsell were among those who were closely connected to her work in Colorado. June remembered that over the many years she knew her, she never heard Seyril speak ill of anyone.

Seyril was fortunate to have Suzanne handle her correspondence and outreach and Pavita to look after her during her last months when she was bedridden and on oxygen. The Sri Aurobindo Learning Center, which Seyril founded, will continue on its mission.

Even to the last, Seyril was full of enthusiasm and dedicated to the Matrimandir. It was her custom to send a birthday greeting informing the person that a donation was being made in their name to Matrimandir. Hopefully this tradition will be carried on in her memory.

Seyril is survived by her son, Dr. Peter Rubin, as well as grandchildren and great-grandchildren.



Seyril at the All-USA Meeting in 1995.

(Photo by Julian Lines)

### In the arms of Mother's Grace

by Seyril Schochen

*This letter was written to the editor of Collaboration for publication several months before her passing.*

This is a thank you letter to all my fellow comrades on the journey to a transformed consciousness, the supramental, with my loving gratitude. We have gone in different ways, but always with an intense aspiration to find and live "the life divine." Now I sit in the Sri Aurobindo Learning Center, established at the foot of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, with Pavita, my co-director and an early Aurovilian, reviewing the joyous Force that brought us here. As I look out at the fantastically beautiful Rocky Mountains, I marvel at how Mother brought this about.

Years ago, when I was still living in New York City, a Power had guided me to Pondicherry and to Her, on a 28-day round trip ticket from New York to India. In the Ashram, She called me to Her and told me three things. About the symposium on Auroville which I had organized at New York University, She said it was "a very good work." The second was about my inner state of being. And the third was "You will be here for a very long time." The 28 days became nine years. When Mother talked to me, I felt so safe and blessed; her Presence was an indescribable ambience of joy.

Nine years later in Auroville, while living at Peace Camp, working on the Matrimandir, I received a cablegram from my



father in Ohio saying my mother was dying and that I should come home at once. At the time I had been called to Auroville, I was a playwright living in Manhattan, married, with a son in medical school and a husband on the NYU faculty. When I stayed on in Auroville I was disinherited by my parents. But when the message came from my father in Cleveland, I immediately gathered all my books about Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, and with a minimum of personal belongings, took a flight back to America. I cared for my mother in her last days during which we were reconciled. To my amazement, when my mother's will was read, the estate had been left to my sisters and me. It was that money which would enable me to start a Sri Aurobindo Learning Center, but where?

In 1986, after some amazing happenings, I was living in Boulder, Colorado, and encountered Hanne Strong, whom I had met in India. Hanne was then with the United Nations, visiting communities dedicated to human unity. When she came to Auroville, we met on the Matrimandir, and she told me that if I ever returned to the U.S., she would help me find a place for the Center.

Mother's Grace, and the inheritance restored when I returned to Ohio to care for my mother, allowed me to buy this unusual, many-windowed house, and to build the Savitri Solar Dome adjoining it. We also received a State of Colorado charter for the Sri Aurobindo Learning Center as a tax-exempt educational organization. On the grounds of the Center, overlooked by the magnificent mountains, we now have two residences and a meditation dome.

Savitri House, my home after leaving India, with its large meditation room, has hosted many presentations honoring the work of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. A few steps up the path is the Savitri Solar Dome, site of Rod Hemsell's Savitri Immersion Workshop every August. Mother and Sri Aurobindo feel very close to us in the Dome as Rod reads *Savitri* and we sit in a circle listening, with summer breezes blowing gently through open doors. With a great deal of help from Mother's dedicated volunteers, Solar Bridge is nearly completed, a calm and comfortable retreat and guesthouse.

Over the years, six Global Village Conferences and an AUM Conference have brought devotees to Crestone from all over the world. Speakers like Devan Nair, former President of Singapore, John Robert Cornell, and Savitra have come to the Learning Center to transmit their knowledge and love of the work. The magical paintings and presence of Marika Popovits are an integral part of our Center and communicate her deep love for *Savitri*. From time to time, sacred dances have filled the Dome with joyous movement and devotional music, various topics from *Mother's Agenda* have been the subject of a lively discussion group at Savitri House, and presently a group meets each Tuesday evening to read *Savitri* and meditate.

I have been in correspondence with many beloved Aurovilians who worked with me on the Matrimandir. Each letter received is a joy and floods my sunny room with happy recollections.

There are so many friends I want to thank, and if I forget someone, it is no measure of my love. First of all, my son Peter, for his excellent recordings from *Savitri*. And I am deeply grateful to

June Maher for her dedicated work for Auroville and our many shared memories. Thank you to Dakshina and Vishnu at Auroville, who have faithfully honored my requests for books over the years. Thanks to Sam Spanier and Eric Hughes, and Julian and Wendy Lines, at Matagiri for providing me refuge and having a great library of Sri Aurobindo's and Mother's work when I wanted to escape from Manhattan, and to Wendy for dancing and teaching hatha yoga at Savitri House. And thanks to Suzanne MacGregor for her loyal and loving service to the Mother at Savitri House over the years. Thank you Constance for your inspiring letters—I have saved them all. And thank you to Pavita for reading *Prayers and Meditations* with me every night.

As I sit here in Savitri House, thinking of the past and the future, I am reminded it has been a long journey towards the City of Dawn. Certain aspects make it clear that I was being guided every step of the way, through mistakes, difficulties, painful and joyful experiences, towards a new consciousness. "A Movement is Abroad," which follows [on page 8], a reprint from *The Golden Bridge*, is the story of my journey.

This concludes my letter of gratitude to so many beloved companions along the way.

With all my love . . .

Seyril

## The Seyril Schochen Memorial Fund

by Pavita Decorah

For over 20 years, Seyril lived at Savitri House, where she established the Sri Aurobindo Learning Center (SALC) and worked tirelessly for the vision of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. From responses in the U.S. and India, we have learned how widely appreciated Seyril was for her encouragement and mentoring in the Integral Yoga, and how well loved. She has left the legacy of Savitri House, with its wonderful library and meeting room; Solar Dome, where the Savitri Immersion is held each summer by Rod Hemsell, and where we meditate in the luminous presence of our beloved gurus; and Solar Bridge, a retreat house begun by Seyril and completed by generous donations of money and work. Two collective gardens promise delicious fruits and vegetables.

We live within the embrace of the incomparable Sangre de Cristo mountains with an auspicious living legacy: like Seyril, the Sri Aurobindo Learning Center looks eagerly toward the future, with complete faith in Mother and Sri Aurobindo. The only difficulty we foresee is economic: Seyril was SALC's sole support. We have only enough money to carry us through until spring. By that time, devotees will be welcome to bask in the Colorado sunshine and enjoy the comfort and quiet of Solar Bridge, with its amazing view of the nearby mountains. And a guest room/ study will be ready at Savitri House. However, with utilities and taxes,



our expenses are approximately \$2000 a month.

We have many needs: repair of the deck and solarium roof at Savitri House, seed for the gardens, beds for the guest room, a replacement for the antique computer, etc.

Immediately after the funeral, SALC received a donation to begin the Seyril Schochen Memorial Fund. Hopefully, the Fund will grow with contributions from the Learning Center's many visitors, and from devotees of Mother and Sri Aurobindo all over the world who want to further their work in America. Our address is Sri Aurobindo Learning Center, PO Box 88, Crestone, CO 81131.

We remember Seyril with so much affection, and turn toward the future with a fervent prayer. At Savitri House, Seyril placed a very large picture of Mother smiling, which reminds us to be grateful and confident. We know everything is possible, under the Mother's smile.

## The passing of Bina Chaudhuri

*by Chandresh Patel*

Bina Chaudhuri, the co-founder with her late husband Haridas Chaudhuri of the Cultural Integration Fellowship (CIF) in San Francisco, and its educational branch which eventually became the California Institute of Integral Studies, passed away on 27 December 2006 in peace among family and a few friends. She had suffered a stroke several days earlier. Since her husband's passing in 1975, Bina-di had continued to direct the work of CIF to integrate Eastern and Western cultures.

The center has been important in bringing many persons together with interests in philosophy, psychology, and spirituality, especially during its regular Sunday morning program of talks. It also has held various classes, and has been the site for many cultural events. It served as an Ashram and center for individuals who were students and disciples of her husband, as well as those of the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

Bina-di was always content and smiling whenever I met her at CIF. She made it a point to invite the South Bay Integral Yoga group members to all events at CIF. She had wanted more of the Integral Yoga connected people to come and participate and to give talks or programs at CIF.

She was very happy when a few years back a meditation room was established in the center and dedicated for silent contemplation. I always felt a peaceful atmosphere in the main lecture hall. The few potlucks and annual events that I had participated in were very well represented by the friends of CIF from around the North Bay.

This year we saw several stalwarts in the yoga journey into the Beyond. But their memories stay and give us an understanding of the varied sunlit treks taken by these marathoners of Light.

## AV almanac

### Thamarai Learning and Cultural Center

#### A project of the Auroville Village Action Group under the Mohanam-Svaram Trust

*by the Thamarai Team: Bridget Horkan, Kathy Walkling, Raji Soundari, and Thulasi Arunachalam*

**T**hamarai is the name given to the learning and cultural center in Edayanchavady Village—a gateway village into the township of Auroville. Thamarai is also the Tamil word for lotus, and this is a symbol inspiring the work to foster the emergence of the women, children and families of this village.

#### Origins of the project

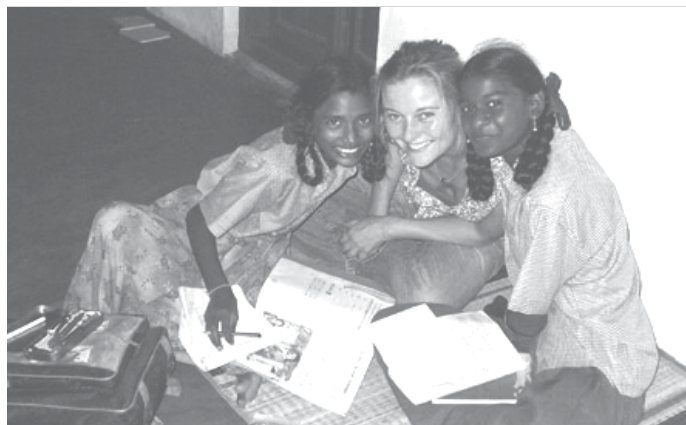
The idea to start a project to build bridges of understanding and relationship between Auroville and Edayanchavady came from the residents of neighboring Adventure community in the beginning of 2006. Very quickly, from this seed idea, the inspiration grew and resources flowed. Our team expanded to include a few women who grew up in the village and were now in Auroville, and before we could precisely think about what we wanted to do, we had a house—a beautiful traditional Tamil house (130 years old) available to us to rent, and a donor, prepared to give the costs for the full renovations and help with rent. We launched in, trusting these signs that this seed wanted to grow and the details would unfold. Renovations began in June 2006.

#### Development of the project

During the time when the renovations were taking place, we began our work to come into deeper contact with the village. Initially our main interest was to work with women, and we made contact with the leaders and then many of the members of the self-help women's group in the village. (These are government savings-scheme groups of which there are about 400 participating women.) We shared the idea of creating a place for collaborative learning and culture in the village and began to exchange ideas. We also conducted a number of experiential workshops with the women to get to know them better and to start to build a sense of trust and confidence.

The ideas that grew out of these exploratory sessions included to start a crèche and to have a tuition program for children—the women were very concerned for the quality of education for their children. They were also very concerned with primary





*A volunteer coaching children. (Photo courtesy the Thamarai Team)*

health care and sanitation in the village and this led to the idea to include classes on environmental awareness, food safety in the home and personal health care.

At a certain point in our visioning phase, a few youth from the village begun to approach us and we soon realized that here was another group, highly motivated, with a strong wish to help the village as well as develop themselves. Meetings with an increasing number of these youth led us to expand our concept to include education programs for them.

By the time we were ready to open in November, we had conceived of a program for the coming months that included:

- A daily crèche (we preferred to call it a play group)
- Daily classes addressing the interests of women and youth to include health awareness, skills training such as kneedlework, conversational English, and yoga and martial arts
- A night school which was intended as a place for school children to receive extra help with their homework and coaching in studies from voluntary staff after school
- Special programs for children
- A library and quiet room open to all

### Thamarai is inaugurated 12 November 2007

Monsoon may not have turned out to be the most auspicious time to open, yet we managed to find a sunny enough Sunday to open after renovations were completed on 12 November 2006.

About 300 villagers, Aurovilians and guests packed into the house for the afternoon opening program which included song and dance offered by Auroville women's groups, Life Education Centre, Mohanam Cultural Centre and villagers. Meenakshi graciously hosted the events and the atmosphere was celebratory and joyful. We were off to a festive start!

### Thamarai begins functioning

The day after opening we began running programs. The play group was immediately full and our teacher was assisted by moth-

ers in helping the 16 new children settle in to the new environment. We have been thankful to receive donations of toys and equipment and the input of people trained in early childhood care to develop this program

The night school also began with over 100 children attending each night in the first weeks. This was way beyond what was expected; however, it was manageable (well just!) with the help of regular volunteers—youth from the village who came every night to help the children, as well as visitors to Auroville who were also wanting to give service to the village. We have recently included a weekly session for training and development of all volunteers.

Women, children and youth have also participated by invitation in programs in Auroville with the Collaboration women's group (Kolam design), and Tamil cultural events such as the Sangamam festival.

### Looking to the future

We have regular meetings with our volunteer team of youth and the leaders of the women's groups to envision together the development of programs to continue to address the needs and aspirations of the village. Out of these meetings, many seeds are sprouting! Helgard, a newcomer and volunteer from Germany, offers an experientially based course to women in learning and creative self-expression as a prelude to co-creating a program for young children.

Some of the village youth offer classes in karate, theatre and conversational English and Tamil. Other volunteers from Auroville offer classes in non-violent communication skills, English, art and music. Tiago, a long-term volunteer from Portugal, is regularly offering classes in Capoeira and wants to co-ordinate a project in the garden including agriculture, eco-literacy and spaces for play and recreation. Thamarai has become a place for intercultural experience and learning. In the process of sharing, learning and exchanging skills in this open environment, respect, understanding, generosity of spirit and tolerance can grow. This was one of the central premises on which Thamarai was founded and in which Auroville is rooted.

### Voluntary service

At the heart of Thamarai is the wish to cultivate an atmosphere where our inner beings can find a safe and fertile place to open and be. We emphasise cooperating, service, sharing and joy of learning in our programs. We believe it is not as important where we have come from as it is to look to the future to what we might become, and that with support and helpful conditions, we are all like the lotus, which blossoms in the sun.

We have been truly blessed to discover many people in the village as well as visitors to Auroville and other Aurovilians who naturally resonate with this vision, and in a spirit of self giving, share what they can for the well-being and progress of the village.



## Chronicles

### A movement is abroad: An Aurovilian's journey towards the City of Dawn

by *Sybil Schochen*

*In the stupendous theatre of Space . . .  
A movement was abroad, a cry, a Word  
Beginningless in its vast discovery,  
Momentless in its unthinkable return . . .*  
—Savitri (p. 695)

**I**nfinite are the ways of moving towards the City of Dawn, infinite as the dreams of the humanity to which it belongs. This is the story of one Aurovilian's journey.

For some years now she has been living in the settlement 'Peace' at Auroville's Center, her room in the bamboo-and-thatch Camp for Aurovilians who work on Matrimandir, the sanctuary of Truth under construction in the City of Dawn. Through her wide woven-mat framed window hung with vines of flowering Silence she can see the Matrimandir itself 500 yards away to the east, mystery rising out of hard red desert ground. Koil birds trill rapturously in the garden surrounding the Camp, seven years ago a patch of arid land. Sounds of Aurovilian carpenters hammering shutters in place for the Matrimandir inner chamber roof come clearly on a wind always in movement over the Center, the highest point of the becoming City.

Peace . . . and movement towards the future under construction now. The movement of consciousness is visible in concrete, invisible but as concretely within the handful—450 Aurovilians at present [in 1970s]—gathered for the inner journey.

There are, in the history of the earth, moments of transition when things that have been for

thousands of years must give place to things that are about to manifest. A special concentration of the world consciousness, one might almost say, an intensification of its effort, happens at such times . . . We are precisely at such a turning of the world's history. As Nature has already created upon earth a mental being, even so, there is now a concentrated activity to bring mentality a supramental consciousness and individuality. (*Collected Works of the Mother*, Vol. 12, p. 72)

So the Mother addressed students young and old of "the Future advancing towards its realisation." She continued,

Certain beings who, I might say, are in the secret of the gods, have been advised of the importance of this moment in the life of the world, and have taken birth upon earth to play their part in whatever way they can. A great luminous consciousness soars over the earth creating a kind of eddy in its atmosphere. All who are open, receive a wave from this eddy, a ray from this light, and seek to give a form to it, each according to his capacity. (*CWM*, Vol. 12, p. 72)

She was speaking at that time, in the early 1950s, to students of the International Centre of Education when her plan of the ideal town with Sri Aurobindo living at its centre was still "an old, old memory of something which had tried to manifest—a creation"—when the Mother was very young, "and which had again started to manifest at the very beginning of the century." (*CWM*, Vol. 13, p. 257) She expressed the condition that was to provide growing ground for the dream city where "Dawn" could build "her aura of magnificent hues" and bury "its seed of grandeur in the hours" (*Savitri*, p. 4)—it was "the peerless privilege of being at the very center of the radiating light, at the source of the force of transformation."

We try to welcome and include all offerings, of which there are so many! We can receive short-term or long-term volunteers. Recently we had the pleasure of receiving a group of students from the U.S.A.'s Living Routes study abroad program who conducted a service project in Thamarai. Within one week, a group of six students transformed a shady part of the garden into a beautiful children's play area. Medicinal and flowering plants were planted and a large sand pit for the children to play in was established.

#### Become a friend of Thamarai

In our short lifetime, we have been delighted to receive an immense flow of practical support and positive energy from many unexpected places. As a project run with donations and almost entirely with volunteers, our network of friends and supporters around the world is essential to our ongoing work.

A friend can give support in many ways. You can wish us well and follow our progress through reading our newsletters and sharing your reflections. Money is always welcome to help cover our monthly running expenses and help towards purchase of equipment, running programs and developing infrastructure. We need approx 7,000 Rupees per month, which is approximately 100 Euros per month. Volunteers can help in countless ways from coaching the children in their studies to organizing workshops such as a recent training program offered by healers from Canada to the women in hands-on energy healing. If you would like to be a friend of Thamarai, please let us know.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all our donors around the world who have contributed with money, books, toys, furniture and hours of service. We feel confident that Thamarai will continue to open more of its petals revealing stronger bridges of collaboration and understanding between Edayanchavady and Auroville and appreciate you for sharing in this vision.





The Aurovilian could recall the description of one of the physicians called to Pondicherry at the time of Sri Aurobindo's withdrawal from the physical body, the glowing golden aura with which it was suffused. Preparing by study in the Ashram for her journey towards the City of Dawn, reading *Bases of Yoga* with that same physician who had become a sadhak, the Aurovilian could only dimly realize at the time the significance of his experience.

For Sri Aurobindo had humanly embodied the supramental consciousness—revealed the nature and method of the path to be taken towards that transformation—and given proof in a human body that the thing could be done. In founding the “City of the Aura” in 1968, the Mother was providing humanity as a whole a field for its collective doing of the thing. It was to be a laboratory in which the unthinkable experiment and vast discovery could be attempted by all “who aspire to live the Truth of tomorrow . . . to hasten the advent of the supramental Reality upon earth.” (*CWM*, Vol. 13, pp. 199, 208, 221)

Auroville wished nothing less than to be the cradle of a new race, the supramental. The Mother watching over the cradle carefully designated at its center three convergences of world energy that are to help its realisation. Three power-points in a field of conscious collaboration with the Divine Will in the universe, their symbolic and visible movement arises from Peace, still center of the turning world; million-mystiered One in ceaseless change as it moves . . .

—Downward, to root itself firmly in the earth, like the Banyan tree at geographical center, through fruitful branches. The Aurovilian could remember a time the Banyan had been a trembling being, leaves devoured by goats, drooping branches that searched desert land for its eternal life, chopped off by villagers for firewood.

Its harassed spirit had finally gone to the Mother some 12 kilometers south in Pondicherry for protection. The Mother of the newly born City answered its appeal. Now the Tree of Eternal Life can offer shelter in turn, eight new roots making a living

circle of columns around its trunk, center for its future Garden of Unity.

—Outward, from the lotus bud urn of the City's inauguration, amphitheatre steps spiralling in the cosmic movement of a nebula. The urn enfolds handfuls of earth brought from a 121 nations to mingle in it without man-made divisions, freely. Like a chakra in the living body of the planetary City, the bud will open one day: One Earth its flower. At the concretings of the spiral's foundations and at the collective meditations marking the City's Inaugural anniversaries the Aurovilian has experienced the movement as that of a new star burning with hope and born in fire into an earthly galaxy: “I saw the Omnipotent's flaming pioneers . . . / Come crowding down the amber stairs of birth . . . / Out of the paths of the morning star they came . . . / The sun-eyed children of a marvellous dawn . . .” their bare feet red with Auroville dust. (*Savitri*, p. 343)

—Upward, a planetary globe moving out of a crater 50 meters across and 10.5 meters deep dug by hand from the red-earth rock to meet the sky at 29 meters in reinforced concrete as perfectly formed as it is possible to human limitations, unlimited meters high in longing to transcend them. “The Matrimandir wants to be the symbol of the Divine's answer to the human aspiration for perfection,” The Mother explains to those journeying towards the dawn. (*CWM*, Vol. 13, p. 229) Their union with the Divine will manifest “in a progressive human unity” through work done in a “fraternity of collaboration . . . in joy and Light,” which are experiences of the psychic being. (*CWM*, Vol. 13, pp. 229-230). For Matrimandir is the evolving soul of the City of Dawn.

Looking east from her window and back in memory upon the years of the journeyers' growing fraternity of collaboration the Aurovilian could see how in even—especially—the trials and blistering ordeals often part of the work, Light was concealed; for it is a labor of love. The mystery that is to lift up the globe of earth with that of concrete towards the inner Sun of Truth is supported by the pillars of

“Wisdom, Strength, Harmony, Perfection,” four of the Mother's leading Powers that “have stood in front in her guidance of this Universe and in her dealings with the terrestrial play.” (Sri Aurobindo, *The Mother*, pp. 25-26)

Now the movement upward was reaching a peak in construction of the roof of the Matrimandir Inner Chamber, tower-shaped twelve-faceted hall to be lined in white marble. Just the month beginning the Birth Centenary Year, the marble had arrived in polished slabs glistening snow-white as the Alps of North Italy from which it was quarried in Lasa. The journey over land and sea moved by love and longing for truth's light had brought the pure, almost translucent, stone to the Center seven years after the Mother's vision of it. The interior was advancing towards its manifestation as in December 1969–January 1970 she had seen it already existing on an eternal plane “clearly, very very distinctly.” White marble. No windows. Twelve columns. Always in a kind of light shadow, day and night. At ground center, the Mother's symbol. The sun in a concentrated ray of light striking a transparent globe that rests on four of Sri Aurobindo's symbols joined to form a square and in color a strange orange-tinted gold, very warm, the only color in the place: the rest white. And the globe was transparent—“sun-orb” of “a consciousness mind cannot touch . . . origin of all truth here . . .” (*Savitri*, p. 705)

—Inward, the movement focused upon the transparent sphere becomes a channel for “The Immense that calls to man to expand the Spirit;” (*Savitri*, p. 705) becomes visible, a ray of light “which turns, turns, turns . . . with the sun.” It is a place for “those who are serious—serious, sincere, who want to learn to concentrate . . . in silence . . . a place for trying to find one's consciousness.” (*CWM*, Vol 13, pp. 283, 288, 291, 296).

There it will be possible, the Aurovilian dreams as she works on its roof, for some to be made “the glory's receptacles / And vehicles of the Eternal's luminous power . . . The great deliverers of earth-



bound mind . . . The first-born of a new supernal race.” (*Savitri*, p. 705)

Curiously, the Mother’s seeing of the “sun-orb” and the “sun-ray” foreseen by the Spirit in *Savitri* as unfolded in matter, was being reflected in other manifestations of the New Age movement as the Aurovilian had come to know of them in England, America, Scotland, Brazil, Canada, and other centers of the consciousness revolution in the West. Perhaps some of their seers were the “certain beings” who, advised of the importance of this moment in the life of the world, have taken birth to play their part in the movement of the new and “great luminous consciousness soaring over the earth,” in bringing down its light and love and truth. There was, for one, the Brazilian author and teacher of Yoga, head of the International Yoga Teacher’s Association, who when in India last year journeyed to Auroville to meditate at the Matrimandir site. In a book of hers recently published, she refers to a *vigyan* ray “which can only be received by a human being who has attained a high state of consciousness or awareness,” as she was quoted by a correspondent in Delhi. The Brazilian yogi had herself received the idea after learning about a flash of light which astronauts in an Apollo spacecraft noticed, a ray directed towards South India on Pondicherry. “I believe this to be Sri Aurobindo’s energy. He is credited with a supermind,” she told the correspondent. “The development of the human being prepared to receive such a *vigyan* ray would herald an era in which humans would be capable of receiving this energy and channeling it to others to catalyze the evolutionary process.”

At the time of writing the book describing the ray, which she calls the *vigyan* in Sanskrit, the Brazilian author had not known of the Mother’s conversations concerning her vision of the Matrimandir Inner Chamber interior, for they had been circulated only privately among Aurovilians working on the construction. She was seeing spherically, globally—as the first astronauts to walk on the Moon had seen the Earth: as One, and enabled to envision

“Eternal supermind touch earthly Time.” (*Savitri*, p. 705) The movement was abroad . . . soaring, to be brought down into human consciousness. “All who are open. . . receive a ray of this light,” (*CWM*, Vol. 12, p. 72) as the Mother had foreseen a quarter of a century before, and Sri Aurobindo revealed in *Savitri*:

There is a fire on the apex of the  
worlds. . .  
There is an infinite truth, an  
absolute power . . .  
Its greatness shall be felt shaping  
the world’s course. (p. 704)

The Inner Chamber roof shuttering on which the Aurovilian had been working that morning shines in the sunblaze as if already feeling the fire of transformation. Contemplating it she can recall, awed by the memory, the Power of the call that first brought her from the West to this place, for her, of “peerless privilege”—the Matrimandir. While binding steel rods for reinforcement on the roof section soon to be concreted, the work schedules of Tamil Aurovilians for the Pongal holiday season had been discussed. One aspect of this South Indian festival, at which fire-walking takes place, reminded us of the psychological and esoteric significance of our work: the necessity for the fire-walker’s complete consecration and purification before the ritual is attempted and the dangerous ordeal is so mysteriously passed through.

“It’s no more mysterious than tie-binding steel on the roof under a tropical noonday sun,” said one Aurovilian of another, a woman in her early 60s concentrating with binding-hook and wire, sweat blinding her eyes as she knelt on the sizzling-hot steel grid that lay over the roof-slope. The latter had laughed. “It took seven years of purification before I could do this,” she said.

Only seven? As she bound the intersecting rods she could see her whole lifetime as preparation, a long purification leading up the steep slope of the Matrimandir sanctuary roof at last, a life’s unknowing ascent of the sacrifice before the

call to the conscious climb had come.

Actually the preparation had begun half a century earlier: A child feeling some Power directing her, its leadings came in tiny flashes of symbolic meaning which she had called then “allegory-it is” as if It were some sort of inflammation. At times of crisis or danger it had been an intervening and protective Power. There was the day when fleeing by bicycle as she so often did to escape the suffocating constrictions of a small provincial Ohio town, she perched on a cliff-top overlooking the Great Lake Erie with its wide water seeming infinite to the young girl who could not see to the Canadian shore. Huddling on its edge, thirsting for its glimpse of infinity, moving closer to its blue boundlessness, she had toppled over the cliff, a fall many feet down the steep perpendicular. Who but that Power had provided, far below, a haystack of dried grass to fall upon—at just the one point on the entire cliff-line—to envelop her in a Mother’s saving embrace?

It had moved her as well as saved—through shelves of books in the public library of the nearby city; into dreams of riding like St. Jeanne d’Arc with comrades out of a Camp of God, but into His own City, not a mere earthly prince’s. Or was it only in histories and legends that saints saw visions and heroes acted, only in the past or a science-fiction future that new worlds were to be discovered or created?

And what was the way forward into the visionary Unknown, her true home? In high school, led to Theosophy, she became a vegetarian to the dismay of her family. Unable to find the dream home of her heart in ‘real’ life, she became a playwright, through play-acting and imagined characters searching out ways to another world. She found herself a “Character in Search of an Author.” Instead of finding her Author, she found during a university production of Pirandello’s play by that name, her husband—an actor, another of the characters like herself in search.

But the Conscious Power she could not name—Author of the world’s play—was writing a *finis* to it. As a child, she remembered, It had placed a sign of fire on



the horizon of her little town, her narrow state with its rigidly dividing dogmas political, religious, racial—"Empire of the little life" enshelled by ignorance that "kept it safe from Truth and Self and Light," "An ill-lit straitened continent" (*Savitri*, p. 151) of all the prejudices known to man, masquerading in clean white sheets, and carrying the burning cross they gave their saviour Christ in payment for the crown.

—End of this world by fire, it warned her.

And so it was. A raging fire of totalitarianism that almost engulfed the earth. World War II—"The Mother's War" as in Sri Aurobindo's phrase she came to know it years later—had to be fought to turn back the tide of total darkness. Genocide: six million of the Bible's 'chosen people' into which she had been born, destroyed, many by being gassed and cremated alive. What was the meaning of being "chosen?" By what kind of God? What hope did human life hold when scientific man used his disciplined mind and skills only to murder more scientifically his fellowman—finally splitting the atom to release its fire over a living city, Hiroshima? A white cloud mushroomed its warning: Fire over the whole earth next time.

End of her world.

One thing was certain to the girl, a woman now and a playwright in a world which had ended, whose husband was overseas with the armies stemming floods of the fire, and their golden son was a small child growing in the midst of a psychic inferno. A new world had to be found, or made, one with meaning, in which children—and God—could live. Where was He? Hidden, said the Chassidim. "Dead!" proclaimed her generation. Other wars were following World War II, other acts of genocide on other continents. More savage ways of extermination were experimented upon by nations for their "security," researched in university laboratories: Education in Death. Young people, revolted by the savagery of the Establishment,

were revolting, seeking escape in altered states of consciousness through drugs and being poisoned, going mad, committing murder, suicide—intellectual and spiritual as well as physical suicide. Titan mind reigned; over the desolation, "Thought sat, a priestess of perversity." (*Savitri*, p. 221) In place of light, a rosy cancer spread over the generation of "howl."

To make the new world the playwright tried political action. Impotent. Action through art: to create it then in the theatre. But her plays could only mirror what she saw as real—the savage, doomed order: 'The Moon Besieged,' 'The Tiger Rag,' 'The Hydrogen Jukebox,' 'Cat Orestes.' At last the theatre too had to be abandoned. The mirror itself had become a living world of perversity.

How to live? Where? For what?

*Did such a place really exist? A place in which to transform life? A planetary city in the making? A place of conscious evolution . . . ?*

Increasingly desperate, the ex-playwright turned to religions—meaningless, they were for the age that had ended, not the new; to mysticism—Rilke, Yeats, the *Cabala*—escape; to Tibetan Buddhism, spending some time in a monastery in Scotland—exotic retreat; to the Vedantic literature in a Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center in New York City—a door opening. But was the goal *samadhi*, only an individual salvation? How could it create a new world?

And then one day in the apartment of a friend appeared—as if out of the blue—the striking photograph of a bearded, long-haired young man in white. It actually did strike the heart. So strangely familiar! Where had she seen him before? "Who is that!" "A spiritual giant of India, the seer Sri Aurobindo." The ex-playwright borrowed a book by the Indian seer, *Essays on the Gita*. Perhaps it could shed some light on what had seemed until then an abstruse 'Song of God.'

It was a revelation. It sang, in truth.

After that she could not find enough books by Sri Aurobindo in New York. Making her way to England on a Dutch international student ship, she found in Watkins' Bookshop in London a compilation from Sri Aurobindo's works on *The Future Evolution of Man*. One year later she received a priceless gift: *The Life Divine*. Oddly enough the giver was unaware that it was being given precisely on her birthday in January 1969 when far away in Pondicherry, India, a message was being given by the Mother of Sri Aurobindo's Ashram:

Since the beginning of this year a new Consciousness is at work upon earth to prepare men for a new creation, the superman . . .  
(*Mother's Agenda*, 19 March 1969)

The friend through whom *The Life Divine* had come was in correspondence with a young American couple who had gone to the Ashram and were beginning to move out towards a new city, founded a year before. They were building the settlement 'Forecomers' in a wild spot of canyons and ravines. Ah, but the vision of that City-to-be, Auroville! It was

for those who want to live a life essentially divine . . .

Programme: Research through experience of the Supreme Truth . . . It is in life itself that we wish to find the divine. And it is through this discovery that life can really be transformed. (*Mother's Agenda*, 2 May 1970)

Did such a place really exist? A place in which to transform life? A planetary city in the making? A place of conscious evolution, directed by Sri Aurobindo's spiritual co-worker, the Mother, who was its founder?

From the moment of that realization—that such a place had been founded and its founder was in Pondicherry directing the





new creation—nothing else seemed real. It became the imperative need of the being to find the way there, to the Mother; to her creation. But how to get across half the world to her? How to help build the evolutionary city inspired by Sri Aurobindo's evolutionary thought, a "somewhere on earth," which belonged "to humanity as a whole," a place "where all human beings of good will, sincere in their aspiration, could live freely as citizens of the world and obey one single authority, that of the supreme truth." (CWM, Vol. 12, p. 93)

With trepidation she entered into correspondence with the Mother through her American secretary in the Ashram. At the Mother's request, she sent across half the world her photograph. "Yes; I know her," came the Mother's response.

And then she found herself catapulted across the American continent: ex-playwright acting in what was clearly, exhilaratingly the Mother's Play. She had found her Author. Strange "coincidences," curious meetings, outlandish experiences, revelations that could never happen on a theatre stage credibly came about in life—incredibly. At Crescent Moon Ranch, Star Route 2; in the Hopi Indians' "sacred triangle" in Arizona where the handful of American earth red as Auroville's had been dug and brought to the Inaugural Urn by two young Americans for the Inauguration in 1968; on the West Coast at the East-West Cultural Center in Los Angeles where an Auroville center was starting; in the Redwoods; on the East Coast in Long Island and in New York City at its Port, in its New York University, at the United Nations (U.N.), in the U.S. Mission to the U.N. whose Ambassador to the U.N. Economic and Social Council helped with a symposium at New York University: "Auroville and the Future Evolution of Man." It just 'happened' that his birthday was the same as Auroville's, February 28th; and the date on which the symposium was held and for which leaders from various Sri Aurobindo centers in the States and Canada came together for the first time just 'happened' to be World Unity Day and *Deepawali*, Festival of Light in India. Inner and outer

experiences of the Conscious Force emanated from Pondicherry, ordering events, catapulting, directing, guiding, smiling. "The Force is there."

—As she had discovered it to be on the Star Route leading her from the West to the East, first in *Conversations of the Mother*, and then in *Prayers and Meditations*. The Mother said that it is necessary "to create activities, new modes of being so that this Force, unknown to earth till today, may manifest in its plentitude." (*Prayers and Meditations*, 14 June 1914)

Discovery followed discovery on the Star Route. As described in *Savitri*: "Eternity drew close disguised as Love / And laid its hand upon the body of Time." (p. 237) Riddles and enigmas of the universe were met by a Light that opened priceless secrets, a promise that gave joy in the midst of troubles.

Yet shall the secret Truth in things  
prevail.

For in the march of all-fulfilling Time  
The hour must come of the

Transcendent's will:

All turns and winds towards his  
predestined ends . . .

(*Savitri*, p. 708)

A treasury of the secret teachings found along the Star Route in the *Bulletins* taken from *The Synthesis of Yoga*, *The Human Cycle*, *The Ideal of Human Unity*, *The Supramental Manifestation*, and *Notes on the Way* turned anguishes of the past and fears of the future into sign-posts pointing towards the dawning consciousness. Who were the chosen people? "He who chooses the Infinite has been chosen by the Infinite . . ." (Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 53) What could prevent the end of the world by fire?

The future of the Earth depends on  
a change of consciousness. The  
only hope for the future is in a  
change of man's consciousness,  
and the change is bound to come.  
But it is left to men to decide if they  
will collaborate for this change or it

will have to be enforced upon them  
by the power of crashing  
circumstances. (CWM, Vol. 15, p. 66)

The hour was "The Hour of God . . . often terrible, a fire and a whirlwind and a tempest . . ." but the way through it was shown: "But being pure, cast aside all fear . . ." (Sri Aurobindo, *SABCL*, Vol. 17, p. 1) For it was also the hour of a new birth.

Another race is to be born among  
us . . . if only we give our consent  
. . . We can become the conscious  
collaborators of our evolution or let  
ourselves be surpassed . . .  
(reference unknown)

And Auroville was the field of that Force unknown until now, a shelter offered in which such conscious collaboration could proceed. A movement was abroad: she felt herself swept up in it. Soon after the Festival of Light, as in a dream she found that she was flying on a 28-day round-trip excursion ticket towards the City of Dawn. Arriving in Pondicherry and taken almost at once to the city's Founder for her first *darshan*, she heard, as in a dream, "You will be here a very long time."

So it turned out to be. Invariably it was the unexpected that happened in this field of the Force; the "hour of God" is just exactly the "hour of the unexpected." Unexpected, the first long stay in India. Unexpected, the delay in being moved from the Ashram to Auroville, for to leave the sheltering nearness to the Mother's physical presence, her quarters visible from the room in Golconde in which the future Aurovilian lived, to move from the golden ambience of the Samadhi proved difficult. Unexpectedly too, the Aurovilian had met—with the joy of recognition—members of her true family with whom she deeply knew she had worked before in other lives. Some Ashram sadhaks, others like herself, were still in the process of moving towards their home, the Future. The present scene in embryonic Auroville was at that time not quite as pictured in the first brochures. More truly recording its harsh



realities of the physical as well as psychological and spiritual ordeal had been the letters from the 'Forecomers' concerning their day-to-day struggles and hardships of planting a settlement on waterless earth burned terracotta-hard by sun, drought, and generations of poverty and neglect. Supported only by the Conscious-Force and its love, when they could barely drag themselves along they were enabled by it to walk, when they could scarcely walk, they were enabled to fly.

What made the definitive move possible for the Aurovilian-to-be was the weekly bus trip leaving the Ashram at dawn to work with Aurovilians already at Center on the Matrimandir excavation. The baptism was of course unexpected—as well as amusing in retrospect. One pre-dawn morning at 4 o'clock, descending into the dark hole for the digging work, the future Aurovilian found herself totally immersed in what seemed bottomless mud-waters of a monsoon rain-filled excavation. Although half drowned, changing out of her wet clothing in the chapel-like thatched camp she was led to, she felt herself strangely, elatedly at home. At peace. So it was to be. The same room in which she had "changed" became later her room in the camp named 'Peace.'

Moving with her into the Center—moving her to her own center would be more accurate—was the Mother's handwritten help to her when she lived in Golconde, carried when she taught at *Aspiration* school while waiting for a room at 'Peace' and always with her:

Tout ce que vous faites, travail, activités personnelles, et relations avec les autres, faites-les comme une offrande au Divin. Ainsi toute voire vie deviendra un Yoga.  
(personal note from the Mother)

At last the new Aurovilian could realize that even before her entrance into the path of the Integral Yoga, the evolution of her life had been "designedly led towards its turning point." She could recognize the Power that had saved, the Consciousness



*Seyril in the Matrimandir Worker's Camp.  
(Photo by Dominique Darr)*

that had warned, the Love that had directed her home to her heart's center as having always been with her—the Unknown Author so long sought, now for the first time known. She could collaborate with the Author of the new world at the very center of its transformation. The fire threatening to overrun the earth could be experienced and fought within as destructive only of the old world of falsehood. "Truth or the Abyss," the Guide warned, pointing out the way. The fire of truth and love was purifying and preparing, enlightening and directing from the Inner Chamber of the soul where the secret deity and its human part meet and grow one.

In the same way the new Aurovilian could experience the building of the soul of humanity's city as her own, "a receptacle for spiritual energy, instrument of the evolving supramental consciousness—that 'Truth-Consciousness' glimpsed by seers of the Vedas—to be brought down by human aspiration, so that the City of the Future might be guided by Truth in all its aspects." (reference unknown) The collective life, as her own, was developing according to Truth.

All that you do, work, personal

activities and relations with the others, do them as an offering to the Divine. Thus all your life shall become a Yoga. (translation of personal note from the Mother)

Our Yoga, our union with the Divine, is manifesting in a City of Dawn rising in India. To it are coming travelers in the spirit from many different lands: some bewildered and not even knowing why they have been called here; some moved . . . to tears, like the elder of the Church of Latter Day Saints from Kansas; others moved to action, like the young Canadian psychologist dazzled by the light she found at the Center, working to connect it with other centers of light in the West. A young man from Harvard Divinity School was moved by a visionary map he had seen four years earlier in Arcosanti near a canyon in that same Hopi Indians' sacred triangle of land in Arizona—"A fire along the mystic paths of earth" (*Savitri*, p. 279)—leading from its red desert through southern Illinois, eastward to a point north of Boston, crossing the Atlantic to a point north of England, moving across the hemisphere to the southeastern coast of India—leading him into the New Age and his mission of linking centers devoted to the evolution of a planetary culture.

The whole Earth, as the Aurovilian has come to know and feel, is moving towards its oneness in a "fraternity of collaboration" . . . "in joy and Light," (*CWM*, Vol. 13, pp. 233-234) towards the City dawning wherever there are its builders living and working in Hope . . . Fraternity . . . Service . . . Harmony . . . Discipline . . . Gratitude . . . Joy . . . Fidelity . . . Peace . . . Utility . . . Aspiration . . . Sincerity . . . willing servitors of the new Consciousness and its powers of creation. They are the Omnipotent's pioneers crossing the twilight of an age, sun-eyed children of the Dawn in the movement that is abroad, "Beginningless in its vast discovery / Momentless in its unthinkable return." (*Savitri*, p. 695)

It is Truth's fire of transformation, Love's immortal fire, moving us into a world made new.



## Address to the Matrimandir Gardens' workers

by Narad

*This address given on 28 July 2005 describes some of Narad's interactions with the Mother and his involvement with the Matrimandir Gardens.*

**T**omorrow is my birthday and I feel it is of deep significance to be with you today. I have asked for this meeting to share some of the experiences of my darshans of Mother, the blessings She has showered upon me, the work She has given me and something of my life with this magical world of plants and flowers as well as my work in the years since 1981 when I left Auroville.

I requested Sanjive to join us as I feel very strongly that Mother has sent him to help implement the work of the gardens. He will facilitate imports of plants and equipment and already has taken on some of the mantle of Madanlal in seeing that funds flow into the Matrimandir. It is a privilege and a blessing to have him work with us. When I arrived on the 21<sup>st</sup> of this month Sanjive had already arranged with customs officials to allow the grass to come in without permits, quarantine, etc. In fact, those on duty were instructed to "turn their heads" as I walked through. Sanjive has further arranged for me to meet Mr. A.K. Singh this Saturday evening.

I would like to tell you now of some of my extraordinary experiences with Mother, for many of us feel that another moment has come for the Matrimandir Gardens to be realized. These are my most sacred reminiscences. I begin with some autobiographical notes.

My first experience with flowers was approximately at the age of five. It was a wonderful awakening to beauty. My mother had planted hyacinths (Pride of Beauty) in flower beds around the house. When I saw them my child's heart leapt with joy



*Narad discusses his interests and achievements in gardening, music, and poetry.*

and immediately I went and pulled off the flowers and ran to my mother with the bouquet. Today I can still see the mixture of pain and happiness in her face on seeing her child bring her flowers and knowing that her flower beds had been destroyed.

At the age of 11 I began cutting lawns in our neighborhood, pushing a lawn mower (there were no motorized mowers in the late 1940s!) two miles to cut various lawns. My father changed professions when I was still in my early teens and became partners with a landscaper. This was to change my life as well, as I worked for him all through my teenage years and during the summers when I was in college. We designed landscapes and maintained properties, installed new lawns, renovated old ones, pruned trees, and started a plant nursery at a new home on three acres where I learned the value of compost, soil pH and also began to study the Bio-Dynamic methods of Rudolf Steiner.

When I was 17 it was discovered that I had an operatic voice. I began voice lessons in New York City with Rosalie Miller, the teacher of many opera stars and was given a four-year scholarship by the famous mezzo-soprano, Regina Resnik, to study for the Metropolitan opera. At the same time I was guided from within to study Raja yoga with a Pandit in New York City. He promised me a scholarship to Shantiniketan to continue my music stud-

ies. I followed him to California but he did not keep his word and told me that if I really wanted to do yoga I should return to my family and practice calm. In a voice that I hardly recognize today as my own I said, "No, I am going to India!" I had just turned 23 years old.

Within a day or two I met Jyotipriya, whose name had been given to her by Sri Aurobindo, when as a young woman she came alone to India to find the secret of the Veda. Jyoti told me about Mother and said that she would send my photo and a sample of my handwriting to her. Incredibly, within days Mother sent her reply: "Tell him he may come and stay as long as he likes." So I was accepted in the Ashram, given Prosperity, joined in athletics and even formed a choir that sang to Mother on Christmas eve. But that is a story already published. The tale of my harrowing journey to India to kneel at the feet of the Mother cannot be told here but during my meeting with her, lasting about one hour, she said to me, "You must bring down a new music."

I said, "But Mother I don't know anything about combining words and music."

Mother said, "No, no, you must go far above words and bring down the pure music."

I have concentrated on this for the past 44 years and now the music is coming through the OM Choirs started by Her Grace, in the Ashram and Auroville. I invite all who aspire for the descent of the new music and the new world to join us.

I did not stay long in the Ashram as my vital was too restless, returning to the U.S. in 1962. Before returning, Mother wrote to me: "Go on boldly, following your way with joy and confidence, taking great care of one thing only, never to forget the Divine." She also wrote: "Keep living in you the spirit of consecration and all will be alright."

During my time in the Ashram, Mother gave me permission to teach music in the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, wrote answers to my questions, sent me food to supplement my dining room food, and gave me experiences that I





cannot even begin to speak of all these years later. When she saw me before leaving she remembered everything in my last letter to her and point by point elaborated in detail on her written answers to me.

When I returned to the U.S. I worked at different jobs to put food on the table, married Anie, and did whatever I could for the Ashram, including taking up the work of handmade watercolour paper which I asked Mother to name. She gave the name, 'Arvind.' I made contacts with the most well-known watercolor artists in the U.S., who wrote glowing assessments of the Arvind watercolour paper. Through all these years Mother sent me beautiful birthday cards and blessed my life continually.

One winter during the mid 1960s, I was delivering organic bread to New York City from Connecticut. We were descending a steep hill in a blizzard and the roads were filled with ice. Two ladies had stalled their car perpendicular to traffic. There was no way to stop or to miss them and we crashed into them. Anie's head went into the windshield and she required many stitches. Mother was informed and said that she would have no scars. An Ashramite also saw Mother standing at the foot of Anie's bed in the hospital. We recovered \$3000 in damages and I wrote to Mother immediately saying that I wanted to send the money to her.

Mother replied: "Why don't you use the money to come for the inauguration of Auroville." We purchased two tickets (exactly \$3000) and came to the Ashram. There were three of us, Isadore from the East-West Cultural Center, Anie and myself. We knelt at Mother's feet and she first looked at Isadore for a brief moment and then turned to Anie and said: "This is not the first time we have met. You have been with me many times before, many, many times." Then Mother turned to me and said: "You don't want to come to Auroville



*The Matrimandir in February 2007. The area for the 12 gardens that surround it is being cultivated with various grasses, trees, shrubs and flowers. (Photo by Larry Seidlitz)*

in a few years? I feel you can do something there." I replied, "Yes, Mother, whatever is your Will." Mother gave me permission to photograph the Inauguration and the many rolls of slides I took are part of Auroville's collection.

We returned to the U.S. in March 1968 and I managed one restaurant and then was a partner in another. This was a period when I made a lot of money. Yet, a day came when I began to hear a voice within saying, "Go to California and help Jyotipriya." I wrote Mother but received no answer and after a month wrote to her again saying that the guidance to go to help Jyotipriya had not stopped. Mother sent a telegram saying, "My answer to you was so positive that I thought I had written it!" So I gave up my restaurant business and we left for California to assist Jyotipriya at the East-West Cultural Center. To have some income I found employment in the finest garden center in Beverly Hills, answering such questions from Hollywood stars as "Which end of a tuberous begonia is up?" The garden center was a very profitable enterprise and the owner had taken a deep liking to me. He had no family left and one day he called me into his office and said that he considered me his son and because he was getting too old to manage the business he wanted to give it to me. Would I consider it?

I thought it was to be three more years

until Mother was to call me to Auroville, however, one day I received a letter from Udar. He wrote: "Mother asked me to write you and tell you that she wants you to prepare to come and build the Gardens of the Matrimandir." Joy and gratitude filled my heart! I replied to Udar asking if Mother wanted me to attend formal classes in college or engage in practical work. Mother replied that the best would be a combination of both. I prepared to work for three years and took courses at the University of California, Los Angeles, in plant combina-

tion theory, toured some of the finest landscapes in this wealthy area of California with well-known architects, and studied sub-tropical plant life, for until then all my experience had been with temperate climate species. How subtly Mother works! Moving to California introduced me to a wide range of plants closer to the climate of Auroville. I never would have been exposed to these species had we remained in New York.

I thought I had three years to prepare and in only nine months I received the briefest note from Mother, "A bientot."

Anie came first and we were given a place at Promesse. After settling all our affairs I came in December 1969 and we met Mother again. I believe it was on Anie's birthday, December 18. It was at this time that Mother spoke these words about the gardens that you all have read. Mother's voice was so strong, so clear. She said, "It must be a thing of great beauty, of such a beauty that when men enter they will say, 'Ah, this is it,' and they will experience physically and concretely, the significance of each garden. In the Garden of Youth they will know youth. In the Garden of Bliss they will know bliss, and so on. One must know how to move from consciousness to consciousness. As she said the last sentence Mother moved her hand in an ascending spiral. Anie remembered one additional sentence of Mother. "It (the gar-



dens) must manifest something of that which we are trying to bring down.” Mother also said to me: “You will make some sketches and then show them to me and we will see together.” In the Agenda you will see that Mother mentions two young Americans and says something to the effect that I have studied landscape design and we would be coming soon to build the gardens. At another time Mother said to me: “I would like you to begin with the Garden of Unity.”

I was 31 years old. I met with Pierre Le Grand at Promesse, for though I have a deep love of art, I can’t even draw a crooked line. Pierre made some drawings as I received inspiration but I never got to show them to Mother. Also, since this was early 1970, the Matrimandir construction had not even begun. I did have certain powerful experiences during this time and have written some of them down. Recently, Anie sent me a dream-experience she sent to Mother and to which Mother replied in her own hand. I do not remember the entire sequence but I saw a golden tree in the sky, more beautiful than anything on earth and I said, “I must bring a branch of this down to earth and plant it for Mother.” I began to climb into the sky and

people on the earth below were concerned that I would fall. I had no fear, however, for I was determined to transplant this golden tree on earth, in Mother’s garden. I finally was able to reach a branch and brought it down. Mother wrote: “It is not quite a dream and it is a very good indication of the work you are doing.”

Thus began a period of twelve years in Auroville in which I was guided to prepare a nursery to introduce, acclimatize and study hundreds of species of ornamental shrubs, trees, vines, and ground covers, to determine if they were of sufficient beauty to be introduced into the

Matrimandir Gardens. The first task was to find an appropriate site for a nursery as close to the area that would be the Matrimandir in the place called ‘Peace’. I found the best possible location, one that was protected in the west by a canyon, on the south by a lower road and on the north by a wadi, although the whole area would require fencing. At the same time Amrit went separately and chose the same location. Mother gave her blessings and we began. There were a number of mango trees that provided shade for delicate seedlings and helped to break the wind. You cannot know how difficult it was in those days when a month’s work under the most

devoted himself to building the orchid section. Each year on Mother’s birthday we held a flower show. Ashramites and Aurovilians all participated. Pottery sections made beautiful vases, others skilled in the art of calligraphy made cards with Mother’s significance and the botanical name, and everyone brought flowers. One year we had nearly 400 flower significances on display. Buses were arranged from the Ashram and hundreds of Ashramites walked with Aurovilians through the Matrimandir Nursery. We also had music with Alan’s classical guitar waking us early in the morning. Each Wednesday we had a classical music evening in our home. Mary

Helen’s mother donated a stereo system and we brought hundreds of records to share and many Aurovilians attended through the years.

Mary Helen and I made a world tour of botanical gardens in 1977 to collect the best species and hybrids of trees and shrubs for the Matrimandir Gardens. Wherever we went, all doors were open to us. No one ever refused to help with the Gardens. We reached Singapore so overloaded that the people looked at us with incredulity. Somehow we were able to contact Devon Nair,

Mother’s disciple, and, I believe, President of Singapore at the time, and he had everything sent through without any duty! During the 1970s we compiled an Index Seminum and thus began years of seed exchanges with more than 60 botanical gardens in 30 countries. Today this collaboration continues. On a visit to Florida two years ago people offered more plants than I could carry. There were wonderful trees and shrubs, many exquisitely fragrant, now growing at the Lake to be propagated when we are ready with the Matrimandir Gardens. A friend brought the whole group of plants to Thailand, then another friend



*Narad instructs a group of volunteers on the morning work of digging up sections of turf from special beds and transplanting them in other areas of the gardens where they will grow and spread. (Photo by Larry Seidlitz)*

trying conditions, could be wiped out in an hour by a herd of goats or cattle. The goat-herders purposely sent their animals in to graze. But enough of those stories, there are too many to relate! Around this time Mother also gave me the incomparable blessing to be the first to read *Savitri* in Auroville. I read each week for more than 10 years.

Anie left Auroville to return to the U.S. in 1971 and Mary Helen and I began a collaboration of 31 years until her passing in 2002. All through the 1970s we travelled the length and breadth of India, occasionally accompanied by Alan Klass who





carried them from Thailand to India and brought them to me at the Ashram. I recently was given the three varieties of the finest turf produced in 35 years of research by Dr. Wayne Hanna of the Agricultural Experimental Station in Tifton, Georgia, a southern area of Georgia known for its intense heat and humidity! These grasses are now being grown in trial plots in the Matrimandir Gardens area. This year I also brought new varieties of lotuses and water lilies. They too have been planted at the Lake and as soon as the Garden of Wealth is ready we will have these beautiful plants available for the ponds.

When I began planting hundreds of trees in the 'Outer Gardens', now known as 'The Park', I did so in accordance with Roger's plans. Vikas held the plans and showed me exactly where to plant. As there was much construction during the late 1970s and early 1980s I could only plant in the west and south quadrants. My aspiration was to plant trees whose flowers, foliage or bark represented that aspect of the Divine Mother—in the west, Mahasaraswati and in the south, Maheshwari. The species from tropical Australia and South America flourished and were the greatest successes, but many others from tropical climates also adapted well. We corresponded with the Royal Botanic Garden in Scotland, the Royal Horticultural Society in England, went on collecting trips with the Chief Conservators of Forests in India and shared our seeds and our experiences with all. Today in the Park there are magnificent trees found nowhere else in India, growing alongside the many indigenous varieties we also planted. It is a great botanical collection and I pray that it will be cared for with the highest consciousness. Botanists such as Father Mat-

thew have come at the request of Walter at Shakti and have identified many of the species as all the original data had been lost.

I would add one last comment about the Park in appreciation for the work by the young men from the Ashram who often came in buses at midnight to dig pits for the trees. Without their help much less would have been achieved because the work, as anyone who has dug holes in Auroville will attest, was strenuous and exhausting. Perhaps I can add one anecdote. Often the boys who were digging the pits would have some fun and put a group of lanterns together to watch the coming

at once a supreme grace and a great responsibility, as is the care of the Banyan at the center of Auroville, also given to my care along with the Matrimandir Gardens. We have the extraordinary blessing of living near the two most sacred trees on earth, the Service tree and the Banyan. When I later left Auroville in 1981, believing I would be gone for only a few months, I saw Nolini one last time. He blessed me and asked me only one question, "Who will take care of the Service tree?" I promised that I would return to see to its care, and now the Divine has brought me back to assist in building the Matrimandir Gardens once again.



*Transplanting small pieces of heat- and drought-resistant turf, each about 12 inches from another, in a prepared bed of topsoil, where they will spread and fill in. (Photo by Larry Seidlitz)*

show. First a line of ants would form, then the frogs would come to feast on the ants and then the small owls would come and eat the small frogs and finally the huge white owls would descend for a grand feast.

In the early 1970s, after a cyclone had broken a huge limb of the Service tree and I helped the young men of the Ashram make a proper cut, Mother sent me a blessings packet through Parichand, the Ashram gardener and my elder brother, to care for the Service tree for the rest of my life. Every time I have worked on the Service tree I have experienced *darshan*. It is

During the early 1970s, Richard Pearson and I met three times a week in the Ashram laboratory and made the first botanical revision of the book of Mother's flower significances, *Flowers and Their Messages*. Then, together with Mary Helen and Mary Aldridge, we revised the text. During 2000-2001 Mary Helen and I did another complete revision of the botanical section for the two-volume photographic flower book that Lilo worked on for many years.

From 1970-1972, the last years that Mother was with us for naming flowers, a brief period in which I sent flowers to her as often as possible, She

named more than 60 flowers from the Matrimandir Gardens Nursery. Almost all the rare hibiscus bearing the name Auroville, which Mother later said should also be called the New Creation to expand the scope of the significance, came from Hawaii originally. They were acquired by the Lai Bagh Gardens in Bangalore, with whom we had a wonderful collaboration, and shared with us. In addition to the hibiscus, Mother gave many luminous and powerful significances to flowers grown in the Matrimandir Nursery. Here are a few: 'Remembrance of Sri Aurobindo,' 'Opening to Sri Aurobindo's Force,' 'To Live Only for the





Divine.' A friend recalls that the last flower I sent to the Mother before she said, in late 1972, "The time for naming flowers is over," is from one of the trees where the Matrimandir workers now park their cycles and motorcycles: she named the flowers of *Pterospermum acerifolium*, 'Realization of the Supramental Riches.'

The Matrimandir Gardens Nursery is a sacred place, blessed by the Mother. Its only purpose, however, is to introduce, acclimatize, evaluate and produce the finest plants for the Matrimandir Gardens. After walking through it the past few years I could hardly find any shrubs or hibiscus that were of a high enough quality for the Gardens. The work of the nursery is a full time labor and must be attended to as one's sadhana, as is the constant labor of pruning, fertilizing, and maintaining trees in the Park.

During the 1980s and throughout the 1990s, after we had left Auroville with no prospect of work, with our child Chali of high school age, and with only \$400 to our name, Mother opened every door for me. I had written a thesis on Plumeria, 'Psychological Perfection,' and corresponded with the founder of the Plumeria Society of America. In only a few days after arriving in Houston, Texas to address the Plumeria Society, I was offered a position where I continued my work and my studies of plants, especially sub-tropicals (as Houston is not at all unlike Auroville for five months of the year). I owned and operated retail nurseries, built a major composting facility in Texas with two partners, and formulated specialty soil mixes as Vice-President of Marketing. Eventually, Mary Helen and I moved to Georgia where we created our labor of love, a garden with

more than 1200 varieties, where month after month Nature reveals a breathtaking pageant of beauty. During this time we also built a successful mail order business in tropical plants, produced a major tropical plant catalogue and published two books, one on Oleanders and one on Plumerias.

In the past seven years, I feel some very positive things have been accomplished. I received the permission of the Ashram Trust to develop a website devoted to Sri Aurobindo's epic poem, *Savitri*.



A variety of different hardy grasses in contrasting colors of bluish green to dark green are being planted in neatly bordered adjacent sections in the area surrounding the Matrimandir. (Photo by Larry Seidnitz)

The url is [www.savitribysriaurobindo.com](http://www.savitribysriaurobindo.com). It was completed on Sri Aurobindo's birthday in the year 2000 and with the help of Laxmikant Rashinkar, a disciple of Mother and Sri Aurobindo and a computer expert, we are constantly adding new material. Soon LK, as he is known, will complete a major search engine on the site so that any word, term or line in *Savitri* can be found almost instantaneously. Currently the *Savitri* website contains the complete text of the poem, Sri Aurobindo's letters on the poem, an extensive section of Mother's words on *Savitri*, another section of her recitations of *Savitri*, a biography of Sri

Aurobindo, and more. When the website was completed I began another work on *Savitri*, a major opus entitled *Lexicon of an Infinite Mind*, a dictionary of words and terms in *Savitri*. All through the years of Mary Helen's heroic battle with cancer we worked many hours a day to complete the book. Recently, Dr. Alok Pandey has kindly offered to proofread the manuscript and soon after it will be published.

Another work begun during this time is a book on the Service tree, a homage containing the history of the tree, recollections, poems, paintings and photographs through the 75 years since its planting.

The past two years have also occupied much time in developing a lending library of CDs of classical music, both Indian and Western in the Ashram (shared with Kamel, who is in charge of the library in Auroville), and a DVD library of great motion pictures, musical performances, ballet, art, history, science, and more. These are being shared with Claude who is in charge of the DVD collection in Auroville.

We are just beginning work on a new book

of Mother's flower significances. This will be titled "The Mother's Flower Significances, A Guide to Identification," and will include a photograph of every flower named by Mother. As often as is possible the flower will be shown in its exact size, in full and accurate colour, with the Mother's significance, botanical name and her commentary. The outer edge of the pages will be the colour of the rainbow. If one has a blue flower one turns to the blue section to see all the blue flowers Mother named graded from tiny to very large. The book will be printed on thin but strong paper and will be priced very reasonably.



Lastly, I have just signed a contract for a book entitled “Flowers for the Soul,” to be published in the U.S., with all proceeds to be divided between two Sri Aurobindo Centers, Matagiri in New York and Sri Aurobindo Sadhana Peetham in California, as I am presently involved in helping to further the work of both centers. Very dedicated souls have built these centers and maintained them for many years and we all now feel an impetus to expand and embrace those who are seeking the “life divine.” I have asked Mother for guidance and one word keeps coming to me, “Prepare.” I am also continuing my studies of *Savitri*.

I have been supremely blessed by the Divine Mother to have lived a life among plants and flowers, in the uplifting atmosphere of music, art, literature and poetry and now to be among you to help realise the Gardens of the Matrimandir.

Before I close I would like to touch on some practical matters. I have discussed some of these with Kireet and others who understand the need for essential equipment and well-made tools. Those who have worked intimately with the earth, lived in Nature’s realms of beauty, shared her offerings, collaborated with her in further beautification can perhaps be a little aware of the enormity of the scale of work before us. Before anything is realised we must have the substructure, irrigation, composting facility, soil preparation, proper equipment to move plants and soil, mowing machines, rototillers, power edgers, and proper tools for grading, digging, etc. Then comes the complex challenge of plant selection, the study of plant care, including pruning, shaping, fertilizing, insect and disease control. I will select the best available equipment in India, Europe and the U.S. in collaboration with others and decide upon those that can be purchased here and those that have to be imported, and through Sanjive’s contacts, we hope to acquire them soon.

For many years I lived with a sense of failure, feeling that I could not sufficiently open and be receptive to the vision Mother had entrusted me—to design and build

the Gardens of the Matrimandir. Recently a dear friend in New York has disabused me of this concern saying that 12 years or 30 years is nothing to realize a work given by Mother and that her Force is behind all our efforts. All feelings of frustration and failure have now dissolved. I am ready and the time has come for us to work together in harmony and love.

Sri Aurobindo wrote in *Savitri*:

His failure is not failure whom God  
leads;  
Through all the slow mysterious  
march goes on:  
An immutable Power has made this  
mutable world;  
A self-fulfilling transcendence treads  
man’s road;  
The driver of the soul upon its path,  
It knows its steps, its way is  
inevitable,  
And how shall the end be vain when  
God is guide?

We must remember that this is not a far-off impersonal God watching our movements but the ever-present help and guidance of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo to enable us to transform ourselves in order to bring down the new creation. I seek no name or fame, only to fully surrender to the Mother, to be what she wants me to be and to complete the work she has given to me. I am at the service of the Divine and therefore at the service of all who aspire for the manifestation of the gardens.

Here is part of a letter from John Harper written in 2002.

Let us start with Unity: A proposal

*When there is full faith and consecration, there comes also a receptivity to the Force which makes one do the right thing and take the right means, and then the circumstances adapt themselves and the result is visible.* (Sri Aurobindo, *Letters on Yoga*, p. 670)

*They don’t know that one must*

*NOT THINK.* (The Mother, in conversation with Satprem regarding the Matrimandir, *Mother’s Agenda*, 10 January 1970)

In the early 1970s the Mother said to Narad, to whom she had given the task of creating the gardens, that he should start his work with the Garden of Unity (close to the Banyan tree). I feel that if we can manage, for the moment, to put our plans and conceptions aside, if we could address ourselves simply to the land that is there calling to be made into this garden of Unity, then little by little we would be led progressively forward.

If we could gather there near the banyan, in silence, and then place just one stone or plant one flower, all together, then that would be a true beginning to this most needed garden.

It is the time to be together in silence and to work together. All who feel that they have something to contribute to the Garden of Unity are called to join their aspirations and to take a first step in this adventure. The way to go forward will surely be shown, step-by-step.

I know that Mother has given us another opportunity to work in harmony for the gardens and I am grateful for those she has sent to help manifest them. There are two last points I would like to cover briefly. The first is Mary Helen’s letter to Mother about beginning a small experiment in constructing a Japanese Garden. Mary Helen asked Mother if the Auroville gardens (she mistakenly wrote Auroville gardens but meant the Matrimandir Gardens as there were no gardens in Auroville in those days) would be in the Japanese style. You have seen Mother’s answer. The second point is my letter to Mother about the size of the gardens. You know how strongly Huta has disagreed with Roger about the size and design of the gardens since



Mother had told her so many things about them. Huta told me that Mother held a handkerchief in her hand and squeezed it saying (and I paraphrase here) “Do you think I want something like this?” (so small) Huta encouraged me to write to Mother and I did. Her reply that Roger knows best about the size of the gardens is clear and I do not question it. The gardens will continue to evolve long after Roger and I have discarded these bodies for new ones but until that time I shall work in harmony with him and with all who aspire to see

them manifest. A sincere goodwill and an aspiration for a true collective harmony will enable us to move forward and accomplish this sacred work for the world.

This quotation from Mother to Nirodbaran was published in the *Matrimandir Newsletter*: “The completion of the Matrimandir will be coincidental in establishing world peace and harmony.”

Laxmi Narayan once asked a saint from the Himalayas what he experienced after a meditation in the Matrimandir chamber. The saint replied: “One day it will save the world.”

## Postscript

10 March 2007

The past four months have been the most rewarding of all my recent years at the Matrimandir. People have come from all over the world to join in the work of the Matrimandir Gardens. We have built an excellent team where all work together in a spirit of harmony to maintain the work that has been accomplished thus far, namely the grasses. The Princess 77, a type of grass from the U.S., is proving to be a superior hybrid as one can see when walking on the Service Path around the petals. The gifts of grass from the Agricultural Re-



*Sifting the compost-enriched topsoil to make a fine, rich bed for the grasses and flowers of the vast gardens is a laborious project taken on by the Sunday morning volunteers. (Photo by Larry Seidlitz)*

search Station in Tifton, Georgia have also adapted easily to the climate, and from a few small pieces they are now covering large areas of the Gardens.

We were able to purchase excellent lawn mowers from a company in Chennai as well as a trommel screen to sift our compost and topsoil. Each Sunday a group of people would come from the Ashram to help weeding, screening soil and compost, filling in areas to be planted, and doing everything with such a sense of joy and harmony that a bridge was once again built between the Ashram and Auroville, and this time one that is indestructible. Most of the helpers who came to work on Sundays were members of The Golden Chain, former Ashram students, many of whom helped in the early days of Auroville to build roads, dig pits for the trees planted in the Matrimandir Park area, and work on the construction of the Matrimandir. During the four months I was there they agreed to come every Sunday instead of alternate Sunday's as they had been doing. It is through their hard work, and not only their offering of their physical bodies, but their many contributions for equipment that has added to the tremendous amount of work accomplished. There has been a happy collaboration and participation in weekly

work, communal breakfasts, and above all the gratitude of just working together as Mother's children for the realization of the Matrimandir.

In the coming months the Gardens teams will concentrate on preparing more areas for planting, maintaining the large areas of turf already planted with Gajendra, Amy and volunteers working together, continuing the work of composting under the guidance of Padha, screening and mixing soil with Selvam's team, preparing plants for the future Gardens under the guidance of

Tina and Martin, continuing the work of orchids, water lilies and euphorbia so excellently cared for by Shankar, and propagating rare species in the Nursery for planting in the Gardens with the combined efforts of Doraikannan, Prasanth, Martin and others. So you see, there is much to be done even in the hot season to prepare for the next stage, that of the manifestation of the Gardens.

We do need continued financial assistance to begin the actual Gardens. One of our most needed pieces of equipment is a Bobcat with attachments. This machine has a wheelbase that is narrow enough to fit on the stone pathways and will be something we will constantly use to relieve some of the back-breaking labor of loading soil and compost, digging pits, excavating areas of the Gardens, hauling materials, and much more. Funding is also needed to purchase hibiscus that were named by Mother and have been lost over the years. Other equipment such as contractor's wheelbarrows, more rakes, a dethatcher for the grass, and an aerator is also needed. This equipment is readily available in the U.S., and shipping can be arranged through the dedicated efforts of Mother's disciples at Sri Aurobindo Sadhana Peetham in Lodi, California.





## The hibiscus flowers of Auroville

by Richard Pearson

*The following account of conversations with the Mother (originally in French) about the flowers of the Matrimandir Gardens is based on a talk given at Savitri Bhavan in Auroville on 6 January 2007.*

Today we will be delving into the mystery of flowers, trying to fathom something of what Mother has offered to us. We are trying to understand the relation of flowers, and of Nature, to us. In this context, I would like to say that we are now at a very special moment: the beginning of the year. Here we have spring-time just peeping round the corner, with a bit of early morning mist, bringing out new leaves and flowers; as the wind changes, all the old leaves that have dropped to the ground will gradually be replaced, are already being replaced, by new ones. Just look at the leaves, look at the opening flowers, look at the aspiring trees, and you will feel, concretely, what Mother means by identity with Nature.

Today I will speak about the hibiscus flowers, and it is rather special because we have all these hibiscus flowers with us today on the tables. So we have a double audience, we have you and we have the flowers listening to us. I would like to read to you a short poem by Kailas which expresses the work that the hibiscus flowers are doing here, using the names of some of the varieties:

Oh hibiscus flower,  
Thou art the Dynamic Power of God.  
In this sordid, struggling world  
Thou bringest to it Eternal Smile  
And Youth everlasting.  
Radiant with Beauty of Supramental  
Love!

Light in us the resolute Flame of Agni,  
The Power of Consciousness fully awake  
With thy Light of Purified Power,



*Richard is at home in the Mother's world of flowers. (Photo by Satya)*

And awaken the irresistible sweetness  
Of the Psychic Power in Existence.  
We solicit thy Aesthetic Power,  
And Power in the Higher Vital,  
To build the worlds of Beauty.  
As we travel the sunlit path of Truth,  
Conscious of its mystic heights of Bliss,  
Grant us, we implore Thee,  
The boon of an unshakable Faith,  
Ardent and active, to march on  
With Love the Victor, as our guide  
And radiant Bliss in our very cells,  
To change this earthly life to Life Divine.

The Mother chose the hibiscus flowers for the gardens of Auroville, so we are going to have an introduction to that beautiful aspect of the gardens around the Matrimandir. For those who are not so familiar, let me just say a few words. Right from day one, when Mother inaugurated Auroville with the reading of the charter, and its translation into different languages, and the putting of the earth from different countries and from different parts of India into the urn, from that very day, and possibly a little before, the Mother had given the twelve names to the twelve gardens. It wasn't so explicit, but I first saw the list, in French, at the exhibition during the inaugural ceremony, that is, on 28 February 1968. This was held at the banyan tree. At the top of the list I read "Matrimandir, Love." Below that twelve names

starting with Existence, Consciousness, and Felicity (*Félicité*), which is for us Ananda or Bliss, that is to say, Sat-Chit-Ananda. Then came Life, Light, and Power, and going on to more simple attributes, Wealth, Usefulness, and Progress, and ending with Youth, Harmony, and Perfection. Below that I read, "Banyan, Unity." This, I feel, rounds up the work of the flowers in the gardens, the work of Auroville, and the work of the future that we have to do now.

I will start with the central flower that she chose for each garden. A year or two later I was fortunate enough to be asked by the Mother to help her select a flower for each garden. She intended to have a central flower, representing the spirit of that garden. She had talked to Narad, and had told him that in moving through the gardens of Auroville, and the Matrimandir Gardens in particular, one would move from consciousness to consciousness. Each would be a thing of great beauty! I'm sure you have heard this before. I've really, truly not fully understood, not been fully able to realize how in gardens one can move from consciousness to consciousness. The only answer, I feel, is that in ourselves we must develop the consciousness in the flowers that the Mother has named. Here I would like to say what I feel about these "messages." They are the subtle link to, and at the same time, the material expression of Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's Integral Yoga. All the vision and power of realization of their work is put forth in these simple, spontaneous creations of God.

With the help of Narad and the gardeners in the Ashram, we collected as many flowers as we could of hibiscus, as the Mother wanted to choose the central flower for the twelve gardens from the wide range of hibiscus to which she had already given the largest number of names for one single genus. Basically, they represented forms of power, beauty and consciousness in often different subtle variations, according to color, size, and single and double forms. A bit earlier, a hibiscus that the Mother liked she had named



*'Beauty of Supramental Love' (Flower of Auroville): salmon pink, with a pink center. "It invites us to learn to live at its height."*

*Divinité*—Godhead—and she would say, "This is Godhead. This is Auroville." It is the first Auroville flower. Later on, for the Auroville flower that most of you know, that salmon-pink, orange hibiscus, she said: "This is also for Auroville; it has the color of the soil of Auroville. They are both flowers of Auroville." She had already called it the 'Beauty of Supramental Love,' which is a poem and inspiration in itself when you come to ponder on that magnificent state of being.

That was a magical moment; in the Ashram and in Auroville, hibiscus flowers were growing that were new to everybody. They were Hawaiian hibiscus. It was the golden period for us of hibiscus flowers: the Mother's dream being brought down—what she had called the 'Spirit of Auroville.' This was the title given by her to a painting of Huta's as early as 1966. It was as though a descent took place. All of a sudden we got flowers that we had never seen before, each more beautiful than the previous one. Mother was giving them names with great joy. In fact, many of the names were for Auroville, such as 'Continuous Power and Action,' which was shortened to 'Power of Perseverance,' 'Success of Auroville,' which later was named 'Power of Success,' and the 'Charm of Auroville' became the 'Charm of the New Creation.' There were about 15 names that Mother

seen and what she had named. Some flowers we have lost. Certain flowers have been hybridized and have changed. The golden period that we experienced may not be completely lost because it is to be materialized in our own actions and in our own consciousness. So there is no intrinsic doubt or confusion, we have to identify ourselves with the consciousness, beauty, and power in these exceedingly beautiful flowers.

Let me tell you a little story which some of you must have already heard. A disciple plucked a flower and brought it to the Mother. Without seeing it, the Mother said, "What is the flower you have brought with you today?" So the Sadhak said, "Well, I have plucked it from my own garden, and the flower smiled as it knew it was going to you, so I was doubly happy." And the Mother said, "Oh, it smiled did it? And what was this flower, was it a rose or was it a hibiscus?" So he said, "Yes, Mother, it

gave in all just for Auroville. In fact the last flower named by her was a hibiscus, 'Controlled Power.' This was given after she had finished revising the flower book so it had no commentary. We tried to record the colors of these flowers by painting them so that we would be able to say correctly what the Mother had

was a hibiscus." And Mother added, "I have found these flowers very open to my consciousness." So there you are, you know why Mother chose that flower for the gardens surrounding the Matrimandir.

To continue from where we left off, the Mother called me to bring all the hibiscus flowers that we had gathered. She said, "I want to know the meanings of these flowers so that I can name a flower for each garden of the Matrimandir." I told her, "You know the names, they are your names." In her beautiful divine modesty, she said "I need you to remind me." So we started from the beginning with 'Existence.' After looking about the tray I had with flowers—something like this but in a round symbol of the Mother—she chose this flower. She said, "What is this called?" I said, "Well Mother, this is 'Psychic Power.'" So she said, "This is good, but how do we put the word 'existence' in that?" After a few trials and coming around to what Mother liked, it became 'Psychic Power in Existence,' which is already joining the two ends of our life upon earth.

Then she chose the flower for 'Consciousness.' This was very easy because we had 'Supramental Consciousness' already named by the Mother. The next was, of course, easy too, 'Ananda,' bliss. There we have also this flower, 'Ananda in the Physical,' which most of you already



*'Godhead': shell white or very pale yellow. The Mother's comment was "pure and perfect, puts forth its force in the world."*





know. By the way, I should explain to you that 'Ananda' has the most, what should I say, subtle color, which artists find very difficult to depict. It may be called ivory, it may be off-white; it is not a yellow, it is not an ochre. It is something that comes from a higher sphere.

For 'Life' she chose a vibrant double, medium-sized flower I call a happy red named 'Power of the Consciousness.' For 'Light' we had 'Purified Power,' and Mother changed the name to 'Light of the Purified Power.' The next was 'Power,' and Mother chose "Aesthetic Power.' Her comment for this flower is "Beauty is a great power." And I'm sure that the flower chosen is the right one because it is such a powerful old fashioned flower, or should we call it an indigenous plant, growing here easily. It is perfectly at home in this particular climate, unlike some of the hybrids which are difficult to grow.

In the third set we have the gardens of 'Wealth,' 'Usefulness,' and 'Progress.' Towards the end Mother did not choose only hibiscus. When we came to the garden of 'Wealth,' the Mother looked around and said, "We've already got the water lilies, which are 'Wealth.' We've also got the cactus flowers, which are 'Riches,' so these two flowers will do very well for this garden." For 'Usefulness,' the Mother named a hibiscus 'Usefulness of

Auroville,' which was later changed to 'Usefulness of the New Creation.' For 'Progress' she chose a small single white hibiscus with pink veins and center and with orange stigmas called 'Power to Progress.'

The last triad is formed of 'Youth,' 'Harmony,' and 'Perfection.' For 'Youth,'

an old flower, 'Supramental Beauty,' which we do not see often, was renamed 'Beauty of Supramental Youth.' It is a single, medium to large, apricot-orange-pink colored flower. For 'Harmony,' we had a hibiscus—a single, soft ochre-yellow colored flower with a pink, orange or light-red center—called the 'Power of Harmony.' Then, when we came right to the end to 'Perfection,' she said, "Well, there is 'Psychological Perfection.'" That also is not a hibiscus but a plumeria, a fragrant flower with five petals, each representing a different aspect of psychological perfection. It is our last garden and our ultimate goal too.

It is true that in *Flowers and their Messages* you won't find the name of Auroville, but in the larger edition, *The Spiritual Significance of Flowers* with color pictures, the two names are given. Other flowers named for Auroville are: 'Miracle' (*Memecylon tinetorium*) which



*'Light of Purified Power': a white flower "irresistably simple in its power consecrated solely to the Divine."*

was first named as such. Later she called it the 'Air of Auroville.' Isn't it so uplifting? In fact, her comment is "Marvelous, strange, unexpected." I think that sums up Auroville perfectly. The other flower that was named for a plant growing in Auroville is 'Beauty in Collective Simplicity' (*Ornithogalum umbellatum*). The commentary is straightforward enough: "Each element plays its role in the whole." Simple, isn't it?

My intention was not to give you a lot of explanations, but to try to fathom something of the mysterious element that the flower is. And as our friends have brought us such lovely flowers, it is impossible to pass them over without mentioning something about them, not all of them, but some.

[*Holds up a flower.*] I would like to start with this flower [*Brownea Coccinea*]. It is the 'Divine Love Governing the World,' and it is governing the world. Those who know something about flowers will say this is not one flower but a bunch of flowers, and it is true, but they all bloom together. It very rarely may bloom half at a time, but I have not observed it. They usually come in the month of February. We're only in January but things are ahead of season. I mentioned this because I feel that, as Mother had written in her first list, Matrimandir is Love.

[*Takes another flower.*] This is—pardon my use of the word, everybody says



*'Supramental Consciousness': a yellow double, "Gloriously awake and powerful. Luminous, sure of itself, infallible in its movements."*





I'm using the wrong word—an old-fashioned hibiscus. It means it has been around for a long time. In fact, this one is a new-fashioned hibiscus because it also is a little different. Well, it is 'Consciousness One with the Divine Consciousness.'

[*Holds up another flower.*] This is 'Radha's Consciousness.' When Mother was naming the flowers and she had several flowers to play games with, this was an important flower. In fact, it was called 'Loving Consecration,' and then she added, 'Radha's Absolute Consecration.' Finally she simplified it to 'Radha's Consciousness.' Those who are steeped in something of the Indian tradition know that this is the best word. So evidently it goes with the garden of 'Consciousness.' But I repeat that we must develop these qualities, which will be reflected in the gardens.

I hadn't planned to say anything else except that I feel in this change of season, as I started talking about in the beginning, there are wonders to be discovered in Nature herself: in the sky, in the stars, in the trees, in the ground, in the birds and the insects. In fact, we're coming back to the time of St. Francis of Assisi, when he greeted all the different creatures and beings in Nature as his brothers and sisters. That is what we have to recover. I will not explain it further because I think that each one must make that discovery oneself.

A short anecdote comes to my mind. In olden days, when Sadhaks greeted each other—you know that nowadays people often say '*Bonjour*'—the phrase was "*Victoire à la Douce Mère!*" (Victory to Sweet Mother!) What was the answer? It was "*Au Divin, Victoire!*" (To the Divine Victory!) That is the story that came to me when he [*a member of the audience*] said, "let us offer this to the Mother, and to her victory in us."

Let me tell you an amusing story. I was attracted to a flower about which a garden-friend of mine said, "Oh Mother has not given a nice name to this flower. In fact, she did not even want it to be brought to her." So I was rather puzzled. I thought to myself, "Why, whenever I see this tree I always feel attracted to it, and when I see the



'Radha's Consciousness': Violet with yellow center, this flower "symbolizes perfect attachment to the Divine."

flowers I try to get a petal from the ground and take it home." It is such a beautiful red; it's difficult to find a stronger red. We haven't even got a red like that here, all of them have a touch of orange. So I wrote to the Mother and said, "Mother I'm told that this flower does not have a very good name. So you didn't want to see it." Of course, I told her too that I felt drawn to it. All this was written and sent through Pavitra who used to take my letters to the Mother. I don't remember if she wrote on a piece of paper or she just said to Pavitra—I think she wrote on a small piece of paper, in French—'The Beginning of Realization in Matter,' which made me happy. To get that realization in matter, even the beginning, you know how long it will take . . . but at least let's make a start.

Regarding names, when we were revising the flower book, and I pointed out that she had given two names to the same flower, the Mother simply asked, "what shall we do?" But for the book she chose one—to avoid confusion, I believe.

I must tell you also that when the name 'Auroville' was changed to 'New Creation,' this word also has a little anecdote. We called it 'New Creation,' and Mother said, "No, no, it is 'The New Creation.' It is not an ordinary creation: it is 'The New Creation.'" That's why, I sup-

pose, the word "Auroville" was replaced by "The New Creation." Not in all cases, but in most cases. By the way, 'The New Creation,' the Tuberose (*Polianthes tuberosa*), was named ages ago—long before Auroville came into being.

One thing was very interesting and always struck me. We used to go out for picnics for the day and we would collect flowers to take to the Mother. So I brought a wild flower. I'm very fond of them! To me they have something very special in their simplicity, their spontaneity, their minuteness. So I brought a flower which looked like 'Immortality.' And I sent it to the Mother and asked her whether it had a significance. And Mother simply replied, through Pavitra, "It is some form of aspiration for immortality, but to be very precise, I would have to concentrate a lot, and at the moment I don't have the time."

I must add that when the Mother was naming new flowers during the revision of the book and the early days of Auroville (1969-1971), everyone was excited to send all the flowers that were new to the Mother. And finally Mother had to say—I am putting words into her mouth—she said, "I will name the flowers that are growing here." Otherwise there was no end to the flowers that we could bring from all over the world. She said, "I'd like to name the flowers that are here." So remember when you see a flower here, it is quite special!

[*In answer to a question.*] I feel that an important way of learning the names that Mother has given and is best done in young children's classes, is to let the child choose to be a flower: "I am victory," "I am simplicity," "I am courage." Give a flower's name to a child. And the other way of learning the names is to make sentences with a group of flowers. Hand out a few flowers and say, "How do we make a beautiful sentence out of these flowers with their meanings?" And I think something for the future would be to try to find out what in the flower touches us and in which part of our being and our soul—the fragrance, color, touch, shape and pattern, aura—but that is something for another time to give it due respect.



## Essays

### Flowers: their secret sense and symbolic significance in the light of the Mother

by Shyam Kumari

**F**lowers are the smile of Mahalakshmi. Vibrations of beauty have become concretized and taken a thousand enchanting shapes and hues in flowers. To some extent flowers bring to our earth a reflection of Eden, a touch of Nandana.

In bygone ages the great Auryveda-charyas of India had unlocked the secrets of the medicinal properties of roots and herbs. The Mother studied in a most scientifically spiritual way the quality and vibration that each flower represents. Her method was novel. She identified herself with the “soul” of a flower and, thus becoming one with it, revealed its secret symbolism.

When asked, “Sweet Mother, how do you give a significance to a flower,” she replied, “By entering into contact with it and giving a more or less precise meaning to what I feel . . . by entering into contact with the nature of the flower, its inner truth; then one knows what it represents.”

The Mother further elucidated how she established this contact with the flowers, “There is a kind of identification with the vibration, a perception of the quality it represents. Little by little, through a kind of approximation that sometimes comes all of a sudden and on other occasions needs time, there occurs a close approach between these vibrations . . .

“In some countries, particularly here in India, certain plants are used for worship, offering, devotion. Some plants are given on special occasions. I have often seen that this identification is in agreement with the nature of the plant, because it happened that spontaneously, without



Shyam Kumari. (Photo by Larry Seidlitz)

knowing anything, I give the same meaning as that given in religious ceremonies. The vibrations are there in the flower itself.” The Mother also revealed that flowers “. . . have an occult power; they can even transmit a message if one knows how to charge them with it.”

In the sadhana in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, flowers play a most important role. The Mother always gave different flowers to different devotees, to each according to his or her spiritual need. Old and young, all disciples offered flowers to her consciously, asking for the thing they needed in their sadhana at that particular juncture by offering the flower or flowers signifying that vibration. For example, the Mother has named country roses, the common pink variety, “surrender.” If a sadhak wanted to ask to grow in his surrender to the guru or the Divine, he or she would offer to the Mother this particular flower.

On her part the Mother used to give the needed force or quality to the sadhaks through flowers representing that quality. She once narrated a story about the power of flowers. “Flowers are extremely receptive. All the flowers to which I have given a significance receive exactly the force I put into them and transmit it. People don’t always receive it because most of the time they are less receptive than the flower, and

they waste the force that has been put in it through their unconsciousness and lack of receptivity. But the force is there, and the flower receives it wonderfully.

“I knew this a very long time ago. Fifty years ago . . . There was that occultist who later gave me lessons in occultism for two years. His wife was a wonderful clairvoyant and had an absolutely remarkable capacity—precisely—of transmitting forces. They lived in Tlemcen. I was in Paris. I used to correspond with them; I had not yet met them. And then, one day, she sent me in a letter petals of the pomegranate flower, “Divine’s Love.” At that time I had not given the meaning to the flower. She sent me petals of pomegranate flowers telling me that these flowers were bringing me her protection and force.

“Now at that time I used to wear my watch on a chain. Wrist-watches were not known then or there were very few. And there was also a small eighteenth century magnifying glass . . . And it had two lenses, you see like all reading-glasses; there were two lenses mounted on a golden frame, and it was hanging from my chain. Now between these two glasses I put these petals and I used to carry this about with me always because I wanted to keep this with me and I always felt a kind of energy, warmth, confidence, force which came from it . . . I did not think about it, you see, but I felt like that.

“And then, one day, suddenly I felt quite depleted, as though a support that was there had gone. Something very unpleasant. I said, ‘It is strange; what has happened? Nothing really unpleasant has happened to me. Why do I feel like this, so empty, emptied of energy?’ And in the evening, when I took off my watch and chain, I noticed that one of the small glasses had come off and all the petals were gone. There was one petal left. Then I really knew that they carried a considerable charge of power, for I had felt the difference without even knowing the reason. I didn’t know the reason yet it made a considerable difference. So it was after this that I saw how one could use flowers by charging them with forces. They are ex-



tremely receptive.”

The colors of flowers also have a deep bearing on their significance. Sri Aurobindo has given detailed explanation of the significance of colors. In general yellow is the color of mind, gold of supermind, pink or pale rose of that of the psychic being, of the soul. Violet is the color of the vital emotional being, red is the color of the physical being and white denotes integrality of a quality or vibration.

The Mother has given significances to hundreds of flowers. Here I have compiled the symbolic meaning of some well-known flowers as revealed by the Mother. After the common names, the botanical names of the flowers are given in parentheses (if different); the Mother’s significances and comments in her own words are given in quotes.

Aster, China Aster, Annual Aster (*Callistephus Chinensis*): “Transparency—It can come only as a result of perfect sincerity.”

Cactus flowers of all colors and forms: “Riches—It is to the Divine that all riches belong. It is the Divine who lends them to living beings, and it is to Him that they must naturally return.”

Daffodil (*Trumpet Narcissus*): “Power of beauty—Beauty does not get its full power except when it is surrendered to the Divine.”

Dahlia: “Aristocracy—Incapable of baseness and pettiness, it asserts itself with dignity and authority.”

Geranium (*Pelargonium hortorum*): “Spiritual happiness—Calm and smiling, nothing can disturb it.”

Gladiolus: “Receptivity—Conscious of the Divine Will and surrendered to it.”

Hydrangea: “Collective harmony—Collective harmony is the work undertaken by the Divine Consciousness: it alone has the power to realize it.”

Impatiens (*Impatiens balsamina*): “Generosity—Gives and gives itself with-



Madonna lily. Pearl white: ‘Purity arising from perfect consecration.’

out bargaining.”

Jasmine (*Jasminum*): “Purity—True purity gives a lovely fragrance.”

Lilac (*Syringa*): “Distinction—Of refined beauty, it is sufficient to itself.”

Lily, Easter Lily, Madonna Lily, or Annunciation Lily (*Lilium candidum*): “Purity arising from perfect consecration—If one lives only for the Divine and by the Divine, there follows a perfect purity.”

Lotus (*Nelumbo nucifera*): “The Avatar—The Supreme manifested on earth in a body: the pink lotus is Sri Aurobindo’s flower.” White lotus (*Nelumbo nucifera* ‘Alba’): “Aditi—The Divine Consciousness: Pure, immaculate, gloriously powerful.”

Marigold (*Tagetes*): “Plasticity—Always ready for the progress demanded.”

Pansy (*Viola tricolor hortensis*): “Thoughts turned towards the Divine—A certitude of beauty.”

Petunia (*Petunia hybrida*): “Enthusiasm—True enthusiasm is full of a peaceful endurance.”

Poinsettia (*Euphorbia pubcherrima*): “Opening of the vital to the Divine Love—Little by little it is no longer the ego which governs but the Divine.”

Rose (*Rosa*): “Love for the Divine—The vegetal kingdom gathers together its most beautiful possibilities to offer them to the Divine.”

Sunflower (*Tithonia diversifolia*): “First movements of the riches towards the Divine—The certain indication of conversion.”

Tulip (*Tulipa*): “Blossoming—Result of trust and success.”

Zinnia: “Endurance—Going to the very end of the effort without fatigue or relaxing.”

## Vignettes of the world of plants and flowers

by Shyam Kumari

### The Auroville Banyan tree

One morning the Mother asked Rakhal Bose to go at once to the Matrimandir at Auroville. She said the banyan tree there was in great distress. On reaching the Matrimandir, Rakhal found that some careless labourer, after finishing his work the previous evening, had stuck his sickle in the tree-trunk. He at once removed it. (*Vignettes of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother*, p. 68)

### Of roses

Soon after M’s family joined the Ashram they faced great domestic discord. Young M was confused by these incomprehensible quarrels and misfortunes; but meanwhile, with the Mother’s permission, she started a small garden. She knew nothing whatsoever about horticulture, yet she had high hopes of developing ordinary country roses into an exotic and beautiful variety. She took great care of her plants, but was very much disappointed when the first flowers turned out to be a bunch of small, flat blossoms. Still they were the first roses from her garden, and in those days the first bloom from each plant was offered to the Mother. Although M was convinced that they were not a wor-





thy offering, she approached the Mother in the Playground with her bunch of roses. To her surprise, the Mother accepted them with a keen joy, and asked M, "My child, do you know the significance of these flowers?" M answered, "No, Mother." "They mean 'Abject surrender,'" she said.

Later, M heard that the Mother had commented to someone else, "Out of chaos she has brought surrender." M was very happy. What touched her most was that the Mother had appreciated her ignorant but sincere effort.

Elsewhere, the Mother has given the significance of this rose as "Integral surrender," but on that occasion she said, "Abject surrender."

As we have noted, although she was keen on growing roses, M knew nothing about rose culture. She used to see that every day K took 20 or 30 beautiful roses to the Mother. One particular rose named 'Peace' seemed to be the Mother's favorite at that time, and K offered Peace roses to her. In those days choice varieties of roses were not available in Pondicherry. Those who had means ordered plants from good nurseries in Bengal, Bihar, or elsewhere. M did not have the resources to order plants from outside. Someone once gave her some good rose plants. Amongst them was one 'Peace.' M took great care of her plants. Finally at the end of the year, one perfect flower bloomed on a long healthy stem surrounded by glossy green perfect leaves. She was thrilled and naturally wanted to offer the beautiful flower to the Mother. By then the Mother had retired to her second-floor room. M took the rose to Nolini-da. In his room she saw about 20 similar perfect 'Peace' roses offered by K in a big vase. Nolini-da asked her to place it with them. M felt very sad; she was sure that amid that magnificent profusion her lone flower would be unnoticed.

She was so depressed that she immersed herself in work to forget the whole



*The Banyan tree at the center of Auroville. (Photo courtesy www.auroville.org)*

affair, and succeeded. At 11 o'clock someone came from Nolini-da's office to call her. Nolini-da told her, "Here is a blessing packet for you. As soon as I went to the Mother she pointed to your flower and asked for it. She was very happy to receive it and she has sent this for you." Hearing that the Mother herself had picked out her flower, M's happiness knew no bounds. She understood that a sincere offering, however small, brings down the Mother's love and compassion. (*Vignettes*, p. 142-143)

### Flower distribution

Once M was sitting with Narayan Prasad, who used to supply flowers for distribution by the Mother. In those days lotuses were rare, the Ashram people had to go very far to obtain some; it was considered a great privilege to receive a lotus from the hands of the Mother. Narayan Prasad knew there were not enough lotus flowers for everyone to get one at the distribution. Neither had he any other special flowers. He had made bunches of smaller flowers to be distributed when all the lotuses were gone. So he told M to hurry to the distribution, or he would not receive a lotus from the Mother. M replied, "Any flower given by the Mother becomes as precious as a lotus." Then he joined the queue, accompanied by Narayan Prasad

and eight or ten friends of his own.

While giving a lotus to the person in front of M, the Mother went into a trance. For a full five minutes M had the joy of standing in front of the Mother. When she came out of her trance, her attendant passed her one of the small bunches of flowers which Narayan Prasad had prepared; but the Mother put the bunch to one side and looked into the basket. There were still a few lotuses left, which she distributed to M and almost all his friends; only for the last one no lotus was

there—but this person felt ecstatic at receiving a bunch of flowers instead of only one. (*Vignettes*, p. 160)

### The palm tree

Sri Aurobindo used to walk in a long passage outside his room. When he was walking there, he closed the shutters so that the people in the courtyard would not be able to see him. The Mother had the idea that if a palm tree were to be planted in this courtyard, when it grew up it would shield Sri Aurobindo from view, and he would be able to keep the shutters open while walking in the passage. In 1927 Dyuman planted the tree which still sways in front of the Meditation Hall. (*More Vignettes of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother*, p. 25)

### Flowers for the Lord

For many years the Mother prepared a huge tray of flowers beautifully arranged in different designs. Chinmayi would help her. Then they would carry the tray to Sri Aurobindo's room and place it on the cupboard at the left of the door.

Some time after the accident to Sri Aurobindo's leg, the Mother stopped doing this, perhaps because so many people were attending on Sri Aurobindo and the space was needed for other things. (*More Vignettes*, p. 37)



## The Service tree

Based on talks by Dyuman and Parichand.

In January 1927, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother shifted from the Library House, opposite the main gate of the Ashram, to the rooms above the Meditation Hall. At that time there was a mango tree a few feet from the center of the central courtyard. Later this tree died. The Mother asked Dyuman and the late Manubhai, then the Ashram gardener, to get a “Service” tree (*Peltaphorum pterocarpum*—Copper Pod) from the Botanical Garden. Dyuman, Ambu and Manubhai, without the help of paid labour, dug a six-foot deep pit which they filled with compost.

Finally the Service tree was planted on Tuesday, January 4, 1930, in the very center of the Ashram courtyard. The gardeners protected it so that the Ashram cats might not disturb it. They watered it abundantly. And under the loving gaze of the Mother, who would always look at it as she passed, the tree flourished. By 1940 it was very well-grown, with its branches resting on the tiled roofs of three connected rooms, then known as the “Flower Room.”

During the war, a Japanese battleship was sighted from Madras, far out at sea. It moved in the direction of Pondicherry. There seemed to be the danger of its sending out planes to bomb the town. Sadhaks were even given some training about what to do in such an eventuality. One day Dyuman asked, “Mother, if the terrace collapses, how shall we support the branches of the tree?” Apart from the danger from bombs, the three tiled roofs on which the branches were resting would soon have to be demolished to make way for new construction. The problem was how to prop up the branches, for the Mother would not allow even one branch of this tree to be cut.

The Czech engineer, Sammer, who had come to work on Golconde, was asked to design some support. He made a simple and artistic design inspired by the railings at Sanchi. The Mother liked this idea and the pillars were raised. Squares of earth were left unpaved around the pillars because, in those days, the Mother used to come in the evening onto the terrace above Dyuman’s room to give meditations. She wanted grass to be grown in the squares around the pillars so that sadhaks could sit comfortably on the grass . . . but somehow the grass could not be grown,



The flowering Service tree graces the courtyard of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. (Photo courtesy Sri Aurobindo Ashram)

and later pebbles were put around the pillars instead. [Presently, grass is grown in some of the squares.]

The Service tree went on extending its roots and branches. Some of the boughs hung so low that people would injure their eyes when going to the Meditation Hall for the midnight meditation. Jyotin told the Mother that people were complaining about these branches. The Mother remarked, “How gracefully the boughs came down to touch the earth.” On another occasion she said to Parichand, “They protest! They must learn to bow their heads.” And she herself gave a demonstration of how to do it.

Some of the tree’s roots grew above the surface. It is said that the Mother would not step upon these roots. She would rather take a long stride over them.

Parichand proposed to cover them, but the Mother replied that while it could have been done earlier, now the roots had thickened and become like branches and it would not do to cover them.

A cyclone in 1943 uprooted many trees in the town, and a large branch of the Service tree fell too. When the Mother saw the damage she said, “Had a roof given way, I would not feel so deeply as at the loss of this branch of the Service tree.”

When in December 1950 the Mother decided that Sri Aurobindo’s Samadhi would be constructed at the foot of the Service tree, she asked Jyotin and Parichand to make sure that no thick root of the tree was damaged during the digging work. Fortunately there was no thick root at the site of the Samadhi.

Once during the 1960s, it was decided, with the sanction of the Mother, that the vegetable van would unload at the south-facing “Cartonnerie” gate, and from there the vegetables would be taken upstairs via the Samadhi courtyard. One day workmen started digging near the tree to widen the passage. As Parichand saw

that there was danger of damage to the thick roots of the tree, he informed the Mother at once through Amrita. The Mother immediately came out onto the terrace of Pavitra’s room and asked that the work be stopped. After an hour she came down and admonished the workers for damaging the roots. Then she stopped the work altogether, declaring, “It is absurd.” A new arrangement was made for the vegetables and fruits.

On another occasion some branches of the Service tree were broken during a cyclone. When the Mother was informed the next day, at first she could not believe it. She said that it would not have been possible if the consciousness of the ashramites had not gone down so much.

With its million golden flowers the Service tree stands sentinel to the Samadhi



and pays its scented offerings to the Lord and the Mother . . . a giant tree whose roots have extended even beyond the Ashram walls. (*More Vignettes*, pp. 133-135)

### **‘Divine Solicitude’**

Once the Mother gave Dahyalal the flower “Divine Solicitude” (*Malvaviscus arboreus*). He went to Nolini and asked him, “What does this flower signify?” Nolini replied, “It means, even if you forget the Mother, she will not forget you.” (*More Vignettes*, p. 151)

### **Rose of God**

On another occasion Parichand wrote to the Mother:

“Mother, two questions have arisen in the mind in connection with Sri Aurobindo’s poem “Rose of God,” which please answer. [*see the poem on p. 33*]

“1) Does the rose of all flowers most perfectly and aptly express the divine ecstasies or has it got any symbolic allusion in the Veda or the Upanishad?”

Sri Aurobindo answered: “There were no roses in those times in India—roses came in with the Mohomedans from Persia. The rose is usually taken by us as the symbol of surrender, love, etc. But here it is not used in that sense, but as the most intense of all flowers it is used as symbolic of the divine intensities—Bliss, Light, Love, etc.”

“2) Are the seven ecstasies referred to there the following?: —Bliss, Light, Power, Immortality, Life, Love and Grace.”

“No, it is not seven kinds, but seven levels of Ananda that meant by the seven ecstasies.”

2.1.1935

Sri Aurobindo (*Beautiful Vignettes of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother*, p. 23)

### **‘Supramental Sun’**

S [Shyam Kumari], a flower-lover and a keen gardener, became friendly with almost all the Ashram gardeners within a short time after she joined the Ashram. She

had a very living relation with flowers. From time to time she would feel an intense aspiration to offer some particular flower to the Mother. With the help of the Ashram gardeners she was almost always able to fulfill her aspiration. But when she experienced a great urge to offer the Kadamba flower (*Anthrocephalus cadamba*), which the Mother has named ‘Supramental Sun,’ she was unable to do so for more than two years. At that time there were only one or two Kadamba trees in the Ashram which, in the Pondicherry climate, flowered for only a few days each year.

One afternoon, for no apparent reason, S went to the Meditation Hall at a time when she was not generally free. As she came out after meditating for a while, she met Jyotin, the sadhak in charge of the Flower Room. In his hands were a dozen or so perfect Kadamba flowers. As soon as he saw S he exclaimed, “Where have you been? For two days I have been looking for you. Many Supramental Sun flowers have been coming. I am taking these up to the Mother. Come with me.”

Her heart palpitating with joy and expectation, S followed Jyotin to the landing near the Mother’s room. Champaklal came out to take the flowers for the Mother. Jyotin told him, “S has been aspiring to offer these flowers to the Mother for the past two years.”

This was in early 1970 when the Mother was especially hard-pressed for time. Champaklal answered rather brusquely, “Not everything that we want is possible.” S replied, “If it is not possible, it is not possible.” Champaklal looked intently at her, and then went into the Mother’s room with the flowers. In those last years, the attendants had to speak loudly to make the Mother hear. S could clearly hear him say, “Mother, S says that for two years she has been aspiring to offer you these flowers.” With a happy heart overflowing with gratitude she waited with Jyotin.

Presently Champaklal came out with a bouquet for Jyotin, and then gave one perfect Supramental Sun flower to S, saying “The Mother has given this flower for

you.” Taken aback, S protested, “I don’t want for myself. I wanted to offer to the Mother.” Patiently Champaklal made it clear to the young aspirant, “Yes. I told this to the Mother and gave her the flowers. She has sent this one for you.”

With joy and gratitude S received the flower. (*Beautiful Vignettes*, p. 72)

### **‘Divine Love’ flowers**

Every day with love and devotion M [Moongi-ben] and her sister wove a garland of Purity (jasmine) flowers for the Mother. It took the sisters more than three hours to weave the two meter long, thick garland.

After finishing the garland M would arrange it with tender care in a tray and take it to the Ashram Meditation Hall staircase. From there Vasudha, the Mother’s companion and servitor, carried it to the Mother. The Mother used to hang the garland on the back and arms of her chair.

Then the Mother would arrange several types of flowers in the empty tray and Vasudha would bring it back to M who waited for her. Sometimes Vasudha would work in the Mother’s chamber for as long as two hours, but M would always wait joyfully.

Apart from her daily garland weaving, M used to help embroider the Mother’s dresses and accessories. Once when she embroidered ‘Divine Love’ (pomegranate) flowers on a gown for the Mother, an aspiration rose in her heart to receive a ‘Divine Love’ flower from the Mother. One day while handing the tray of the jasmine garland she mentioned her aspiration to Vasudha. Vasudha replied emphatically that the Mother gave Divine Love flowers only to Pranab, and to no one else, therefore it would not be possible for her to ask the Mother to give one to M.

Accordingly Vasudha did not mention M’s request to the Mother. Imagine her surprise when to the many flowers the Mother usually arranged in M’s tray, on that day, she added several ‘Divine Love’ flowers. (*Beautiful Vignettes*, p. 75)





## Source material

### The psychic significance of flowers

by the Mother

*Is there a sense of beauty in flowers?*

As soon as there is organic life, the vital element comes in, and it is this vital element which gives to flowers the sense of beauty. It is not perhaps individualised in the sense we understand it, but it is a sense of the species and the species always tries to realise it. I have noticed a first rudiment of the psychic presence and vibration in vegetable life, and truly this blossoming one calls a flower is the first manifestation of the psychic presence. The psychic is individualised only in man, but it was there before him; but it is not the same kind of individualisation as in man, it is more fluid: it manifests as force, as consciousness rather than as individuality. Take the rose, for example; its great perfection of form, colour, scent expresses an aspiration and a psychic giving. Look at a rose opening in the morning at the first touch of the sun, it is a magnificent self-giving in aspiration.

*Each flower has its special significance, hasn't it?*

Not as we understand it mentally. There is a mental projection when one gives a precise meaning to a flower. It may answer, vibrate to the touch of this projection, accept the meaning, but a flower has no equivalent of the mental consciousness. In the vegetable kingdom there is a beginning of the psychic, but there is no beginning of the mental consciousness. In animals it is different; mental life begins to form and for them things have a meaning. But in flowers it is rather like the movement of a little baby—it is neither a sensation nor a feeling, but something of both; it is a spontaneous movement, a very special vibration. So, if one is in contact with it, if one feels it, one gets an impression which may be translated by a thought. That is how I have given a meaning to flowers and plants—there is a kind of identification with the vibration, a perception of the quality it represents and, little by little, through a kind of approximation (sometimes this comes suddenly, occasionally it takes time), there is a coming together of these vibrations (which are of a vital-emotional order) and the vibration of the mental thought, and if there is a sufficient harmony, one has a direct perception of what the plant may signify.

In some countries (particularly here) certain plants are used as the media for worship, offering, devotion. Certain plants are given on special occasions. And I have often seen that this

identification was quite in keeping with the nature of the plant, because spontaneously, without knowing anything, I happened to give the same meaning as that given in religious ceremonies. The vibration was really there in the flower itself . . . Did it come from the use that had been made of it or did it come from very far, from somewhere deep down, from a beginning of the psychic life? It would be difficult to say.

### 'Psychological Perfection'

by the Mother

*Mother shows the white Champak flower she is holding in her hand. She has named the flower 'Psychological Perfection.'*

Who remembers this?

(Counting the petals.) One, two, three, four, five psychological perfections. What are the five psychological perfections?

For they can be changed. And in fact, to tell you my secrets, every time I give it to someone, they are not always the same psychological perfections. That depends on people's needs. Even to the same person I may give at different times different psychological perfections; so it's not fixed. But the first time this flower was named 'Psychological Perfection' (I remember very well it was at a gathering up there where Prosperity now is, where I go on the first of the month [to distribute to the disciples what they need for the month]; there was a gathering and we had decided the five psychological perfections), at that time they were noted down, but as for me it is something very fluid—I told you it depends on the circumstances and needs—I don't remember what was chosen the first time.

So, if someone knows it, he can tell us, we'll compare.

*I am not sure.*

You are not sure. Is there anyone who is sure?

*Aspiration, devotion, sincerity and faith.*

That makes only four, so far.

*And surrender.*

Surrender? Someone told me something else.

(To a disciple) You, do you know? Well, then, come and tell us.

*In English, Mother?*

Ah, no, my child, this is a French class, not in English!

*Faith, sincerity, aspiration, devotion, surrender.*



*The Mother distributing flowers. (Photo courtesy Sri Aurobindo Ashram)*

But that's what he just said. (Turning to another disciple) You—a little while ago, you told me "faithfulness."

*I said that, but it's not faithfulness, instead of faithfulness it's faith.*

But why should there not be faithfulness? I didn't put it down, because I didn't try to recall anything. I

simply wrote down what seemed to me the most important and most general. But it may be put in various ways.

In any case, what is always there, in all combinations and to whomever I give it, the first among them all is sincerity. For if there is no sincerity, one cannot advance even by half a step. So that is the first, and it is always there.

But it is possible to translate it by another word, if you prefer it, which would be "transparency." I shall explain this word:

Someone is in front of me and I am looking at him; I look into his eyes. And if this person is sincere or "transparent," through his eyes I go down and I see his soul—clearly. But—this is precisely the experience—when I look at somebody and see a little cloud, then I continue, I see a screen, and then sometimes a wall, and afterwards it is something quite black; and all this must be crossed, and holes bored in order to go through; and even then I am not sure if at the last minute I may not find myself before a door of bronze so thick that I shall never get through and see his soul; so of such a person I can immediately say that he is not sincere. But I can also say, figuratively, that he is not transparent. That is the first thing.

There is a second, which is obviously, as indispensable if you want to go forward; it is to have faith. Or another word, which seems more limited but is for me more important, because (it is a question of experience) if your faith is not made of a complete trust in the Divine, well, you may very easily remain under the impression that you have faith yet be losing all trust in the divine Power or divine Goodness, or the Trust the Divine has in you. These are the three stumbling blocks:

Those who have what they call an unshakable faith in the Divine, and say, "It is the Divine who is doing everything, who can

do everything; all that happens in me, in others, everywhere, is the work of the Divine and the Divine alone," if they follow this with some kind of logic, after some time they will blame the Divine for all the most terrible wrongs which take place in the world and make of Him a real demon, cruel and frightful—if they have no trust.

Or again, they do have faith, but tell themselves, "Well, I have faith in the Divine, but this world, I see quite well what it's like! First of all, I suffer so much, don't I? I am very unhappy, far more unhappy than all my neighbors—for one is always far more unhappy than all one's neighbors—"I am very unhappy and, truly, life is cruel to me. But then the Divine is divine, He is All-Goodness, All-Generosity, All-Harmony, so how is it that I am so unhappy? He must be powerless; otherwise being so good how could He let me suffer so much?"

That is the second stumbling-block.

And the third: there are people who have what may be called a warped and excessive modesty or humility and who tell themselves, "Surely the Divine has thrown me out, I am good for nothing, He can do nothing with me, the only thing for me is to give up the game, for He finds me unworthy of Him!"

So, unless one adds to faith a total and complete trust in the Divine Grace, there will be difficulties. So both are necessary . . .

Now, we have put "devotion" in this series. Yes, devotion is all very well, but unless it is accompanied by many other things it too may make many mistakes. It may meet with great difficulties.

You have devotion, and you keep your ego. And then your ego makes you do all sorts of things out of devotion, things which are terribly egoistic. That is to say, you think only of yourself, not of others, nor of the world, nor of the work, nor of what ought to be done—you think only of your devotion. And you become tremendously egoistic. And so, when you find out that the Divine, for some reason, does not answer to your devotion with the enthusiasm you expected of Him, you despair and fall back into the same three difficulties I was just speaking about: either the Divine is cruel—we have read that, there are many such stories, of enthusiastic devotees who abuse the Divine because He is no longer as gentle and near to them as before, He has withdrawn, "Why hast Thou deserted me? Thou hast abandoned me, O monster! . . ." They don't dare to say this, but think it, or else they say, "Oh! I must have made such a serious mistake that I am thrown out," and they fall into despair.

But there is another movement which should constantly accompany devotion . . . That kind of sense of gratitude that the Divine exists; that feeling of a marveling thankfulness which truly fills you with a sublime joy at the fact that the Divine exists, that there is something in the universe which is the Divine, that it is not just the monstrosity we see, that there is the Divine, the Divine exists. And each time that the least thing puts you either directly or indirectly in contact with this sublime Reality of divine existence, the heart is filled with so intense, so marvelous a joy, such a gratitude as of all things has the most delightful taste.



There is nothing which gives you a joy equal to that of gratitude. One hears a bird sing, sees a lovely flower, looks at a little child, observes an act of generosity, reads a beautiful sentence, looks at the setting sun, no matter what, suddenly this comes upon you, this kind of emotion—indeed so deep, so intense—that the world manifests the Divine, that there is something behind the world which is the Divine.

So I find that devotion without gratitude is quite incomplete, gratitude must come with devotion.

I remember that once we spoke of courage as one of the perfections; I remember having written it down once in a list. But this courage means having a taste for the supreme adventure. And this taste for the supreme adventure is aspiration—an aspiration which takes hold of you completely and flings you, without calculation and without reserve and without a possibility of withdrawal, into the great adventure of the divine discovery, the great adventure of the divine meeting, the yet greater adventure of the divine Realisation; you throw yourself into the adventure without looking back and without asking for a single minute, “What’s going to happen?” For if you ask what is going to happen, you never start, you always remain stuck there, rooted to the spot, afraid to lose something, to lose your balance.

That’s why I speak of courage—but really it is aspiration. They go together. A real aspiration is something full of courage.

And now, surrender. In English the word is “surrender,” there is no French word which gives exactly that sense. But Sri Aurobindo has said—I think we have read this—that surrender is the first and absolute condition for doing the yoga. So, if we follow what he has said, this is not just one of the necessary qualities: it is the first attitude indispensable for beginning the yoga. If one has not decided to make a total surrender, one cannot begin.

But for this surrender to be total, all these qualities are necessary. And I add one more—for so far we have only four—I add endurance. For, if you are not able to face difficulties without getting discouraged and without giving up, because it is too difficult; and if you are incapable . . . well, of receiving blows and yet continuing, of “pocketing” them, as they say—when you receive blows as a result of your defects, of putting them in your pocket and continuing to go forward without flagging—you don’t go very far; at the first turning where you lose sight of your little habitual life, you fall into despair and give up the game.

The most . . . how shall I put it? The most material form of this is perseverance. Unless you are resolved to begin the same thing over again a thousand times if need be . . . You know, people come to me in despair, “But I thought it was done and now I must begin again!” And if they are told, “But that’s nothing, you will probably have to begin again a hundred times, two hundred times, a thousand times; you take one step forward and think you are secure, but there will always be something to bring back the same difficulty a little farther on. You think you have solved the problem, you must solve it yet once again; it will turn up again looking just a little different, but it will be the same problem,” and if you are not

determined that: “Even if it comes back a million times, I shall do it a million times, but I shall go through with it,” well, you won’t be able to do the yoga. This is absolutely indispensable.

People have a beautiful experience and say, “Ah, now this is it! . . .” And then it settles down, diminishes, gets veiled, and suddenly something quite unexpected, absolutely commonplace and apparently completely uninteresting comes before you and blocks your way. And then you say, “Ah! What’s the good of having made this progress if it’s going to start all over again? Why should I do it? I made an effort, I succeeded, achieved something, and now it’s as if I had done nothing! It’s indeed hopeless.” For you have no endurance.

If one has endurance, one says, “It’s all right. Good, I shall begin again as often as necessary; a thousand times, ten thousand times, a hundred thousand times if necessary, I shall begin again—but I shall go to the end and nothing will have the power to stop me on the way.”

This is most necessary. Most necessary.

So here’s my proposal: we put surrender first, at the top of the list, that is, we accept what Sri Aurobindo has said—that to do the integral yoga one must first resolve to surrender entirely to the Divine, there is no other way, this is *the* way. But after that one must have the five psychological virtues, five psychological perfections, and we say that these perfections are:

Sincerity or Transparency

Faith or Trust (Trust in the Divine, naturally)

Devotion or Gratitude

Courage or Aspiration

Endurance or Perseverance

One form of endurance is faithfulness, faithfulness to one’s resolution—being faithful. One has taken a resolution, one is faithful to one’s resolution. This is endurance.

There you are.

If one persists, there comes a time when one is victorious.

Victory is to the most persistent.



*‘Psychological Perfection.’*





## The poetry room

### From "The Destined Meeting Place," *Savitri*

To a space she came of soft and delicate air  
 That seemed a sanctuary of youth and joy,  
 A highland world of free and green delight  
 Where spring and summer lay together and strove  
 In indolent and amicable debate,  
 Inarmed, disputing with laughter who should rule.  
 There expectation beat wide sudden wings  
 As if a soul had looked out from earth's face,  
 And all that was in her felt a coming change  
 And forgetting obvious joys and common dreams,  
 Obedient to Time's call, to the spirit's fate,  
 Was lifted to a beauty calm and pure  
 That lived under the eyes of Eternity.  
 A crowd of mountainous heads assailed the sky  
 Pushing towards rival shoulders nearer heaven,  
 The armoured leaders of an iron line;  
 Earth prostrate lay beneath their feet of stone.  
 Below them crouched a dream of emerald woods  
 And gleaming borders solitary as sleep:  
 Pale waters ran like glimmering threads of pearl.  
 A sigh was straying among happy leaves;  
 Cool-perfumed with slow pleasure-burdened feet  
 Faint stumbling breezes faltered among flowers.  
 The white crane stood, a vivid motionless streak,  
 Peacock and parrot jewelled soil and tree,  
 The dove's soft moan enriched the enamoured air  
 And fire-winged wild-drakes swam in silvery pools.  
 Earth couched alone with her great lover Heaven,  
 Uncovered to her consort's azure eye.  
 In a luxurious ecstasy of joy  
 She squandered the love-music of her notes,  
 Wasting the passionate pattern of her blooms  
 And festival riot of her scents and hues.  
 A cry and leap and hurry was around,  
 The stealthy footfalls of her chasing things,  
 The shaggy emerald of her centaur mane,  
 The gold and sapphire of her warmth and blaze.  
 Magician of her rapt felicities,  
 Blithe, sensuous-hearted, careless and divine,  
 Life ran or hid in her delightful rooms;  
 Behind all brooded Nature's grandiose calm.  
 Primaeval peace was there and in its bosom  
 Held undisturbed the strife of bird and beast.  
 Man the deep-browed artificer had not come  
 To lay his hand on happy unconscious things,  
 Thought was not there nor the measurer, strong-eyed toil,

Life had not learned its discord with its aim.  
 The Mighty Mother lay outstretched at ease.  
 All was in line with her first satisfied plan;  
 Moved by a universal will of joy  
 The trees bloomed in their green felicity  
 And the wild children brooded not on pain.

—Sri Aurobindo

### Rose of God

Rose of God, vermillion  
 stain on the  
 sapphires of  
 heaven,  
 Rose of Bliss, fire-sweet,  
 seven-tinged with  
 the ecstasies seven!  
 Leap up in our heart of  
 humanhood, O  
 miracle, O flame,  
 Passion-flower of the  
 Nameless, bud of  
 the mystical Name.



Rose of God, great wisdom-bloom on the summits of being,  
 Rose of Light, immaculate core of the ultimate seeing!  
 Live in the mind of our earthhood; O golden Mystery, flower,  
 Sun on the head of the Timeless, guest of the marvellous Hour.

Rose of God, damask force of Infinity, red icon of might,  
 Rose of Power with thy diamond halo piercing the night!  
 Ablaze in the will of the mortal, design the wonder of thy plan,  
 Image of Immortality, outbreak of the Godhead in man.

Rose of God, smitten purple with the incarnate divine Desire,  
 Rose of Life, crowded with petals, colour's lyre!  
 Transform the body of the mortal like a sweet and magical  
 rhyme;  
 Bridge our earthhood and heavenhood, make deathless the  
 children of Time.

Rose of God, like a blush of rapture on Eternity's face,  
 Rose of Love, ruby depth of all being, fire-passion of Grace!  
 Arise from the heart of the yearning that sobs in Nature's  
 abyss;  
 Make earth the home of the Wonderful and life beatitude's kiss.

—Sri Aurobindo



### **From Basundhara**

My Earth, you  
Of unaccountable years; with your soil  
Mingling myself, in the endless sky  
With untiring feet you have revolved around  
The solar system, during countless days and nights  
And through aeons of time; within me  
Grow your grass, flowers in super-abundance  
Bloomed, the trees shed their  
Leaves, flowers, fruits and scented pollen.  
So, some day  
Sitting unmindful and alone  
On the bank of the Padma,  
casting a charmed glance ahead  
I feel in and through all my limbs and mind,  
How inside your earth shivering  
The grass shoots are sprouting, within you  
What a stream of life's essence, day and night,  
Circulates, the flower-buds  
From what a blind joy bloom eagerly  
On exquisite stalks, in fresh sun-shine  
Trees, vines, bushes and grass  
from what a mysterious thrill,  
From what an unmeaning hilarity, grow over-joyous  
Like a child tired of sucking its mother's breast and satiated--  
Its face wreathing with a dreamy smile.

—Rabindranath Tagore  
(tr. Rabindra Nath Choudhury)

### **From Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey**

For I have learned  
To look on nature, not as in the hour  
Of thoughtless youth: but hearing oftentimes  
The still, sad music of humanity,  
Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power  
To chasten and subdue. And I have felt  
A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
Of elevated thoughts: a sense sublime  
Of something far more deeply interfused,  
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
And the round ocean and the living air,  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:  
A motion and a spirit, that impels  
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,  
And rolls through all things. Therefore am I still  
A lover of the meadows and the woods,  
And mountains; and of all that we behold

From this green earth: of all the mighty world  
Of eye, and ear,--both what they half create,  
And what perceive; well pleased to recognize  
In nature and the language of the sense,  
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,  
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul  
Of all my moral being.

—William Wordsworth

### **And there are flowers**

And there are flowers, modest, shy, withdrawn  
For whom the sun as lover is too strong;  
They bloom at night and offer to the dawn  
Their fragrant gifts and silence is their song.

We have watched the ballet of the stamens dance  
In the moon-white chalice of blooming Cereus  
When night was full and earth held in its trance  
And felt a subtle peace wash over us.

Now love has come and granted me the Sight  
Reflected in the mirror of my heart,  
Of things that are themselves possessed of light  
And every soul is of this beauty part.

For at the last joy shall again prevail,  
Eternity lives in us, we cannot fail.

—Narad

### **The lotus**

Who can know the secret of the hidden lotus?  
Who can peep into the mystery of its depths?  
Some God's gaze holds it ingathered,  
Some mystic silence has it enthralled.  
Head of Light held high on Infinity's stalk,  
It sways in a vibrating fathomless Vast,  
Till with His morning's golden warmth  
The Sun wakes it up gently from its age-long trance.  
Then with a sigh of ecstasy, in its Lover's arms,  
Petal by petal is revealed its all-containing Heart.  
Floating on enchanted wings of invisible winds,  
Its eternal scent suffuses creation's farthest ends.

—Shyam Kumari



### **'Radha's Consciousness'**

In some glad emptiness without support  
Hung a creeper lit with glorious ultramarine bobs.  
My heart stood on tip-toe  
To pluck a sky-piece from the silver flow.  
As if by common chance  
I found the inner wilderness,  
Where glories wear flower-faces  
And there is no toe-hold above and below.  
Where was I? In a space of Light  
Words cannot know.

—Shyam Kumari

### **In the garden of the soul**

The brilliant roses planted in Thy name  
Are leafless now in winter's cold embrace,  
The sap within descended to the soil  
And of their beauty lingers not a trace.

As all our dreams of spring are dormant now  
And we look back remembering the sun  
That burned from human eyes in human form  
And know, though we cannot see, the battle won.

Hearts once touched by the flower of her smile  
And minds pierced by her words, truth's javelin,  
No season's chill, no inclement atmosphere,  
No cloud of discontent can veil within

The light that grows in earth and in our souls,  
Where blooms the silver rose of sacrifice  
And open the golden flowers of gratitude,  
When winter's calm is wed to rapture's spring.  
Aspiration's Sun-Flower

Where harmonious lights play in subtle shades  
And branches wave in symphonic glades,  
Where gentle hearts are lost in sacred musings  
And heroic souls are swept up in fiery longings,  
Where on the vesper verge of the Eternal's dream  
Stars are bright, skies washed in pale moon-stream,  
O high Gods, lead my eager feet on the secret steep  
And help me emerge new-born from divinity's deep.  
Reveal then the way to Eden's balmy bower  
Till on myriad boughs my aspirations "sun-flower".

—Narad

### **Blue hyacinth**

Thy skies, O Lord, are too far  
And out of the reach  
Of my small yearning heart.  
Wilt Thou grant me a tiny piece  
Of Thy sapphire Heavens  
In this blue hyacinth,  
So I may hold Thee in my hand  
And greaten my being  
With a touch of Thy Vast?

—Shyam Kumari

### **The strophes of destiny**

Somewhere in the soul-travelling days  
And in the gleam of youth, I lost the song,  
Tragic, it was my avenue of praise  
And yet I cannot say I followed wrong

The call of flowers fragrant in that morn  
To labour in the deep red earth of God  
When Auroville in human hearts was born  
And the higher with the lower angels sparred.

Truly I cannot say the music ceased  
For in my mind supernal melodies  
Recur and hymns and choruses have seized  
My spirit and eternal harmonies

Resound in moments when the calm descends  
And all the nervous being in me stilled,  
The chaos of the worldly cycle ends  
And in the silence the empty staff is filled

With choral odes, symphonic in their sound,  
Mid the swelling of the voices of the sea,  
The chants of trees from consecrated ground  
Awake my soul to the strophes of destiny.

—Narad





## Apropos

Flowers are the moment's representations of things that are in themselves eternal. —Sri Aurobindo

It is plants that are the most open, on the material plane, to my influence . . . —The Mother

One never appreciates the earth unless one really lives with it, works with it, puts one's hands in the dust, lifting big rocks and stones—one never knows the extraordinary sense of being with the earth, the flowers, the gigantic trees and the strong grass and the hedges along the road. —Krishnamurti

As soon as you honor the present moment, all unhappiness and struggle dissolve, and life begins to flow with joy and ease. When you act out of present-moment awareness, whatever you do becomes imbued with a sense of quality, care, and love—even the most simple action. —Eckhart Tolle

The Lord of all, himself through all diffused, sustains, and is the life of all that lives. Nature is but a name for an effect whose cause is God. —William Cowper

To be oneself, that is to say, to live in the consciousness of one's own essence, promotes the growth of a new understanding. It is just as if delicate fingers were unfolding, one by one, the petals of a lotus. —Sri Anirvan

All negativity is caused by an accumulation of psychological time and denial of the present. Unease, anxiety, tension, stress, worry—all forms of fear—are caused by too much future, and not enough presence. Guilt, regret, resentment, grievances, sadness, bitterness, and all forms of nonforgiveness are caused by too much past, and not enough presence. —Eckart Tolle

The Divine reveals himself in the world around us when we look upon that world with a spiritual delight that seeks him in all things. —Sri Aurobindo

It is in proportion to our trust in the Divine that the Divine Grace can act for us and help. —The Mother

Make it a habit to ask yourself, "What's going on inside me at this moment." That question will point you in the right direction. But don't analyze, just watch. Focus your attention within. Feel the energy of the emotion. If there is no emotion present, take your attention more deeply into the inner energy field of your body. It is the doorway into Being. —Eckart Tolle

If you keep your attention in the body as much as possible, you will be anchored in the Now. You won't lose yourself in the external world, and you won't lose yourself in your mind. —Eckart Tolle

In the silence of the deep night and in the quiet still morning when the sun is touching the hills, there is a great mystery. It is there in all living things. If you sit quietly under a tree, you would feel the ancient earth with its incomprehensible mystery. —Krishnamurti

The feeling of awe and sense of wonder arises from the recognition of the deep mystery that surrounds us everywhere, and this feeling deepens as our knowledge grows. —Lama Anagarika Govinda

To see a world in a grain of sand / And a heaven in a wild flower, / Hold infinity in the palm of your hand / And eternity in an hour. —William Blake

These roses under my window make no reference to former roses or to better ones; they are what they are; they exist with God today. There is no time for them. There is simply the rose; it is perfect at every moment of its existence. —Ralph Waldo Emerson

The tree must bear its own proper fruit, and Nature is always a diligent gardener. —Sri Aurobindo

Day and night constantly the Presence is there. It is enough to turn silently inward and we detect it. —The Mother

Watching and listening are a great art—watching and listening without any reaction, without any sense of the listener or the see-er . . . When there is this simple, clear watching and listening, then there is an awareness—awareness of the colour of those flowers, red, yellow, white, of the spring leaves, the stems, so tender, so delicate, awareness of the heavens, the earth and those people who are passing by. —Krishnamurti

You are a child of the Heavenly Father. His immortal life energy pervades all your body's cells. Your whole being is vibrant with His presence: you are well. —Paramahansa Yogananda

None can achieve eternal life who has not first learned to live, not in the past or in the future, but now—in the moment of the moment. —Aldous Huxley

As the strength of the tree shows itself in the fruit, so the true divine strength in a person is shown in good works and virtues. —Jacob Boehme

God waits to win back his own flowers as gifts from man's hands. —Rabindranath Tagore

Come, my beloved, let us walk amidst the knolls, for the snow is water, and Life is alive from its slumber and is roaming the hills and valleys. —Kahlil Gibran

I am Thy dewdrop, quivering on the leaf of life-and-death that floats on Thy shoreless sea. —Paramahansa Yogananda

By plucking her petals you do not gather the beauty of flowers. —Rabindranath Tagore